

Running on Empty

The Newsletter of the Bendigo University Athletics Club

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Oxfam 100km Trailwalker

BUAC member Pat Kenny recently completed the Oxfam 100km Trailwalker. After catching up on a bit of lost sleep, he was kind enough to prepare a piece on the event:

"On Good Friday (Friday April 6th), I was asked to fill in for a Melbourne based team that was competing in the Oxfam 100km Trailwalker event a few weeks later on Friday April 20th. At the time I jumped at the opportunity as it was an event that I had always wanted to try, and I knew that my cousin was competing and saw it as a chance at some friendly family competition. An hour or two after accepting the offer, I became concerned as the length of the event began to sink in. 100km is a long way, especially when it is through the hilly Dandenong Ranges.

My team was hoping to finish between 20-24 hours with a mixture of walking the hilly sections and running the flatter sections. I was lucky enough to have one training session with my team mates in Melbourne the weekend before the event where we were planning to run 10km and walk 20km. I wanted to make sure that they were people I could tolerate for a long period time under trying circumstances and that I wouldn't let them down. After seeing their running prowess over the 10km, I knew that walking would be the order of the day, but I was still very keen to participate.

The conditions at the start of the event were wet and windy, but that did not dampen the spirits of my new found three friends and I as we started on our adventure along with the other 753 teams participating. Little did we know that the same conditions were making the next 100kms of mostly dirt tracks slippery and muddy.

The first 50km were much of a blur as we made our way along the course. The route was well marked and there were checkpoints every 7 to 14km. The checkpoints were manned by volunteers, and had everything that you would require over the 100km including food, drinks, first aid, physiotherapists and podiatrists. You had to check in all four team members together before you were able to leave for the next part of the course. The beautiful scenery, excitement, daylight and the large groups of competitors along the course made things seem easy and time flew. We were flying along the course with a combination of running and walking. I felt that the running seemed to be using less energy than the walking.

We were all in good spirits and feeling strong until darkness descended and things began to change. No longer could you see the bush around you, the temperature dropped rapidly, the presence of other competitors on the course started to dramatically thin as the field started to spread, and our team started to run out of positive things to talk about as the Trailwalker started to bite. Most legs of the course would involve us arriving at each checkpoint individually, refuelling, waiting for the slowest team mate to arrive, and then leaving as a team along the next leg until we would separate again only a kilometre or so up the trail. Luckily I had my MP3 player so I could listen to the Fremantle versus St Kilda match. I found that the large amount of walking with my team was causing my gluteals, ITBs and hip flexors to tighten, so running a little ahead of them would reduce the tightness. I would then walk slowly until one team member caught me and then I would run again and repeat the process. Breaking the repetition of walking with some running seemed to keep me in good condition.

My team mates, and a lot of other competitors, started to struggle with large blisters, tiredness and fatigue. One section of the course around the 80km mark known as O'Shannassy's Aqueduct is particularly dangerous as you walk along a large aqueduct that is immediately on your left hand side for approximately 10km. It is very flat and boring and most people walk it from 2.00-7.00am where they are more inclined to fall asleep while trudging along and fall head first into the aqueduct. One team member pulled out of the walk around this point due to continuous vomiting and a stabbing knee pain that had begun to limit her ability to walk. This created a negative feeling amongst the team as she was quite distraught and we had a sense of abandoning her, but she couldn't go on and we had lost time.

The last 13km was a nightmare. My feet felt like every bone was broken, there were no other competitors to be seen, and all you could look at was a patch half a metre in front of you that was lit up by your headlamp. I decided to stay with my team mates as they had slowed considerably and one was struggling with fatigue. I would try to talk to her, but it was hard to chat as I was that tired it was difficult to form sentences. We were struggling, and the last 7km of the course is considered as the hardest.

As we left the last checkpoint to tackle the last 7km, one of my team mates started to cry. She was a fill in like me and the longest distance she had ever run or walked was the Melbourne City to Surf 14km only a few months ago. Her emotions were fluctuating from sorrow to determination to despair very quickly, and the massive hills made her condition worse.

Eventually we got to a section of the course where we could hear the loudspeakers and see the lights of the finish. We had around 2km to go and this really lifted our spirits. We stumbled the rest of the way with high spirits and finished in 21 hours and 59 minutes at 6.29am (104th out of 715 finishing teams). We were elated, but very tired and did not hang around the finish too long as we were bundled into cars and taken back to Melbourne. I had to get back to Bendigo by noon to watch my daughter play netball, which I fell asleep during.

