

Half Marathon Readiness & 6-Week Plan

Vikram · Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon · Sunday 18 October 2026 · First 21.1 km
Assessment date: 5 September 2026 · All figures from Garmin Connect data, no estimates

Part 1 — Where You Actually Stand

VERDICT

Ready to finish with a run/walk strategy

You are at the **bottom** of this band, not the top. You are not in the "real injury risk" category — that requires a longest run under 10 km or under 8 weeks of consistent running, and you clear both comfortably. But racing a time goal is off the table, and so is finishing comfortably.

The numbers that decide it

Metric	You	First-timer needs, 6 weeks out	Gap
Longest run ever	10.01 km (31 Jul)	14–16 km already done	–4 to –6 km
Longest run, last 5 weeks	7.87 km (37% of race)	~70% of race distance	–7 km
4-week average volume	14.4 km/week	25–35 km/week	roughly half
Consistency	4.2 runs/week	4–5 runs/week	meets it
Time running consistently	9+ months (since Dec 2025)	6+ months	exceeds it

The number that matters most: race day is **1.5× your entire typical training week, done in one go**. You have never run more than 47% of the race distance — and not at all in the last five weeks.

Weekly running volume — last 16 weeks

Week starting	km	runs	longest	avg pace
11 May	16.9	4	7.00	7:03
18 May	14.7	5	5.01	6:55
25 May	11.8	4	5.02	7:01
1 Jun	13.2	4	4.94	6:58
8 Jun	14.3	4	6.00	7:11
15 Jun	12.0	3	5.03	6:50
22 Jun	15.5	5	5.00	6:51
29 Jun	19.9	6	6.26	7:38
6 Jul	19.2	8	6.01	7:20
13 Jul	12.0	3	5.06	6:56
20 Jul	9.6	3	5.00	7:02
27 Jul	10.0	1	10.01	6:59
3 Aug	13.2	5	4.00	7:03
10 Aug	14.9	4	5.40	7:20
17 Aug	8.4	3	4.35	6:55
24 Aug	20.9	5	7.87	7:11
31 Aug (6 days)	15.7	5	5.15	7:04

242 km across 72 runs in 17 weeks. Consistent 4–5 runs/week going back to December 2025.

Aerobic decoupling — the single most important finding

Run	First half	Second half	Decoupling
31 Jul · 10.01 km · treadmill	7:02/km @ 146 bpm	6:56/km @ 164 bpm	9.9%
29 Aug · 7.87 km · outdoor	7:00/km @ 160 bpm	8:18/km @ 162 bpm	16.9%
16 May · 7.00 km · outdoor	7:10/km @ 156 bpm	7:16/km @ 171 bpm	10.1%

The 31 July run is the cleanest read: treadmill, pace held within 6 seconds across ten kilometres, and heart rate climbed 18 bpm anyway. The 29 August run is the ugly one — you held 7:00/km for 4 km, then cadence fell from 172 to 114 and pace collapsed to 9:26/km. That

is not decoupling, that is the run ending.

Threshold is 5%. All three are roughly double it. This says your aerobic system starts failing around 5–7 km. At 21 km that is not a slower second half — it is a wall.

Load, recovery and fitness

Metric	Reading (5 Sep 2026)	Read
CTL / ATL / TSB	275 / 372 / -97	ACWR 1.3, Garmin labels OPTIMAL
Training status	PRODUCTIVE	Balance: AEROBIC_HIGH_SHORTAGE
HRV, 7-day avg	47 → 37 ms (21-28 Aug), now 44	4 UNBALANCED days, since recovered
Sleep, 28-night avg	6.44 h	6 nights under 6h, 3 under 4.8h
VO2max, 12-week trend	44.4 → 44.7	Flat. No fitness gain.
Garmin race predictions	5K 27:03 · 10K 59:03 · HM 2:17:31	Ignore the HM number — see below

Ignore the 2:17:31 prediction. Garmin derives it from VO2max and implicitly assumes you have the endurance base to express it. You don't. That is the time you could run if you had been doing 35 km weeks with 16 km long runs. It has no idea your longest run this month is 7.9 km.

