



Keeping Contact

Newsletter of the Delaware County Road Runners Club

October, 1992

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THE PRE-COMPETITION MEAL

When it comes to pre-competition eating, each person has individual food preferences or aversions. Hence, no one single food or "magic meal" will ensure top performance. Whereas some athletes (runners or those in sports involving running and jumping) often prefer to eat nothing before competition, others (cyclists, skiers) may perform better after having eaten a light snack (50-200 calories) or small meal (300-500 calories). The following guidelines offer points to consider regarding your own personal pre-exercise eating program. Since each person is unique, you should experiment to learn which foods (if any) and how much of them work best for your body.

- * The pre-competition meal/snack helps to:
 1. maintain a normal blood sugar and prevent the performance problems associated with hypoglycemia (light-headedness, blurred vision, needless fatigue and indecisiveness).
 2. settle the stomach, absorb some of the gastric juices and abate hunger feelings.
 3. provide energy to fuel the muscles.

The goal of the pre-competition meal is to enhance stamina and endurance without causing any stomach discomfort. Eating too much food can have adverse effects (nausea, stomach cramps); so can eating too little (lack of energy). Athletes who get very nervous, stressed or have sensitive stomachs may prefer to abstain completely from food. They should make a special effort to eat extra food the day before to be well fueled for the competition.

* Carbohydrates are the best pre-competition foods because they digest quickly and are readily available for fuel. Some popular choices include cereal, bread, bagel, crackers, potato and pasta. Protein-rich foods (eggs, tuna, steak) take longer to digest and may increase the need to urinate. Fats (fried foods, peanut butter, greasy burgers) stay longest in the stomach and may feel heavy and uncomfortable.

* Pay attention to meal timing. In general, you should allow 3-4 hours for a large meal to digest; 2-3 hours for a smaller meal, 1-2 hours for a blenderized meal (liquids are absorbed more rapidly than solid foods), 0-1 hour for a small snack. Always eat extra carbohydrates the day prior and do little or no exercise so your muscles can refuel.

With morning events, eat a hearty, light carbohydrate dinner and bed-time snack the night before. That morning, if tolerated, eat a light meal (such as 1-2 slices of toast and/or cereal) to stabilize your blood sugar, absorb some of the gastric juices and keep you from feeling hungry.

With afternoon events, eat a hearty breakfast and a light carbohydrate-based lunch.

With evening events, eat a hearty breakfast and lunch, then perhaps a light snack 1-2 hours prior.

Some athletes break all the rules and can handle a big meal with no problem within an hour of the event. Others can eat nothing for four hours prior. You simply have to experiment during training to determine what foods (if any) settle comfortably, when you should eat them (one, two or three hours prior), and how much you can eat.

* Always eat familiar foods prior to competition -- don't try anything new! Experiment with new foods during training to determine if they settle well, cause "acid stomach", gas, heart burn, cramps or intestinal discomfort.

* One pre-event meal inadequately compensates for a poor training diet. Hence, you should eat a high carbohydrate diet every day to prevent chronic glycogen depletion and ensure adequate glycogen replacement.

* When traveling, you might want to bring your favorite pre-competition food such as a tried-and-true cereal muffin, fruit or sandwich. This way, you can be worry-free about food and better able to focus on performing.

* The pre-competition meal may have a greater psychological than physiological value. For example, if you firmly believe that a steak dinner helps you perform best, then eat it even though this meal "breaks the rules" regarding pre-game suggestions! You also might want to experiment during training with pasta or another high carb, low fat choice to see if this more appropriate food settles better and offers an energy advantage.

Sample high carbohydrate, low fat pre-competition food suggestions:

Breakfasts: cereal, lowfat milk, banana; toast; juice; muffin or bagel, yogurt; French toast or pancakes, syrup.

Lunches: sandwich with thick bread, little mayo; soup, crackers; thick-crust pizza (single cheese, no meat).

Snacks: crackers, bagel, toast, canned or fresh fruit, banana bread, yogurt, small turkey sandwich, biscuit.

Dinners: spaghetti, tomato sauce; extra rice, noodles, potato, vegetables with small serving of chicken, fish.

Editor's Note: The above article was received from the Benjamin Franklin Clinic.

