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20K WISDOM

20K (12 1/2 miles) is a long way to travel by foot and offers plenty of opportunities for things to go wrong and if approached correctly, much to be thankful for. Here are some of the things I discovered at the end of a recent training run.

Do's

1) Carbo load

Whether it's a race or just a training run, it's still a 20K. So why should any dietary preparations that go into either runs be any different?

2) Carry water / gels

Don't discount the option of carrying fluids and gels if your distance warrants it. Or if you feel you're going to need it. Besides sustenance, this is an opportune time to try out various drinks and gels. Freeze some ice OK, we don't have that many choices here but you get my drift. Thankfully I got this right.

3) If you're running on a workday, run early...very early

I started my run at 5:30pm, intending to cover 25K in 2 1/2 hours. That would take me to 8pm and would be all right, if it was a Sunday. Being a working Saturday, I was fighting for road space with other vehicles. One car passed so close to me that if I reached out, I would've been able to give the car passenger a good tight slap. Running on the pavement along my training route is not an option as they resemble an airport runway that's just been cluster-bombed.

4) It's OK to stretch and walk

No one's gonna whip and scream at you (cue the sadistic Master Sergeant from Full Metal Jacket). If you feel a cramp coming, stretch. If all your muscles lock up, walk or slow down. Common sense and pain notwithstanding, you'll look as silly as someone on stilts if you continue to press on, when that happens. So just stop and have a short walk.

5) Look after your nipples

Nipples do get rubbed the wrong way. As unthinkable as it may seem, repetitive rubbing against your wet vest may cause severe pain during a long run and if you don't heed the warning signs (something quite impossible to ignore especially when your nipples feel like they're on fire) may result in some blood letting. Plaster them up.

6) Indulge in some mind games

Think "If I can complete this 20K, I can complete the Marathon", or get into a trance, or keep repeating a phrase, or pretend you're Paul Tergat, Khalid Khannouchi or Paula Radcliffe.

7) Watch out for oncoming traffic

Ummm...for obvious reasons unless you think running is an extreme sport (see Point 1 in the Don't list). Regardless of what time of the day you run, it's always a smart move to run against the traffic so that you can see the oncoming cars and observe if any shady characters are following you.

Don'ts

1) Saturday mornings are no-nos

Avoid doing your long runs on Saturday mornings, unless you're thinking of alleviating running into an extreme sport or moving alongside mad/drunk drivers and CO belching vehicles your idea of staying awake. Even then make sure your wills are all executed and secured. Don't forget to say goodbye to your loved ones before leaving the house...just in case.

2) Don't wear anything shiny/flashy

These may attract more than stray dogs. Felons may be prowling in the dark.

3) Don't get to close to fences

While I don't have anything against dogs (I kinda like the Jack Russell in Frazier), I wouldn't want to die of shock when



one crazed black Doberman (unseen in the darkness) launches himself at me from behind the fence when I least expect it.

4) Unless it's a public place and there are heavy human traffic, ditch the headphones / Walkmans

This advice is primarily for women: Despite the spate of sex crimes, there are still women who run in the dark with their headphones on. While it's nice to have Bon Jovi urging you along, you're also deaf to the world.

If 20K already presents these many learnings, I wonder what 42K will bring? The journey continues...

Jamie Pang

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