



respond to work through a bonk if it happens—by slowing the pace or walking and getting some extra hydration and nutrition in.

### Step 5: Have a refocusing strategy

Inevitably, over 140.6 miles, you will go through hard, extra-challenging areas of the race, and chances are they will occur late in the bike and intermittently during the run. The best athletes are great at focusing and staying on task, and they are also great at problem solving when things aren't going well. If you get blisters or a cramp, or bonk or become bloated, your goal still remains doing the best job possible given the circumstances you are facing. Try to remain calm no matter what, get back on task as soon as possible and optimize what you can do right now, rather than stressing about what you can't do.

When Chris Lieto won Ironman Canada last summer, after posting a record-setting bike split, he was low on fuel and seriously fatigued. After battling back and forth with Simon Lessing over the previous seven hours, he found himself with a narrow lead but needing to walk in the heat to allow himself to absorb calories and fluid. Initially, the goal for an athlete of his caliber was obviously to run the marathon and run it well. But in this case he recognized what he needed to do and decided that if he were going to walk, he would walk quickly. He did the very best he could until his legs came back around, and he ended up running well for the last six miles to take the win. By staying on task, problem solving and talking himself up despite the circumstances, Lieto took what his body would give him on the day. That's really all you can ask of yourself as an athlete. ▲

*Over the past 20 years, Lance Watson has coached a number of Ironman and Olympic champions. Beginner and experienced triathletes are invited to join the LifeSport Team. Contact LifeSport Coaching (at [coach@LifeSport.ca](mailto:coach@LifeSport.ca)) or visit [LifeSport.ca](http://LifeSport.ca).*

John Spegel/walshmedia.com

### TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

- Predetermine an emotional reason for being out there, or a personal theme.
- Do a training camp on the course a few months before the event to learn and master the course. If that isn't possible, tour the course on race week and run portions of it in your race-taper sessions.
- It is important to be realistic but not fearful of the effort it will take to tackle the marathon. Be levelheaded in assessing your skills and abilities, as well. It is a recipe for disaster for you to expect to greatly exceed anything you have done consistently in training.
- Have a pacing strategy supported by a nutritional strategy and review it in your mind before the race.
- Try to remain calm no matter what, get back on task as soon as possible and optimize what you can do right now, rather than stressing about what you can't do.