ON THE TRAIL...

Race Report By: Dave Covey

The Mosquito Marathon, Leadville, Colorado
July 11, 1992

It was early June, and knowing that my vacation was coming up in July, I decided to go on a driving tour of the Southwestern part of the U.S.A. While I am out there, I thought, why not try to run in a race somewhere. It might be fun! I started leafing through the upcoming race section in the back of Ultrarunning Magazine, hoping to find a race that wasn't too difficult.

A couple of races caught my eye, taking place during my holiday, but they were 50 and 100 milers, too long! A 30 miler in Vancouver, too far to drive. Wait a minute, what's this? I had spotted a possible run. "The Mosquito Marathon - an extreme adventure." Leadville, Colorado, July 11. That doesn't sound too bad, I thought. Right time, right area, right distance. I sent away for an entry form and received one in the mail several weeks later.

My first clue that this was no ordinary race came in the first paragraph of the course description. It said: "this may well be the continuously highest and possibly the hardest marathon on earth." ON EARTH! I gulped and read on.

..."The start/finish is the lowest point on the course at 10,200 feet; the highest points are over 14,000 feet." ... "These are a few landmarks along the ridge that the course will cross: Peerless mountain, 13,348'; Mt. Sheridan, 13,748'; Mt. Sherman, 14,036'; Gemini Peak, 13,951'; Dyer Mountain 13,855'; and Mt. Evans, 13,577'." ... "Between Evans and Dyer is the only jagged section that may require hand-assisted running/walking." (I will explain this "little" understatement later on.) ... "Fourteen miles of the race will be above timberline (11,400'). ... "You will have to see this course to believe it; pack a double lunch..."

Under the general information section of the entry form read the following interesting tidbits:

"Carry food, clothing and water with you. Lightning can be expected in the afternoon and freezing rains are not uncommon." ... "There will be aid stations at 8, 17, and 21 miles." ... "Injured runners should send fellow contestants ahead so that help may be returned as soon as possible." (YIKES!!)

Recalling the last time I had tried to run at this kind of altitude, (Pikes Peak Ascent, '88), I was naturally a tad concerned. Actually, at Pikes Peak, once I was higher than 12,000' altitude, I didn't run so much as stagger forward with the sensation that my head was disconnected from the rest of my body.

I decided to give the race director a call to get some more information and to have him assure me that this race was really not as difficult as it sounded. Once I got him on the phone, I asked him for a description of the race. "Well," he said. A loooooong pause. "It's very hard!" Knowing how Coloradoans can be masters of the understatement, I explained that I lived at sea-level, and did he think that fact might be a problem for me? His response to me was the ambulance fees and Flight for Life air evacuation services would be the runner's responsibility. With this overwhelming vote of confidence under my belt, I was off to Colorado!

The day before the race, July 10, I was in Telluride, Colorado; elevation 8,800'. I decided to go for a little run to see how my body was adapting to the altitude. Most experts say it takes 8 - 10 days to get used to altitude, but unfortunately I had only two days. My three mile run in Telluride at a 9 min./mile pace yielded a heart rate of 165 BPM. Prior to leaving on my trip, I had bought a heart-rate monitor. I would use this device to help me try to maintain a steady pace during the race. The next day's race was going to be very interesting, indeed.

The next morning's 6:00 A.M. start in Leadville dawned overcast and chilly. (About 40 degrees at the start.) My clothing consisted of shorts, tights, a long-sleeved polypro top, a singlet, Gortex jacket generously loaned to me, gloves, silk balaclava hood, and a baseball cap. I wore a two-bottle pack and carried another one in my hand. My pack was stuffed with a banana, raisins, and 4 powerbars.

At 6 A.M. 116 hardy souls (fools) started up the mountain. My goal was to maintain my heart rate at or preferably below 150 BPM. A half-mile into the race, 90% of the field was already ahead of me and none of them were doing any walking. Damn, these Colorado runners are tough! I was blazing along at what was probably an 8:30 to 9:00 min. mile pace when I checked my monitor for the first time. 175 BPM. (First reality check of the day!!) I started to walk. I might have some ego, but I'm not crazy. There was a long way to go.

