

Run Off-Road



Welcome

to this, the first edition of Run Off-Road, the all-new newsletter published by Trailguides to cater for the trail, fell, hill and mountain runner. In fact, if you shy away from the dreaded tarmac and run off-road then we are interested in what you do.

So what's the purpose of this publication. Well obviously to provide news and to promote Trailguides and it's various books and guides, we wouldn't insult your intelligence by pretending otherwise but at the same time if it was just about us you'd probably find it boring and wouldn't read it anyway. So the challenge for us then is to provide something that is interesting and is a good read in it's own right and that you, as runners, will want to see.

Have a look at the contents inside and you'll see a varied mix of articles and points of interest that will, hopefully, grab you and make you want to read further. Maybe enough to convince you that we have hit the ground running, so to speak, with our very first edition.

Please feel free to contact us by email and give your views on the content. Your views are always welcome and as this newsletter develops and evolves then it would make sense to have you, as the reader, involved in it.

Good reading



One of the most popular set of trail races in the north of England is set to continue this summer. The aptly-titled Wild Races are a series of three runs held in Durham, Cumbria and Northumberland during May, June and July respectively.

As the name suggests each of these races is held in a very scenic location with a variety of open countryside, moor and forest. The first race at Hamsterley Forest in County Durham is held on a mixture of forest and moorland tracks and paths while the Cumbrian race at Bowderdale traverses tracks over the open countryside on the lower slopes of the Howgills. The final race at Kielder is through the forest lining the shores of the largest man-made lake in Europe.

Over the years these races have built up a good reputation and consistently attract large fields of runners. In the past I've done a couple of the races and found them very enjoyable.

Dates and distances of the races are:

Race 1 May 17 Hamsterley Forest, County Durham

Distance 12 km +/-

Race 2 June 21 Bowderdale, Eden Valley, Cumbria

Distance 18 km +/-

Race 3 July 5 Kielder Forest, Northumberland

Distance 15 km +/-

The races are organised by All Terrain Events and further details and entry forms can be found on their website at www.allterrinevents.com

Photos. Above the open countryside of the Bowderdale race and below the forest tracks of Kielder.



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Views expressed in the articles within this newsletter reflect the views of the writers of these articles and do not necessarily reflect those views and opinions of Trailguides as an organisation. The suggested training regimes and coaching advice contained in this publication are exactly that, suggested. It is the reader's responsibility to judge their own level of fitness and whether they are capable of performing any of the said activities. **As with all outdoor activities, you and you alone are responsible for your safety and well being.**

TRAILGUIDES
WALK • BIKE • RUN 

Trailguides goes across the Irish Sea.

The Trailguides series of coaching booklets has received a firm endorsement from the Irish Mountain Runners Association with the purchase of a quantity of books to be used as prizes during the Association's Winter League and the forthcoming Leinster Summer League. This is not the first time that IMRA has used the books and in the past they have proved to be a popular prize especially for those who are new to the sport.

For more information on the Irish Mountain Runners Association see www.imra.ie

Reader's letters and emails.

Being the first issue there is obviously no reader's letters or emails. I did think of making some up but I always have the opinion that you can tell when they are a put-up job. However, after saying that we are always willing to print reader's comments and reply to questions. Both the email and postal address are on the Trailguides website.

GEAR REVIEW

By Stuart Ferguson

RAIDLIGHT – Trailrunner Short Sleeve Shirt

This top has a nice feel, looks good and comes in a variety of colours. It has a three fabric construction, mesh for ventilation, stretch for fit and breathable for performance.

There are four pockets, one of which I would like to have seen which a fixed closure to keep, for example, a key in. The pockets are easily accessible, with or without a bum bag, but with a back pack totally inaccessible.

This top is at home on long runs in hotter climbs or in a UK summer. It does, however, have a strange fit as I took a large and I am normally a standard medium. The collar annoyingly 'flops', possibly Raidlight should consider using the mesh fabric on the outside to give it more stability.

However these are small issues really, as this technical top is good to run in, performs well keeping you dry and cool, has a very good price tag and after many outings still looks as good as new.

Check out the Raidlight website www.raidlight.com.



Downhill Speed Sessions

By Keven Shevels

One of the ways to encourage a faster leg speed is to utilise the help of gravity to make you run just that little bit faster. The basic principle behind this one is that as you run downhill the force of gravity helps pull you down with the result that the legs have to move faster to keep up. There are more elaborate principles behind it but that basic one will do.

The only problem with off-road runners performing this type of speed work session is that they tend to get carried away with the length and steepness of the downhills. Steep and long downhills are often encountered during both trail and fell runs and so runners have the need to get accustomed to this kind of descent and should train for them with specific sessions planned at improving the required descending skills. However there can often be a degree of confusion between these two different types of downhill session with the result that the planned speed session often ends as more of a downhill skills session. The main problem here lies with the understanding of what the objectives of the session are and then adequately planning the structure of the session.

First and foremost the objective of the downhill speed session is to increase the ability to run faster and to do that, the mind must be focussed on speed and not let any skill aspects of downhill running intrude. The gradient of the hill must be very shallow, really no more than a five degree slope but ideally nearer to two degrees so that you can maintain a normal running action without having to make any adjustments to the running style such as altering the stride length or the movement pattern of the arms.

Again the emphasise is on speed and so there should be no rough ground during the rep. The running surface should be as smooth as possible so that you can maintain a high speed without having to slow down or alter pace to compensate for an unstable surface.