Risk flags

- FIRED** **Aerobic decoupling** — 9.9%, 16.9%, 10.1% against a 5% threshold. The primary constraint on race day.
- FIRED** **Ramp rate** — not a ramp, noise. 8.4 km → 20.9 km is **+149%** week over week, directly after a -44% week. Your body cannot adapt to a signal that jumps like that.
- FIRED** **Sleep** — 6.44 h average over 28 nights, below the 6.5 h line. Three nights under 4.8 h.
- WATCH** **HRV** — 47 → 37 ms over eight days in late August, four UNBALANCED days, now recovered. Lines up exactly with the 20.9 km week.
- NOT FIRED** **TSB** — the -97 reading is not comparable to the -30 threshold, which comes from the TrainingPeaks TSS scale. Garmin's CTL/ATL are 42-day and 7-day sums of its own load points and run 5-10× larger. On Garmin's own terms, ACWR 1.3 = OPTIMAL.

Data caveat: most of your volume is treadmill. Pace and HR are not heat-adjusted, and Delhi in mid-October at a 7 a.m. start will be warm and humid. Every pace figure above will be slower on race day.

Realistic finish time

2:50 - 3:20

Assumptions behind the range:

- Long runs reach 15-17 km over the next five weeks. From 7.87 km at +2 km/week, that is the ceiling — and it is enough.
- You run/walk from kilometre 1. Not "run until I break."
- km 0-10 at 7:45-8:00/km including walk breaks; second half degrading to 8:45-9:30/km.
- Warm, humid Delhi morning, likely poor AQI. Add 5-10 minutes.

If you go out at 7:00/km — your habitual pace — the 31 July heart-rate curve says you are at 165+ bpm by km 8 and walking involuntarily by km 12. That is a 3:30+ day and it hurts. The run/walk is not a consolation prize; it is what makes 2:50 possible instead of 3:35.

Part 2 — The 6-Week Plan

Sunday 6 September → Sunday 18 October 2026 · 4 runs per week · long run on Sunday to match race day

Your heart-rate targets

Session type	Target HR	Notes
Easy run	138-150 bpm	If you cross 152, walk until you're back down. Every time.
Long run	140-155 bpm	Walk break whenever you exceed 158.
Steady / tempo blocks	158-168 bpm	Weeks 3 and 4 only, short blocks.

Zone caveat: your Garmin profile has no running-specific zones and the DEFAULT profile uses max HR 207 — a formula estimate. Your observed max across real activities is 189-195, so the saved zones sit too high. The bpm ranges above are set against your observed data, not the profile. Use the numbers, not the zone colours on the watch.

The core change

Your easy runs aren't easy. Nearly every run in the last 16 weeks sits at 145-165 bpm — that is tempo, not base. It is why you decouple: there is no aerobic foundation underneath, just a lot of moderately hard 2-5 km efforts. Garmin's own AEROBIC_HIGH_SHORTAGE flag points at the same thing. From Monday, easy means easy, and it will feel insultingly slow for about ten days before it stops feeling that way.

Run/walk from day one. Every long run is 9 minutes running, 1 minute walking, from the first kilometre. Not when you get tired — from the start. This is the single intervention that moves you from 3:35 to 2:50.

Week 1 — 6 to 12 September · 19 km

Day	Session	km	Target
Sun 6	Long run, 9:1 run/walk	9	140-155 bpm
Mon 7	Rest · strength 20 min	—	—
Tue 8	Easy	4	138-150 bpm
Wed 9	Easy	3	138-150 bpm
Thu 10	Rest · strength 20 min	—	—
Fri 11	Easy	3	138-150 bpm
Sat 12	Rest · optional 30 min walk	—	—

Tomorrow specifically: you have run three days straight (3, 4 and 5 Sep) and your acute load is well above chronic. Start conservatively. If your HR is drifting above 158 inside the first 3 km, cut it to 7 km and call that a win. The 9 km will still be there next Sunday.