The course was paved and uphill for about the first 4 1/2 miles, rising 1,000 feet. After a short, steep downhill and a turn onto dirt jeep trail, the trail started ascending again through forests and alpine meadows. I reached the first aid station (8.4 miles), in the Empire Gulch, in 96 minutes, feeling ok. I was walking all of the steeper up hills and jogging any downhill or flat sections. My heart rate had stabilized to 140-150 BPM. Past the first aid station there were many small streams to cross and some thick brush to bushwack through. It was at about the 10 mile mark that I noticed I wasn't running very much anymore. It was all steep uphill at this point. Nobody else was running either, so that made me feel a little better.

We were now at the base of the Empire amphitheater, and surrounded by steep slopes on three sides. I knew that we were going to have to get to the top of the ridgeline that towered over us, but how? Surely we couldn't go straight up the mountainside, it was too steep! (Second reality check of the day.) We did go straight up! How steep was it? How about rising 1,380 vertical feet in a half mile!! There was not much of a trail, so the footing was very treacherous. There was also a lot of loose dirt/gravel; so much slipping and sliding was being done. I finally reached the ridgeline. (Peerless Mt. 13,348'). On top of the ridge there was no protection from the wind, so it started to get pretty chilly. Also, once on top of the ridge, the trail basically disappeared. The ridgeline consisted of rock fields, broken up by the occasional patch of grass or snow. As one might guess, a lot of trail-following improvisation was used here.

The next mile and a half took us up over Mt. Sheridan and down to the base of Mt. Sherman. It was very slow going, jumping from rock to rock, boulder to boulder. I don't think I did any running since the 9 1/2 mile point. I started the steep climb up to the high point on the course, Mt. Sherman (14,036'). The wind was really blasting now, and it had started snowing lightly. A guy I was running (hiking) with at the time had one of those little key chain thermometers and said that it was 30 degrees. With a 20-30 mph wind, it was, well, you get the picture. I stopped for several minutes, fumbling with my silk balaclava hood, putting it on under the Goretex hood and baseball cap. My hands were pretty cold.

I crested Mt. Sherman, the approximate halfway point of the race (13.0 miles) in about 4 hours. As a reward for my achievement, it hailed on me for about 10 minutes. (Thank God for Goretex!) Remembering the last time I was at 14,000 feet, when I got sick, (Hypoxia is the technical term), I made my way down the back side of Mt. Sherman. I'd been told that the view from Mt. Sherman was beautiful, but, all I saw were the tops of cloud banks and an occasional oxygen molecule!

Coming down off Mt. Sherman is where the course got really interesting. The following hour was spent gingerly stepping from rock to rock and trying not to break my ankle for the umpteenth time. A new type of obstacle had started popping up. Snowfields on 60 degree slopes. The fields were about 200 to 400 yards wide and very steep and slippery. The snow was about 4 feet deep, so if you brake through the crust, you could expect to sink in up to your waist. I saw a guy slip on one of these slopes, slide down about 20 feet, and helplessly watch as one of his waterbottles slid further down the slope, over the edge and hurdle into 2,000 feet of empty space. (Reality check number 3!

After struggling through the rocks and snow for a while, I came up on a guy camped out just beyond Gemini Peak. He had a ham radio set-up with him, so I asked him if he was a race official. He said he was. "What mile point is this?", I asked. "This is mile point 13.8," he said. The last 8 tenths of a mile had taken me 65 minutes! (Reality check number 4!) Nothing to do but keep going, I guess. (Little did I know that the most difficult part of the course was yet to come!)

After another mile or so of steep rocky descent, I came to a section of trail (Hah!) where it was no longer possible just to walk from rock to rock. This was the "hand-assisted" section that was mentioned in the entry form. What the entry form failed to mention, however, was that on some sections of the rock the competitors literally has to climb hand-over-hand with their feet dangling in mid-air! There were 6 inch wide ledges to tip-toe along and 50 foot high boulders to shinny up and over. This race had ceased to be a running event and turned into a "survival of the fittest" course. And having to do this at nearly 14,000 feet made it a bit more strenuous!! I finally climbed/hiked over Mt. Evans and staggered down the hill toward the aid station at 17 miles.

