

charlton 5k : course preview

TOMORROW is the big day in my little town of Charlton, NY — it's [Charlton 5K](#) day!!! The race is put on by the [Charlton Historical Society](#), and is part of the larger celebration of "Founders' Day Weekend" (which seems somewhat like an oxymoron — how can a day be a weekend?) Anyway, it's a really fun weekend for a small town, and one I look forward to every year as one of my summer kick-off highlights.

I have been hosting training runs on the course for the last several weeks. Yesterday was my last one, and I snapped some photos along the course to build a course preview / prep course / pacing strategy for those of you who weren't able to come to the runs. Come find me after the race and let me know if this helped you :)



START/FINISH LINE: this is an out-and-back course, with "home base" being at the south end of Maple Ave., where you can find the former St. Paul's church (now home of the Charlton Historical Society), the old one-room schoolhouse, and the Charlton Tavern. Be mindful of your starting position. Some people (mostly the high school & college runners) are VERY fast (5-6:00/mile pace) and they should be the runners on the front lines. Little kids (and/or parents with little kids) should be especially mindful of the crowds to avoid any tripping & trampling. Ask the people around

you what their expected pace will be so you know you're starting in the right area.

First half / going out: 3/4 mile in, top of the first gradual incline (most of that first 3/4 is incline), and water stop #1! Grab a sip, and dump the rest on your head/neck to cool off. Now you'll go downhill — lean forward a bit and let gravity help you out here. Trying to slow down by leaning back can take a toll on your quadriceps (thigh muscles) and knees. FYI - there is usually a photographer at the bottom so be ready to show your best running form & biggest smile!

THE TURN. As you approach the turn, you will be greeted by a short and steep hill — it's actually not too bad if you're just out for a jog, but if you're running hard, this is not a fun one! Take a deep





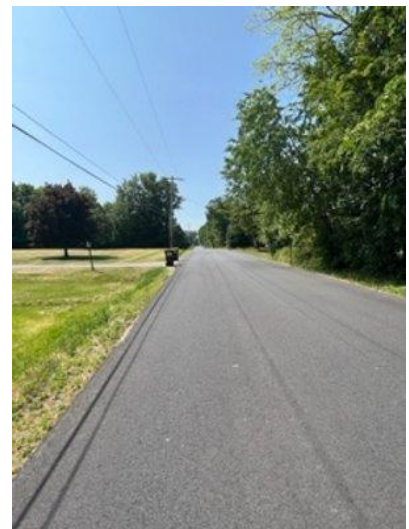
breath, and find a visual landmark at or near the top (I like to use the stop sign). When you pass that landmark, take 10 hard steps before settling back down to recover from the incline. My high school athletes call these “monster steps” :) You’ll also be seeing some people coming BACK now, as you’re almost at the turnaround — you’re all struggling together, and maybe you’ll see some people you know!

THE TURNAROUND. At 1.55 miles, you make a 180-degree turn around a traffic cone. Not ideal for fast running, BUT you do have a very slight (about 15 feet) decline right after the turnaround, which helps to get your momentum back. Here you’ll also have water stop #2, which means guaranteed cheerleaders. If you are targeting a certain time, you’ll probably be about $1/2 + 20-30$ seconds at this point (ex: 20 minute 5K goal = 10:20-10:30 first

half).

THE HARDEST PART: after the turn, the turnaround, and the turn again you’ll go down that steep hill — and then take just one quick glance up at the road ahead. It looks like a giant hill, but I promise you it is not! You’re approaching mile 2 mark now, and this is arguably the toughest part mentally. It’s a slight incline, but mostly relatively flat, until you get to the steep hill by the brick house (remember that first water table?). In this section, focus on visual landmarks that aren’t far apart — a mailbox (there are only a few in here!), a telephone pole, a shady spot ... use those small segments to get you through this part.

THE END IS IN SIGHT (kind-of). That little spot in between the trees at the end of the road is the roof of the Charlton Tavern! You have just crested the hill after water stop #3 and have less than $3/4$ mile to go. From here, it is almost entirely downhill. It’s time to start thinking about your finish — while you won’t quite be in a full-out finishing kick quite yet, you want to try to find the next gear. This is a really fast finish with the gradual decline, so lean into the hill, set an imaginary target on someone ahead of you, and start chasing.



TENNIS COURT: This marks about 600 meters ($1/3$ mile) to go. NOW it’s time to move — you only have a few minutes left in the race, and very soon you’ll see the finish line and hear the crowds cheering & announcer calling out finishers’ names. You are SO close. You might feel really hot, really tired, wanting to walk, maybe wanting to puke (hey, it happens) — so take a deep breath, shake out your arms, and regroup. You can do this. You are almost there.



OK, this is REALLY it. You have about 200 meters to go (1/2 lap around a track, 1/8 of a mile) — for the middle-of-the-pack runners, this will be a minute or less! Plus, you have spectators, announcers, cameras, music — all of this energy will help you get to the finish line. There is one final downhill into the finish area, and you can really lean into it and let your legs roll. They might feel like jelly by now, but they'll get you there!

TIME FOR PIE!!!!

While you were busy running, the volunteers were busy transitioning this tent from registration to refreshments! Once you've caught your breath and grabbed some water, head over to the tent for your slice of Smith's apple pie and other tasty items.

You can also check out the schoolhouse while you're waiting for your awards! Don't forget to thank the volunteers for their time and help with the race!

THAT'S THE COURSE! The spots are some of the easiest landmarks to spot, and help to break up the course into smaller, more manageable segments. Running is SO much of a mental task, so hopefully this approach will help you to feel a little more prepared and confident on race day. HAVE A GREAT RUN & ENJOY YOUR FOUNDERS' DAY WEEKEND!!!

Dr. Coach Megan

PS - if you have a local course you'd like to have a photo course preview & pacing strategy for, please let me know! this is the first time I've done it, but it was really fun and I'd love to do more :)

