

RUNNING ON EMPTY

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Celebrity jogging in L. A.

Yes: celebrity jogging. That's the name of the latest fitness craze to sweep Los Angeles. It's a sport, or rather a hobby, that revolves around a simple format. You dress up in Spandex and grab a camera. Then you run around an exclusive shopping district hoping to spot someone famous. If you do, you take a photo. If you don't, you continue on your way, consoling yourself with the thought of burning off calories.

To the uninitiated, celebrity jogging combines two of the most distasteful aspects of American society. It panders to a vain obsession with trying to keep fit, and encourages a desire to invade the lives of celebrities. To aficionados, however, it's a strangely compelling pursuit. Celebrity joggers collect albums full of snaps like philatelists collect stamps. They learn preferred running routes, and become experts on the shopping habits of the famous. With luck, they also become fitter in the process.

Cheryl Anker is one of the sport's pioneers. Today, she makes a living by introducing paying students to the art of spotting famous people in and around LA. She conducts her classes in the streets close to Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. The area is, of course, America's luxury capital, containing a flagship outlet of every global fashion brand, distilled into a couple of square miles. It is probably most famous as the venue of that extravagant shopping trip by Julia Roberts (using Richard Gere's credit card) in *Pretty Woman*.

To Anker, it's a district laden with possibility due to its swish stores' typical patrons. A week ago, she bumped into the comedian George Lopez and his wife outside The Ivy. They'd just had a birthday lunch. She stopped jogging, chatted, and secured a series of knockout pics. Her greatest ever "spot", however, was Sidney Poitier. "I saw him through the window of Office Depot," she recalls. "He was doing some photocopying. So I ran in to get a proper look. The sales assistant told me he came there all the time, and let me ask if he would pose for me. Normally, I respect people's privacy when they're in a shop. But this was Sidney Poitier, a hero of mine".

This touches on one of the "ground rules" of celebrity jogging, revealed during Anker's briefing session to the 12 or so mostly middle-aged women who have signed up to her \$60 class: if you are inside a store, or on any other form of private property, taking pictures is forbidden. Security guards are liable to descend and "wipe" your camera equipment.

We will jog for roughly four miles. From time to time – particularly if we see someone famous – we will stop. We'll all wear matching lurid yellow T-shirts made from a special material that won't show up sweat patches in the 105F midday heat. Our itinerary passes through Louis Vuitton, Van Cleef & Arpels, and the Four Seasons Hotel, where staff look on, baffled. In Chanel, the party is delayed after one member gets stuck in the restrooms.

Outside The Ivy, on Robertson, meanwhile, we are further delayed by half a dozen real paparazzi hanging around the valet-parking booth. They won't reveal whom they're waiting for. Apparently, this is standard procedure: paps hate "amateurs" for undermining their lucrative market. The presence of just six of them suggests, however, that they're following a very minor star, possibly from the world of reality television.

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Returning to running after a brief layoff? A general rule of thumb is that it takes about two weeks of "retraining" to come back from every week in which you do no exercise. Go easy on yourself during this period. Don't let your ego convince you that you should immediately be able to run as you did before. If you've been off the roads for only a week or two, start at about half the distance you were running before the injury. You should be able to build back to your former level in two to four weeks

It's a funny old world, where people pay money to gawp at the rich and famous like animals in a zoo. But it does underline America's curious relationship with stardom – one that occasionally erupts, such as when surfers on a Malibu beach attacked photographers for stalking Matthew McConaughey in his swimming trunks.

The irony, of course, is that while Americans are often appalled by their feral paparazzi, plenty of them also carry People magazine in their handbag. They don't seem to register a connection, either: look at the OK-reading onlookers in the Malibu "pap rage" videos posted online.

And while LA venerates its celebrities, it isn't always as obsessed by them as you'd think. The celebrity-jogging community, for example, is worryingly thin on fame junkies. Instead, most are regular people like housewife Bonnie Keilband, who says: "I wouldn't recognise a celebrity if I tripped over one," but fancied a change from another Saturday walking her dog.

Anker's tour finishes outside the Sprinkles cupcake store on Santa Monica Boulevard, where she buys her weary, sweaty students a big cake, and hands them a "recovery pack" of fruit, water and energy bars. The morning, we realise, has successfully reflected what LA life is all about: trying to keep fit, scoffing junk food, and having a brief encounter with a passing celebrity.