Being at over 13,000 feet elevation for nearly 4 hours had definitely made me a bit light-headed and weak, so I was a little wobbly on the trail, but fortunately I was not feeling nauseated. I made it to the 17 mile aid station (elevation 13, 200') in 6 hour, 5 minutes. I descended the next three miles (2,000' down) to Lake Isabelle. It was at this point that the entry form had mentioned a "little 400' vertical side hike." So I headed up this very steep hill, (much steeper than Goat Hill in the Catalina West end 30K) and made it to the top thinking that there were no more bad uphill on the course. (Reality check number 5! --Wrong!) I rounded a bend just after the top of the hill and was confronted with another 200-300 ft. steep uphill that they didn't mention in the entry form. It was here that I finally lost my sense of humor. Muttering to myself all the way up the hill, I trudged into the last aid station at 21 miles in 7 hours and seven minutes.

I must say that the last 5 1/2 miles (the course was 26.6 miles long) downhill into town were actually quite pleasant, running through forests, along a railroad grade, and finishing in town where we had started. I even managed to run about 90% of the last 5 1/2 miles. I don't know where I got the strength; I guess it was knowing that the finish was near.

I finished in 8:09:47. 73rd overall out of 116. I had heard that the winning time was somewhere around 4 1/2-5 hours, but that seems hard to believe. The race officials were expecting some of the runners to be out there for over 12 hours. I would believe that. All in all, it was a pretty, uh, interesting day. If I've learned anything from this experience, it is that when the race entry form says "Possibly the hardest marathon on earth...", BELIEVE IT!

P.S. The heart rate monitor proved to be invaluable. I recommend using one for extended runs.

Editor's Note: Dave Covey is one of the club's two California residents, the other being Rick Jones.

The Polo Club 5K in Greenville - Greenville, DE
Contact: Marathon Sports
109 Ninth Street Plaza
Wilmington, DE 19801
302-654-6400

Oct. 18 Women's Run for Breast Cancer
Rockford Park, Wilmington, DE
Contact: Women's Sports Specialties
5335-B Limestone Rd
Wilmington, DE 19808
302-239-0838
Note: Women only race.

Oct. 24 Klondike Kate's 10K & 5K - Newark, DE
Contact: Klondike Kate's 5K & 10K
P.O. Box 7737
Newark, DE 19714

Run For Health First 5K - Paoli, PA
Contact: 647-2940

Oct. 25 Harrier's Harvest 5 Mile Run & 2 Mile Walk
Delcastle Recreation Area, New Castle, DE
Contact: Sports & Athletic Dept.
New Castle County
187-A Old Churchmans Road
New Castle, DE 19720

Marine Corps Marathon - Washington, D.C.
Contact: 703-6402225
703-640-2720

November 7 Collier's 10K Point-to-Point
Centerville to Wilmington, De
Contact: Marathon Sports
See Oct. 17 listing

Nov. 8 Run Wild at the Zoo 10K - Phila. Zoo
Contact: 243-1100 Ext. 237

Nov. 14 Delaware State Music Teachers Assoc. 5K Run/Walk
Wilmington, DE
Contact: Marathon Sports
See Oct. 17 listing

Nov. 15 California Dreamin' 12K - West River Drive
Contact: Pat Mc Closkey
Racing Resources
343-2407

YM/YWHA Fall Loop Race - Kelly Drive
Contact: Dave Brier
545-4400

Note: 20th Annual!!! Philly's oldest continuously
held road race.

- Nov. 21 19 Annual Turkey Trot 10K & 5K - Newark, DE
 Contact: Newark Parks & Recreation Dept.
 220 Elkton Rd
 Newark, DE 19700
 302-366-7036/7060
- Nov. 22 Marathon Sports 5K - Wilmington, DE
 Contact: Marathon Sports
 See Oct. 17 listing
- Nov. 26 Turkey Trot 5 Miler - Memorial Hall, Phila.
 Contact: 685-0051
- Bank of Delaware 10K & 5K - wilmingtion, DE
 Contact: Marathon Sports
 See Oct. 17 listing
- Nov. 28 Delaware Open Cross Country Championship 5K
 Brandywine Creek State Park
 Contact: Jim Walsh
 1507 Beech St.
 Wilmington, DE 19805
 302-658-5747