Overall, it was a great test and a very well run event. It was more an adventure than a race, and raised funds for a worthwhile cause. I will definitely do it next year, so watch out BUAC members as I may tap you on the shoulder to join the team."

Late news

BUAC member Jason Fletcher also competed in the Melbourne Ironman. His results are as follows:

Swim 1:05:30 T1 0:05:37 Cycle 5:17:48 T2 0:01:56 Run 3:36:39

Total time 10:07:32

A great effort and a very handy marathon time for someone who had been exercising for six and a half hours previously. Congratulations.

Injury tips

Quadricep strains

A quadriceps strain is a tear in one of the quadriceps muscles at the front of the thigh. It can range from a mild discomfort to a full blown tear of most of the muscle.

Symptoms of a thigh strain

Quadriceps strains are graded 1,2 or 3 depending on severity.

Grade 1

- A twinge in the thigh is usually felt.
- A general feeling of tightness in the thigh.
- Mild discomfort on walking.
- Probably no swelling.
- Trying to straighten the knee against resistance may be uncomfortable.
- An area of local spasm may be felt at the site of the suspected tear.

Grade 2

- A sudden sharp pain when running, jumping or kicking.
- Unable to play on.

Pain affects walking.

The athlete may notice swelling or even mild bruising.

Pain on feeling the area of the tear.

Straightening the knee against resistance causes pain.

Unable to fully bend the knee

Grade 3

Sudden, severe pain in the thigh.

Unable to walk without the aid of crutches.

Bad swelling appearing immediately.

Bruising usually appears within 24 hours.

A static contraction will be painful and might produce a bulge in the muscle.

Expect to be out of competition for 6 to 12 weeks.

What is a Quadriceps strain?

The quadriceps muscles are the muscles on the front of the thigh. They consist of the Vastus lateralis, Vastus medialis, Vastus intermedius and the Rectus femoris. A strain is a tear in the muscle. These can range in severity, from a very small tear to a complete rupture.

Tears to the quadriceps muscles usually occur following an activity such as sprinting, jumping or kicking, especially if a thorough warm-up hasn't been undertaken. Any of these muscles can strain (or tear) but probably the most common is the Rectus femoris. This is because it is the only one of the four muscles which crosses both the hip and knee joints. This makes it more susceptible to injury. The most common site of injury is around the musculotendinous junction (where the muscle becomes tendon), just above the knee.

Injuries that occur following a direct impact to the muscle, such as being hit by a ball or other hard object, are more likely to be contusions and should be treated slightly differently.

Treatment for grade 1 quad strains

What can the athlete do about it?

Apply the R.I.C.E (rest, ice, compression, elevation) procedure for the first 24 hours.

Apply cold therapy as soon as possible and every 2-3 hours.

Use a compression bandage until you feel no pain.

Rest for at least 72 hours before commencing light training.

If there is no pain, continue with training.

See a sports injury professional.

What can a sports injury specialist do?

Use sports massage techniques to speed up recovery (very important).

Use ultrasound and electrical stimulation.

Prescribe a rehabilitation program.

Treatment for a grade 2 strain

What can the athlete do about it?

Use the R.I.C.E procedure as above.

Apply cold therapy straight away and every 2-3 hours for 48 hours.

Wear a compression bandage and rest with the leg elevated.

Use crutches if necessary.

See a sports injury specialist.

What can a sports injury specialist do?

Use sports massage techniques to speed up recovery (very important).

Use ultrasound and electrical stimulation.

Prescribe a rehabilitation program.

Treatment for a grade 3 thigh strain

What can the athlete do about it?

Stop play immediately.

Rest with the leg elevated, using a compression bandage.

Apply cold therapy immediately.

Seek medical attention. It is important you do this if you suspect a grade three strain. If you do not you may be permanently injured or weakened.

What can a sports injury specialist do?

Use sports massage techniques to speed up recovery (very important).

Use ultrasound and electrical stimulation.

Prescribe a rehabilitation program and monitor it.

Operate if needed (rare).

