



August 2017 Training Newsletter

By Bruce Deacon

Smoke in Your Eyes

There's no doubt that this has been a particularly bad year for BC forest fires. Already there have been dozens of air quality alerts and some endurance events have had to be cancelled. Still, there is no real end in sight. This has left people asking how they should adjust their training.

In July, the Canadian Sports Institute issued a notice to all elite athletes training in their network, providing expert advice on exercise in smoky conditions. The concern was that the typical warning notices don't give sufficiently detailed advice for those in training. Will the smoke particulates do lasting damage, and how exactly do you modify your training?

The notice quotes Dr. Michael Koehle, a prominent respiratory physiologist from the University of British Columbia. The message conveyed is that in smoky regions short and low intensity activity are alright. This could include activities like strength work or bike commuting, but would stop short of your typical marathon training run. For longer runs, it's best to workout indoors. His advice is that "if at all possible, up the intensity and shorten the duration, and use treadmills, trainers, swimming pools, and strength equipment."

The problem is that training for a marathon or half marathon requires longer runs that can't be replaced by lifting weights. If you are stuck with smoky skies, then hit a treadmill for those longer runs. You might mix up the pace to add some variety.

If you have already run in smoky conditions, don't lose sleep worrying about it. While research has found that pollution can cause long-term health issues, these aren't made worse by exercise. Fortunately, smoky skies are not a permanent condition for BC, and a bit of rain will soon clear the air.

Pace for the Race

At the start of your marathon or half marathon training, your race pace is often based on your goal time for a race many months away. Based on that goal time, you've started doing your speed work and tempo runs. But what if you got it a bit wrong? What if you were too ambitious, or what if you have been progressing faster than you hoped?

The number one way to ruin your race is bad pacing, so determining your race pace is a must. The math is easy with a bit of help of an online pace calculator, but the trick is knowing whether you have chosen the right goal time.

In my second marathon, I had set the goal of breaking 3 hours. It was a lofty goal considering my previous best time was 3:30. But there was no talking sense into me; I wanted that sub 3 hour time. I dashed off well on pace for my goal; however, my body just wasn't ready to lop half an hour from my time. In the end, I ran one of the toughest races of my life and took 2 minutes off my best. The last half was SO painful.

How do you know if you can reasonably hit your time? The best way to tell is to do a shorter race. By running a 10k or a half marathon, you get a good indication for how your training has gone. By using a [running equivalency calculator](#), you can determine how your time over a shorter distance is likely to translate to a marathon.

If you can't find a convenient race, you can assess your readiness by doing a track workout. Use the equivalency calculator backwards by inputting your marathon goal time. This should show you a 10k equivalent time. For instance, if you are shooting for a 4 hour marathon, then you should be able to run a 52:17-52:50 for 10k. That means that you should feel strong doing a workout of 4-5 times 1600 at your 10k pace of 8:22-8:30/mile with a lap rest. If this is a breeze, then you should be well on your way to a 4 hour time. On the other hand, if you finish seeing stars and throwing up, then you probably either have the flu or an unrealistic goal.

Let me give a word of caution. The equivalency calculators assume that you are equally strong at all distances. You aren't. I am more of a marathoner, so I can usually run faster for the marathon than my equivalent 5k or 10k times. Also, some of the programs are more accurate than others. If the time that you use for your equivalency calculation is old or run on a tough course or hot day, then it will definitely affect your race prediction.

It is always best to recalibrate your goal pace in training instead of racing off at a pace that is not sustainable. While we all want to push our limits on race day, your body just won't let you get away with ignoring your limits.

Need some help?

If you need advice or have some questions, email [Coach Bruce](mailto:CoachBruce@runvictoriamarathon.com).

The GoodLife Fitness Victoria Marathon supports your success by providing you an array of proven training programs and access to coaching help. Please feel free to reach out to Bruce with any questions you may have! CoachBruce@runvictoriamarathon.com.