BIATHLONS

- Oct. 25 Naval Station Fall Classic Biathlon - Phila. Navy Yard
 Run: 2.5 miles, Bike: 12 miles, Run: 2.5 miles
 Contact: L & M Computerized Sports
 7 Westwood Dr.
 Mantua, NJ 08051
 609-468-0010

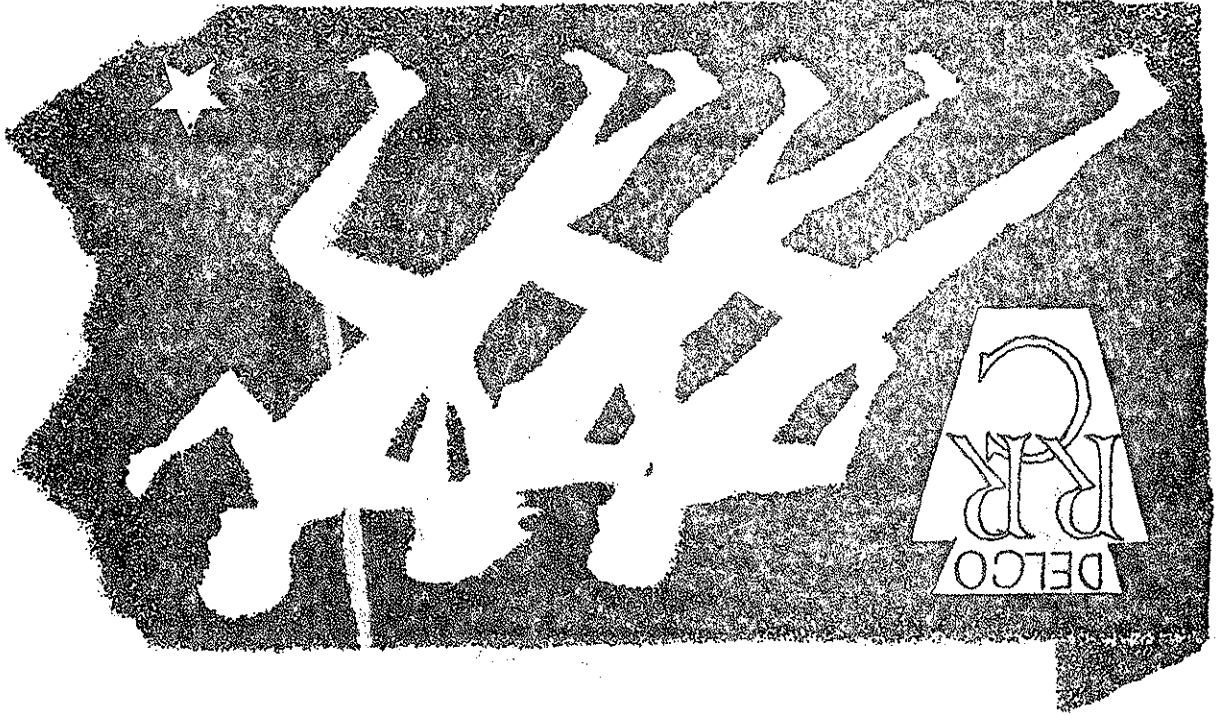
GOOD LUCK, JOHN!

Our best wishes go to John Shiffert of the Middle Atlantic Road Runners Club as he embarks on a new career direction. Those of you who are MARRC members know that John has been newsletter editor of MARRC's Running News for the better part of the last decade. John will be relocating from the Philadelphia area to Atlanta where he will be working on the 1996 Olympic Games. We'll miss his informative and entertaining stories about the running scene throughout the Delaware Valley, but we wish him all the best in his new job.

Taking over as vewsletter editor is none other than longtime MARRC president, Bob Fortunato who gets to wear two hats. Other key MARRC officers are Pat Barrett, Executive Director and Dave Brier, Race Director. all three are "long timers" on the Delaware Valley running scene.

MARRC serves as a clearinghouse, of sorts, for area runners, running clubs, and race directors. For more information on membership, Contact:

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