

## Experimentation

As September arrives, most of us should be hitting the higher distances on our long runs and weekly totals. This period of higher volume presents us with a great opportunity to begin (or continue) experimenting with many of the race day variables under our control, including: apparel, nutrition and hydration. The golden rule of distance races (and this applies to the full and half marathons) is: “nothing new on race day”. It’s much better to find out at the 25<sup>th</sup> kilometer of a training run that the new shorts you are wearing are chafing your legs, and the gel you thought you might like in fact tastes like potting soil. Thus it’s experimentation time!

### Apparel

All of your race-day apparel needs to be field-tested on at least one long training run to make sure it is comfortable and won’t chafe. Though it’s nice to shop at the race expo, any clothing bought race weekend needs to be washed and tested first. Use your long runs to also try anti-chafing agents like Body-glide or petroleum jelly in areas you know or suspect might chafe.

This is also a good time to purchase and break in the shoes you intend to use on race day. Ideally you want about 80 to 150 kms on the shoes and have completed at least one of your long runs in them (again, to make sure they are comfortable and won’t cause blisters). If you are a first-time marathoner, save the shoe laces from the pair that got you there! They make a great souvenir, long after the shoes have been relegated to garden duty.

### Nutrition

Long runs are the perfect time to experiment with your race day nutrition strategy. For the marathon and half alike, mid-flight re-fueling is recommended. There are many brands and flavors of energy gels, sport beans, and the like. Most deliver about 100 to 125 calories and 25 to 30 grams of carbohydrate. The frequency of consumption is what you need to experiment with, along with finding the right product that you can easily digest. Many folks can get by with 1 or 2 gels (or equivalent) over a 4 hour period. Others may need more frequent consumption. Experimentation is the only sure-fire way to find the right combination for you.

On an evening before a long run, it’s worth trying the pre-race meal you intend to eat to make sure it agrees with you the next morning. You can even time your long run departure to coincide with the same time of day that the race will start (9:00 AM for the marathon).

### Hydration:

As with nutrition, you will want to work on your fluid strategy. Try the sports drink to be used during the race on your long runs. For a first-timer you need to pay special attention to your hydration needs. A good starting point is roughly 16 to 24 ounces of fluid per hour (more if it’s warmer). It is recommended to start hydrating as soon as the run (or race) begins. If you wait until you are thirsty to drink, it’s usually too late, and you will remain dehydrated for the duration of the event (and your performance will suffer accordingly). Again, try this first in training before race day.

Good luck. And as always, send in any training questions you may have.

Happy Trails!  
Coach Jack