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June 2011 Training Newsletter

By Bruce Deacon

Beat the Heat!

Although you'd never guess it by the cool spring, this summer is supposed to be a scorcher. This will make training a real challenge. While summer is great news for the beach-going folk, slogging it out in 30C on a 3 hour run is not fun.

Exercising in the heat is hard. Your body is not only working to complete your workout, but it is also doing overtime to cool itself off. You need a much greater effort to get the same results as when the temperatures are low. It also carries more risks like heat stroke, dehydration, sun burn, and skin cancer.

Caution is the key. On hot days, exercise early in the morning or late evening. Pay attention to the sun. Sun stroke and severe sunburns are a real threat when you mix high UV days and long exercise sessions. Stick to the shade, cover up, and use a sweat resistant sun screen. Wear a mesh cap when working out in the direct sunlight.

Getting adjusted or acclimatized to the heat takes about 9 days. During this time, your body's cooling system will become more efficient and you will become better at sweating. You'll sweat more, sweat earlier and sweat fewer salts. This is all good news, because the evaporation of sweat is the body's chief way of regulating heat. The downside is that your improved sweating abilities will also carry over to when you are rushing to that meeting in business attire.

As your body learns to sweat, replacing lost fluids will become more important. Pay close attention to the amount you're drinking, as you will need more fluids than normal. Your options are to carry your water or choose a route where you can find the water you need. Since lugging around water on a hot day reduces the enjoyment of the experience, you might think of hiding some water bottles along your route.

Approach those hot days with a recognition that you will simply not be able to run as fast as when it is cool. This is a time not to be anxious about pace, because it will either frustrate you or lure you into trying to hold a pace that is unrealistic for the conditions. Start slower than normal and pace yourself carefully.

With all of the above cautions now voiced, remember that running on a hot day still beats training through a cold and rainy November day. Enjoy the warmth, smells, birds and lack of mud. Even though it is often harder, summer is still my favourite time of year to run.

Fuelling for the Long Run

Most running schedules will gradually be increasing the duration of the long runs. Sooner or later, the distance reaches a point where fuel becomes the critical success factor.

During endurance events your body primarily relies on carbohydrates and fats as its primary sources of fuel. Most of your fuel will come from burning a mixture of carbos and fats, and the intensity of your



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running will control the burn mixture. For instance, the harder you run, the greater the proportion of carbohydrates you burn. Conversely, slower exercise uses a greater proportion of fats.

Carbohydrates have some advantages. They burn much more efficiently than fats. This means that your body needs less oxygen to break down each calorie from carbohydrates than it does to get a similar calorie from fat. There is a hitch, though. While your body can store infinite amounts of energy as fat, it is limited in its ability to store carbohydrates. As your carbohydrate stores begin to dwindle, your body then starts to burn more and more fats. This requires increasingly more oxygen. Since you are limited in the amount of oxygen that your body can take in, you just can't compensate by breathing more. Little by little you run out of accessible fuel. You are forced to slow down your pace in order to access this fat. In marathon terms this is called "hitting the wall", and trust me, it can rival a trip to the dentist in terms of terms of agony.

Of course one way to meet your race fuel needs is to load-up on the run using gels and other simple on-the-run fuels. These gels pack about a hundred calories in simple carbohydrate form, giving you a quick boost late in the race. Some come with caffeine, which gives you a perk and helps to release fatty acids that also be used for fuel. However, some runners find that introducing caffeine into their systems causes them to run for the loo and not for the finish line.

Now is the time to experiment with the various gels and sports drinks. You will find that some work well for you and that others don't. It is better to discover what doesn't sit well in your tummy now than at 30 km of the marathon. Also, make sure that you consume them with water to assist their digestion.

Vacation Time

Summer vacations often make for training scheduling issues. How do you fit in a hard week when you are camping with the family in bear country? If you need help in juggling your schedule, feel free to drop me an email at coachbruce@runvictoriamarathon.com

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