Training tips - Tips for marathon preparation

1. Get a realistic goal time. Run a 5 kilometre race, every 4-6 weeks, and use a good prediction table. This time will allow you to predict your finish time, under ideal conditions, if you do the training necessary. Those who have run a marathon before can add 15 minutes to correct for less than perfect weather conditions, and another 15-20 minutes if your longest run was 25 kilometres or less. First-time marathoners should run the first 8 kilometres at a pace that is 1.15 min/km slower than the predicted ideal pace—then speed up as desired.

2. Run your long runs at least 1.15 min/km slower than the time predicted by the 5K. When the temperature rises above 17 degrees, add an additional 19 seconds per kilometre, and above 22 degrees, 37 seconds per kilometre and above 25 degrees, add 1.15 minutes per kilometre .

3. Put walk breaks into your long runs for dramatically faster recovery. Start the one min walks, from the first few minutes. If your goal marathon time is 6 hours, run 1 min/walk 1 min. Other goals: 5:30 (2-1), 5 hours (3 min run/1 min walk), 4:30 (4 min run/1 min walk), 4:00 (5-1), 3:30 (6-1), 3:15 (7-1).

4. Drink a few sips of water every mile unless you hear or feel water “sloshing” in your stomach, during training runs and the marathon itself. The various marathon organizations are recommending that the consumption of fluid be between 14 and 27 oz. per hour. If you are running at the rate of 3.125 kilometres an hour, for example, you would consume between 3 oz and about 5 oz a mile. A “sip” is about an ounce. Consider electrolytes in your water if you cramp.

5. Start long before sunrise on days when the starting temperature is expected to rise above 16 degrees. It is not uncommon for marathon training groups to start at 5 a.m. to avoid major heat stress and the radiant effect of the sun.

6. Build your long run to a maximum distance of at least 40 kilometres, for best preparation in avoiding “the wall” at the end of the marathon. Be sure to pace these long ones at least 1.15 min/km slower than a legitimate marathon goal pace.

7. Don't try to “push through pain” if you suspect that you have an injury. This will magnify the damage.

8. Treatment for a possible injury includes the following: 1) stop running for 3-5 days, 2) ice on the injured area, for 15 minutes every night, 3) stretch/nonstretch depending on the injury, 4) deep tissue massage may help a muscle injury, and 5) see a doctor or physiotherapist who wants to help you get back to your marathon training. Ask about anti-inflammatory medication and other treatments to speed recovery.

9. Take days off from running each week, down to 3 days—when fatigue lingers more than 3 days after a long run. The minimum necessary for maintaining conditioning between long runs is 30 minutes of walk-run, on two days between the weekend runs.

10. Add additional minutes to your predicted time, if the weather is above 16 degrees at start time.

Injury Tips - Preventing injuries

First things first: running is not an invitation to pain and injury. The fact that you enjoy pushing yourself, enjoy exploring the roads and trails around you, enjoy the simple act of motion -- this does not doom you to bad knees and shredded tendons, despite popular myth. Running is not a filthy habit. If you run strictly for fitness -- 30 minutes, three times a week -- you will probably never be injured except perhaps for some pesky shin splints when you're first starting out. Running is good for you; revel in your health and strength. When you begin to run beyond that level, however, you are running for performance. By definition, this means that you are pushing your body to its limit in order to get ever better results. You're redlining. If you keep it up, then eventually you'll probably stray beyond what you can handle. When that happens, your body inevitably cries uncle.

Never fear, with the proper care you can nurse your legs back to health. But learn from your injuries. It's not running per se that causes your body to break down; it's the amount or the manner in which you run. Let your injury be a caution, and adjust your routine so that it doesn't happen again. If you've gone and injured yourself, then we're afraid it's time for a dose of "Running on Empty's" own special brand of tough love. It's not easy to say, it can be even harder to hear, but it has to be said: you probably had it coming to you. Nine times out of ten, you've run too far, or too fast, or just plain too much. This injury didn't just happen to you; you've run yourself into the ground.

With that behind us, let's get down to the nitty-gritty of how you can keep this from happening again.

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Who's running hot, and who's not

Who's hot.....Jason Sim (again) for running three marathons in seven weeks. His last was the Gold Coast marathon which he completed in 2.50.

Other Gold Coast marathoners Andrew Evelyn (3.40), Francis Walsh (3.41), Brendan O'Brien (3.14) and pseudo BUAC member John McGrath (3.18). Josh Evelyn ran the half marathon in 1.37 and Addie Evelyn ran the 4km in 14.00.