Week 2 — 13 to 19 September · 22 km

Day	Session	km	Target
Sun 13	Long run, 9:1 run/walk	11	140-155 bpm
Mon 14	Rest · strength	—	—
Tue 15	Easy	4	138-150 bpm
Wed 16	Easy	4	138-150 bpm
Thu 17	Rest · strength	—	—
Fri 18	Easy	3	138-150 bpm
Sat 19	Rest	—	—

Week 3 — 20 to 26 September · 25 km

Day	Session	km	Target
Sun 20	Long run, 9:1 run/walk	13	140-155 bpm
Mon 21	Rest · strength	—	—
Tue 22	Easy	5	138-150 bpm
Wed 23	Easy + 4 × 20s strides	4	Easy, strides free
Thu 24	Rest · strength	—	—
Fri 25	Easy	3	138-150 bpm
Sat 26	Rest	—	—

Week 4 — 27 September to 3 October · 27 km

Day	Session	km	Target
Sun 27	Long run, 9:1 — last 3 km at race effort	15	140–155, final 3 km to 162
Mon 28	Rest · strength	—	—
Tue 29	Easy	5	138–150 bpm
Wed 30	Easy with 2 × 5 min steady	4	Steady blocks 158–168
Thu 1 Oct	Rest · strength	—	—
Fri 2 Oct	Easy	3	138–150 bpm
Sat 3 Oct	Rest	—	—

Decision gate: the 27 September 15 km is the checkpoint. If you cannot complete it with average HR under 165 and without an unplanned walk, revise the race target to 3:15–3:30 pure run/walk, or switch to a shorter category if the event offers one. That is a data-driven call, not a failure.

Week 5 — 4 to 10 October · 28 km · PEAK

Day	Session	km	Target
Sun 4	Dress rehearsal. Long run, 9:1. Race kit, race shoes, race fuelling, 7 a.m. start.	17	140-155 bpm
Mon 5	Rest	—	—
Tue 6	Easy	5	138-150 bpm
Wed 7	Easy	3	138-150 bpm
Thu 8	Rest · strength	—	—
Fri 9	Easy	3	138-150 bpm
Sat 10	Rest	—	—

17 km is the longest run of the block and it sits two weeks out, which is exactly where it should be. There is nothing to gain from running 21 km in training and a great deal to lose. **Nothing new after 4 October — no new shoes, no new gels, no new anything.**

Week 6 — 11 to 17 October · 15 km · TAPER

Day	Session	km	Target
Sun 11	Long run, easy, 9:1	8	140-152 bpm
Mon 12	Rest	—	—
Tue 13	Easy	4	138-150 bpm
Wed 14	Easy + 3 × 20s strides	3	Easy, strides free
Thu 15	Rest	—	—
Fri 16	Rest · 20 min walk	—	—
Sat 17	Rest · 15 min shakeout walk	—	—

You will feel sluggish and slightly anxious this week. That is what taper feels like. Do not add sessions to fix it.

Race day — Sunday 18 October

Segment	Pace	HR ceiling	Note
km 0-5	8:00/km	155	Should feel embarrassingly slow. This is the whole race.
km 5-12	7:45-8:00/km	162	Hold the 9:1. Do not skip walk breaks because you feel good.
km 12-18	8:15-8:45/km	170	Walk breaks may lengthen. That is planned, not failure.
km 18-21.1	whatever is left	—	Race it home if there's anything there.

Target: 2:50-3:20. The 9:1 run/walk is non-negotiable from kilometre 1. Every first-timer who abandons it in the first 5 km because they feel strong pays for it between km 14 and 18.

Abort and adjust criteria

- **Any pain that changes your gait** — stop the session. Persistent pain is a physiotherapist question, not a training-plan question. Garmin measures load, not tissue.
- **HRV UNBALANCED for 3 consecutive days** — cut that week's volume by 30%, keep the long run, drop the midweek runs.
- **Two consecutive nights under 5 hours** — drop that week's Wednesday run. Sleep is the flag that fired hardest in your data and it is the cheapest one to fix.
- **Missed a session** — absorb it and move on. Never stack it onto the next day. The plan has slack for exactly this.
- **Delhi AQI poor** — move indoors or go earlier. Treadmill is a legitimate substitute for easy runs; try to keep long runs outdoors for heat adaptation.
- **Heat** — expect roughly 10-20 sec/km slower per 5°C above 15°C. If you hit the target HR at a slower pace on a hot morning, the session is working correctly. That is not a fitness regression.

One honest note on the ramp

This plan moves you from a 14.4 km/week average to 19 km in week one — about +32%, above the 10%/week guideline. That is deliberate, and it is the calculated risk in this plan. Staying at 14 km/week would guarantee you arrive underprepared; ramping faster would guarantee injury. After week one the increases are 16%, 14%, 8%, 4% — which is the controlled ramp your last four months never had. Your run frequency does not change at all: you already run 4.2 times a week. What changes is the distance of one run and the effort of the other three.