

RUNNING ON EMPTY

The Newsletter of the Bendigo University Athletics Club

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Running in Iraq's "Green Zone"

Run in pairs, stay alert, do not run at night, do not venture off the beaten track...most of the advice from joggers running in Baghdad's heavily fortified "Green Zone" makes sense. The casually added "just watch for the mortars" does not. The risk of being blown up by mortar fire in what is also known as the IZ (International Zone), the most shelled 10 square kilometres in Baghdad, remains the same whether you are walking, driving or running (there is little you can do if one comes your way). While the roadways built in Saddam Hussein's gated city bear shell pockmarks, the number of people killed in the IZ has not been significant, not enough to deter the joggers.

The obstacles are rather more predictable, military traffic, helicopters, razor wire, armed guards and check points. The experience of jogging past Saddam's palaces, numerous monuments, the bombed Baath party headquarters, the riverfront villas where he housed his cronies, and the courthouse where he was tried and sentenced make it worth braving the annoyances. Favourite with Westerner joggers is Celebration Square, created by Saddam to mark Iraq's successes in its war with Iran. Centred around a large monument and the "crossed swords" parade ground, the area allows about a mile of running away from traffic and alongside fields, fountains and palm trees. The excesses of the despot are hard to avoid, the bullet-holed helmets of Iranian soldiers killed in the war embedded in the tarmac, the reviewing stand from which Saddam would glare at his troops on the parade ground, the stadium-sized Tomb of the Unknown Martyr, and the crossed swords monument.

Two women, who asked that their names not be published, said that the main problem with running in the Green Zone was that they had to put up with Iraqi men harassing them. "We always run with a guy," said one woman, a press affairs officer. "Men stop us all the time, it's very annoying." Regular joggers have tales of adventure. "I was running down the street with an air force officer when a mortar shell exploded near us," said an employee of the US embassy, identified as David. "We saw an Iraqi man run into a house so we followed. We found ourselves being stared at by a family of Iraqis. They wondered what we were doing in their house. We hadn't even realised there were families living in the IZ."

Embassy employees stick to a circular running route that tracks through the compound, then out along a road following the Tigris river which is hidden by towering blast walls, then down a leafy street and back into the compound. Every first Friday of the month some 200 people line up at 6:00 am (0300 GMT) for a five-kilometre race through the embassy complex, which is dominated by a palace built by Saddam. The route passes two giant busts of Saddam lying face down in the dirt plus a statue of him cast in bronze made to look like an Assyrian king. "Very few embassy staff run out of the IZ," said David while jogging onto the "July 14 Bridge" for a view of the Tigris and some relief from the never-ending blast walls.

Do not mention the possibility of leaving the beaten track and doing some exploring in the drab, dusty and grossly misnamed Green Zone. "The reason that people run the main routes is because it is dangerous to go off and explore the unbeaten path," said the second of the two women runners. "I would by no means consider the IZ a park to be explored by the curious runner. The object of running here is to run without getting hit by traffic, getting cut by concertina wire, falling over holes left by mortars and not gagging from the smells of burning trash, blowing sand, sewage and overflowing dumpsters."

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While you can't necessarily avoid stress, you should respect it. If you have a big training week ahead, try to plan ahead to minimize the other stressors in your life, thus optimizing your training. Be diligent to take care of yourself before and after your important training sessions. Make sacrifices. Do the little things necessary to be successful in your racing. If something does come up, like a long work day or sick child, be open to adjusting your program.

Training tips - dealing with boredom

Mind over matter

- Look around. Observe different colours when you run. Look for red one day, yellow the next. Look at the flowers or new green leaves in the spring. See how nature changes from day to day and season to season, and make it a point to notice one new thing every day.
- Listen. If you run near the ocean, listen to the roar of the waves. If you run by a playground, listen to sounds of children shouting and laughing. Concentrate on hearing the different sounds around you.
- Appreciate your run. Enjoy being outside. Many people are sitting inside watching sitcom repeats or Big Brother (ARGHHH!) as you experience the beauty of a good run.
- Count. How many houses do you run by on your regular loop or how many other runners do you see? Count your steps. See how many it takes to get you up that killer hill.
- Feel. Your body is an amazing machine. Feel your leg muscles propel your body forward.
- Visualize. Picture yourself running a marathon and crossing the finish line, or see yourself as a stronger runner after sticking to a certain schedule for two months. If you are trying to lose weight, visualize fitting into that outfit that's just a little too tight now.

Try something new

- When you look good, you feel good. Buy a new outfit or some new running shoes.
- Get out of town. Get in your car and drive until you find some place that looks appealing. Park your car and run.
- Go to a race, but don't run. Just watch. Learn the true meaning of motivation—like seeing a 75-year-old granny crossing the 10K finish line.
- Run with somebody. Join a group and run with them. You'll find new routes to run on and new people to run with.
- Or, if you usually run with somebody, run alone. Appreciate the solitude. Use this time to meditate and reflect on your life, job, relationships and well-being.
- Stop running. Every 10 minutes or half-hour or whenever you feel like it, walk briskly. Or, for a challenge, try sprinting at 15-minute intervals.