Training tips

Surviving your long runs

An important part of your training for longer distances such as marathons and half-marathons is your long runs. These runs are crucial to getting in physical shape for your upcoming race. They are also important to you mentally to know that you are well-trained and ready to take on the distance. Here are some tips to help you through your long runs.

First of all, you want to make sure that you are wearing the proper clothing. Wear running clothing made out of technical materials such as Cool-Max. These materials have moisture-wicking properties in them that will help keep you comfortable during your runs. They wick your sweat away from your body. This is important to keep you feeling dry as you run. This will help prevent chafing. Also, make sure that you are wearing moisture-wicking socks to prevent blisters.

Be smart when you run your longer distances. Remember to only increase your weekly mileage by 10% from one week to the next. You want to build up to your longer distances slowly to prevent injuries. Also, run your longer runs slower than your usual runs. When you first start running longer, it will take a lot of energy to stay out there. After your body gets used to the longer distances, you can work on running faster. But, it is true that slow and steady will win the race.

Make sure that you are staying hydrated during your longer runs. Drink 16 ounces of water about an hour before you head out. Then, stop drinking until you head out the door. At that time, drink about 4 ounces to get started. When you are out on your run, a good rule of thumb is to drink about 4-6 ounces of water every

30 minutes. If you are running for longer than 1½ hours, you should make one of your drinking stops a sports drink to replace the electrolytes that you will be losing.

Make sure that you are keeping up proper running form. Some runners, when they get tired, will start tensing up their shoulders, arms and hands. Make sure that you are staying loose. You can shake out your arms every so often to be sure to stay that way.

If you need to take a walking break - that's alright. In fact, many runners incorporate regular walking breaks into their runs. It rejuvenates them and helps get them through their long run. The important thing is to make sure that you can do the distance.

During your run, don't think of the mileage that you have left to do. Play mind games with yourself. I do this all the time. If you are running 15 miles and you've already run 5, don't think, "Gosh, I've still got 10 more to go". Instead, think, "wow, I'm already 1/3 of the way done". I know it sounds funny, but it does work.

Another mind game is to break your run up in chunks. If you are stopping every 3 or 4 miles for water, you can say, "Only 1 more mile until my water stop". These mental games may sound goofy, but believe me, they do help.

Who's hot, and who's not

Who's hot..... Congratulations to Brian "Briza" Watson who ran the Canberra marathon in April in a time of 2.59. Well done to Brian on breaking the 3 hour barrier. He's a wee ripper!

London calling! Marathon machines Jenny and Alan Buchanan have recently jetted over to Europe to run in the legendary London marathon. Consistent as always, Jenny finished in 3.34 with Alan in 3.48. Pseudo BUAC member John McGrath battled with injury during his preparation and clocked 4.04. Now it is time for the Buchanans to tour the Old Dart, similar to the Griswold's in "European Vacation".

Well done to our new BUAC committee. Without people on the committee, the club does not function so please help where you can. Many hands do make light work.

In the Geelong half marathon, the BUAC had two representatives with Rebecca Tweed running a 1.24 and finishing as the second female overall. Lisa Wilkinson ran a 1.35 and finished third in her age group. Great efforts in a race with large numbers from Geelong and Melbourne.

Andy Buchanan has a new girlfriend. Well done champ!

And last but not least, well done to Russell Tremayne who has qualified for the prestigious Hawaiian Ironman. This is something that Russell has worked hard for, so just reward. Congratulations.

Media watch



BUAC and triathlon club stalwart Kevin Walsh displays a pair of strong hands in his role as Sandhurst Football and Netball Club president. Go Slagheads!

Training groups

Join the long distance “Buchanan-McGrath Training Super Group” at The John Bomford Centre car park next to the Kennington Reservoir on a Thursday morning at 6.00am or a Sunday morning at 7.00am. For a bit of speed work, join the “Need for Speed” training group who meet at Lake Weerona on a Wednesday evening at 6.00pm. For those new to running, check out Jac Tremayne’s Triathlon Coaching Bendigo at www.tricoachbendigo.com.au.

Internet stuff

Visit “www.bendigouni.com” for all of your BUAC news, and join “Bendigo University Athletics Club - Uni Pride!” if you are a Facebook user. It’s better than listening to the wireless!

Race day contacts

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Feel free to make suggestions, or to submit information and pictures, to help fill these pages. Contact the editor, Pat Kenny by email on mpken1@bigpond.com with any information (preferably true but not a prerequisite).