All BUAC members who ran in the Glen Allen Memorial runs, including Michael Bieleny who finished second in the open male section.

Who's not..... Jana Rawlinson and Nathan Deakes suffering Olympic heartbreak.

Future events

Events in Victoria

28/04 - 22/09 - Athletics Victoria Winter Series 3.8-21km
10 run series in Melbourne, open to all levels of runner.

(www.athsvic.org.au)

27/05 - 09/12 - Sri Chinmoy Races 10-42km

(www.srichinmoyraces.org.au)

07/10 - Melbourne Marathon 10/21/42km

(www.melbournemarathon.com.au)

09/01 - 31/12 - Victorian Road Runners 5 - 21km

(www.home.vicnet.net.au/roadrun)

Cool Running Website

(www.coolrunning.com.au/calender/vic)

Local Events

02/08 Piepers Plunder (500m, 1, 4, 8km) - two four kilometre laps over a challenging course.

09/08 Kangaroo Flat Falter (500m, 1, 3, 8.2km) - a journey over to Kangaroo Flat for BUAC members who are used to the south-east side of town.

17/08 Keith Huddle (6.5km)

23/08 Cousins Street Clash (500m, 1, 4, 10km) - one for those who enjoy the longer distances. Great training for the BUAC half marathon.

30/08 Club Mystery Run (?) - who knows what this run will offer up in 2008. Lots of pain I bet!

06/09 BUAC Half Marathon - the big one.

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Feel free to make suggestions for our newsletter. Ideas, news and the little bit of idle gossip help to fill these pages. Contact Pat Kenny on 5442 3431, or email mpken1@bigpond.com with any ideas or information. The more you contribute, the better this newsletter can be.

Newsletter Classifieds

Wanted: Bulla yoghurt containers for drinking cups (those types supplied with the water, after our races). Must be Bulla types as they are plastic and can be washed repeatedly. See Gavin Fiedler.

Remember: Wayne Forbe's training group on a Wednesday night at Lake Weerona. See Wayne for details.

Presentation Night: Saturday, the 30th of August after the club mystery run. Mark it on your calendar.

Injury tips continued

No matter how good a runner you are, don't let yourself forget the cardinal rule of running: patience. Go easy whenever you're adding mileage or intensity to your program. While part of running is all about pushing your limits, you have to push them gently. If you try to rip through them, you're just as likely to do the same to a tendon. Let your brain dictate your program, not your ego.

You can do a lot to prevent injury simply by following a regular stretching program. Just a little light stretching before your run and fifteen minutes of stretching afterward will go far to keep your body from rebelling. Sure, fifteen minutes probably seems like a huge amount of time, but it's a small sacrifice for injury-free running. Don't forget to do some gentle running both before and after your run to help keep your muscles from tightening up on you.

Be sure that your shoes aren't worn out and that you have the right model. The modern running shoe has all kinds of high-falutin' gizmos to adjust for the natural structural flaws in just about any foot out there. That's great if you're wearing a shoe that's designed to correct the specific imbalance in your foot. But it can be bad if you're wearing a shoe designed for a completely different type of foot. The wrong shoe can actually aggravate existing problems, causing injuries in your feet, legs, knees or hips.

Be cautious when buying your shoes. Go to a specialty running shoe where you can be properly fitted, and replace them every 640 kilometres. If it turns out that you have biomechanically weak feet, you might also look into getting fitted for heel lifts or orthotics.

Now that you've got the right shoes, use them on the right surface. Avoid rock-hard surfaces like concrete sidewalks and aim instead for grass or dirt trails. The idea, of course, is to run where the ground will absorb more shock, instead of passing it along to your legs. Try to be consistent. A sudden change to a new running surface can itself be a cause of injury. Whatever you do, though, get off the concrete. It's approximately 10 times as hard as asphalt, and is easily the worst possible running surface. Runners World agrees, as evidenced by its ranking of surfaces on a scale of 1 (awful) to 10 (best):

Grass 9.5, Wood chips 9, Dirt 8, Cinder track 7.5, Track 7, Treadmill 6.5, Asphalt 6, Sand 4, Snow 2.5, Concrete 1, Red hot coals -1, Quicksand -3, Lava -20.

Media watch



"Show me the money!" BUAC member Chris Cullen enjoying his new job as an used football salesman.