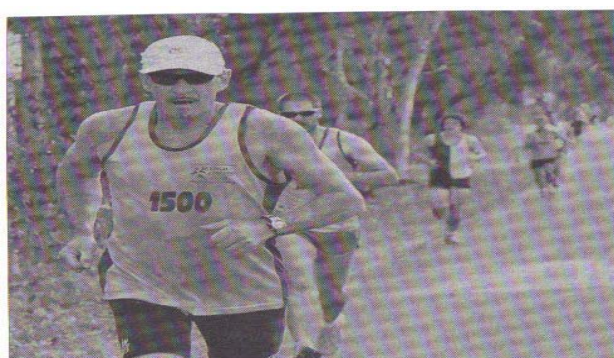
Have fun

- Play silly games like you did in the car as a kid. Try to spot out-of-state license plates or run by streets that start with each letter of the alphabet.
- Take someone running with you who has never run before. Inspire them by reminding them that you were once in their (running) shoes. This will help you to realize how far you have come since your first miles.
- Run somewhere that entertains you. Cities and parks often provide entertainment.

Stop!

- Just stop. Give yourself a break and try cycling, kickboxing, yoga or basketball for a while. Nothing is wrong with not running for a few days or a week or two. Once you take a little break, you will realize that you really miss running and will soon be back into the groove.

Media Watch



John Rose leads out a string of runners at a Bendigo Athletic Club run on a Sunday morning. The staff at "Running on Empty" are certain we could see the "Eye of the Tiger" if not for the shades.

Injury tips - blisters

A **blisters** or **bullae** is a defence mechanism of the human body. When the outer (epidermis) layer of the skin separates from the fibre layer (dermis), a pool of lymph and other bodily fluids collect between these layers while the skin re-grows from underneath. If a blister is associated with sub-dermal bleeding it will partially fill with blood, forming a blood blister. Blisters can be caused by chemical or physical injury. An example of chemical injury would be an allergic reaction. Physical injury can be caused by heat, frostbite, or friction. Blisters typically develop when there is friction and irritation to the surface layer of the skin that cause it to separate from the second layer. Fluid fills in the space between these two layers. Blisters most often appear on the soles of the feet and palms of the hands. The hands and feet often rub against shoes, socks, or sports and music equipment and create friction under moist, warm conditions perfect for blisters. Certain autoimmune diseases feature extensive blistering as one of their symptoms. These include pemphigus and pemphigoid. Blistering also occurs as part of food borne illness with vibrio vulnificus (seafood). The class of chemical weapons known as vesicants acts by causing blisters (often within the respiratory tract). Mustard gas and lewisite are examples of such agents.

Continued page four.

Who's running hot, and who's not

Who's hot... -Endurance demons David Meade and Jason Sim, who ran in the Great Ocean Road marathon. Dave finished fourth in 2.48.33 (Lee Troop finished fifth...slow coach), and Jason finished seventh in 2.58.46. Great efforts lads.

-All of the BUAC runners who ran at the South Bendigo Invitational. Congratulations to Bree Heiden, Lee McCullagh, Andrew Buchanan, Lisa Wilkinson, Jenny Buchanan and Dane Heiden for their age group, podium finishes.

-Dane Heiden for his walking exploits. Dane recently won the Under 14 Boys Victorian Country title. Apparently, he talks the talk, and walks the walk.

Who's not... -the people who set petrol prices.

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

14/06 - Rifle Range Rattle (500m, 1, 3, 8km) - great run around a suspicious military "no-go" zone. Intrigue and fitness in the one race.

21/06 - University Invitation (1, 3, 7.5km) - the BUACs day to shine. Runners and volunteers always needed. Followed by the mid-year night out, another opportunity for BUAC members to shine.

28/06 - Coliban Relays - A team relay race from Harcourt to Bendigo. Each leg varies in distance and contours. The BUAC or Athletics Bendigo may have teams entered this year.

05/07 - Junortoun Jog (500m, 1, 3, 8km) - nice run with sealed roads, bush tracks and not too many hills.

Bendigo University Athletics Club

Race Day Contacts:

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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 evening. Perfect for those wanting to improve their running.

Injury tips continued

Minimizing friction is the primary method of preventing blisters. Appropriate footwear, socks, and gloves for work involving frequent hand use will help reduce blisters. Ensuring that shoes are the right size and shape, and that socks are made from a synthetic blend is an effective way of reducing the occurrence of blisters. Other effective ways to reduce blisters is to apply petroleum jelly or talcum powder before exercising to reduce friction. Most blisters usually heal quickly without much additional treatment. If a blister is punctured, it forms an open wound, which should be disinfected and bandaged. Loose bandaging should be used since a bandage that is too tight can result in rupture or rubbing against the blister, causing discomfort. If the blister is broken, the excess skin should not be removed (unless it is dirty or torn). If the blister is infected, by removing the excess skin the wound may heal quickly - if immediately disinfected. Signs of infection include pus draining from the blister, very red or warm skin around the blister, and red streaks leading away from the blister.

Small unbroken blisters that do not cause discomfort can be left alone to heal, because the best protection against infection is a blister's own skin.

Media watch



The Walsh family preparing to do a bit of heavy duty exercising. Ruby looks like a young Nicole Kidman on the set of "BMX Bandits".



Andrew "Moe" Evelyn poses for a friendly group photo. Isn't that Rob de Castella at the front?