One further point to note is that the shock impact of running fast downhill can be severe and can, potentially, lead to injury. To minimise this always perform these downhill speed sessions on an even grassy surface such as a park or a playing field. And use shoes with a cushioned midsole such as



Slightly sloping parkland - the ideal venue for a downhill speed session.

those for road or trail rather than the more basic fell shoe with its thin midsole.

The repartition should not be too long, to be most effective it should be between 200 and 400 metres in length. The emphasis here is on speed, any longer and the rep starts moving into speed-endurance territory.

Any normal speed sessions of between 200 to 400 metres can be adapted for one of these downhill sessions. A typical session of 1 hour with 4.8 km effort could include the following.

- 12 x 400 metres or
- 3 x 4 x 400 metres,
- 15 x 300 metres,
- 2 x 12 x 200 metres,
- 2 x 6 x 300 metres.

Recovery. The intensity of these sessions will be high and therefore a full recovery needs to be taken in-between individual reps and also, where appropriate, between sets. The recovery/run ratio should be at a minimum 2/1 meaning that you take twice as long to recover as you do to run.

However don't feel constrained to twice the run time as the recovery, if you feel that you need extra time then take it. The whole principle behind any repartition work is maintaining consistency of effort and if your running

performance is slipping through not taking adequate recovery then there is not much point in carrying on. However a slow leisurely stroll or jog or walk back to the starting point should be sufficient.

Warm up. With high intensity sessions such as this, it is important to perform an adequate warm-up, preferably including dynamic exercises such as skipping, bounding and fast feet, to ensure that all muscle groups are warm and flexible enough to be ready for this high intensity work.

Tip.

Do what you used to do when playing football as a kid and use your jumper as the posts to mark the distance of the rep out, this will help ensure consistency of time and effort. While heading back on the recovery it will be worth going past the marker to turn round and then jog back to the start to give a running start rather than a standing start to the rep.



With the effect of running downhill these intervals can be more intensive than ordinary speed sessions so an adequate warm-up is essential.





**TERRAIN TRAINING
FOR
OFF-ROAD RUNNERS**

By
Stuart Ferguson



Terrain Training for Off-Road Runners Review

This book is one of a series of Guides in the course of publication by Trailguides. The author is a UK Athletics coach specialising in endurance running in the fells and mountains.

It's an interesting read for trail runners, particularly those who tend to stray off the trails and out into the open countryside. How many of us understand fully the nature of the flexible running style we should adopt to cope with the enormous variety of conditions underfoot that will be encountered? This book offers guidance on how we can run more effectively and minimise the risk of injury on a variety of treacherous surfaces. There is also advice on how to strengthen one's legs and ankles to cope with the stresses imposed by varied terrains.

The book should be of particular use to someone starting out on off-road running. It is the distillation of a lifetime's experience. Even an old hand like myself found it helpful to have such good sense so clearly expressed.

Of course I was aware that one should shorten one's stride in slippery conditions and endeavour to achieve level footplants but, having read it, I'm more likely to do it. I'm happy to recommend this book.

**Newsletter of the Trail Runners
Association Autumn 2008**

New Kid on the Tor

Over the last few years there has been a slow but steady increase in the number of mountain marathons on the annual calendar partially driven by the growth in the numbers of fell runners, orienteers, adventure racers and general outdoor people. This growth in events has seen marathons staged in the upland areas across the whole of the UK, from the Highlands to the Peak District, from Wales to the Lake District and all points in-between. However upto now there has been a distinct lack of races outside of these more traditional areas.

This all changes as from the 13-14th of June this year with a new kid on the block and the introduction of a new mountain marathon into the wilds of Dartmoor. It was over twenty years ago back in 1982, during the early days of the Karrimor Mountain Marathon, that the last time one of these events was held down in the South West and a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then. For a start, as we all know, the KIMM has been renamed and rebranded as the Original Mountain Marathon and equipment has become a lot more high-tech and sophisticated but the whole process of facing a challenge in the wilderness still remains and appeals to a growing number of devotees.

The Dartmoor National Park, the location of the event, is not noted for it's mountainous terrain, after all it does have only two summits over 2,000 feet, but this rugged landscape has been shaped over thousands of years to produce a complex mix of granite outcrops known as tors, wild moorland, mires and river valleys coupled with stands of ancient woodland. This is a wild land that has the potential to challenge the navigational and endurance ability of the most experienced mountain marathoner. That along with the history of myth and legend that permeates through this area could make this event stand-out among British marathons.

The Dartmoor Mountain Marathon or DMM is being organised along the traditional mountain

**Seen in an Up and Running shop an
OMM tee shirt with the logo**

"OMM 2008. You had to be there."

Says it all really !!

marathon lines of being a two-day test of endurance and navigational abilities with an overnight camp somewhere in the wild moors. As is customary all food, clothing and equipment that is required by the competitors has to be carried while running and navigating over the tough terrain within this national park.

As with most mountain marathon's the event is offering the five usual classes of competition, namely Elite, B, C, Long Score and Medium Score but one of the two things that make this event unique on the marathon calendar is the introduction, for the first time in a UK event, of a new class called Combi Score which combines a day of foot-based navigation with a day of navigating on mountain bike. However, for those who really like to pit themselves against a challenge the second unique feature of the DMM is that for the first time ever in any mountain marathon in this country, all classes will allow solo competitors as well as the normal teams of two. All other events restrict entry to solo competitors to a specific elite class only.

The event is being organised by Endurancelife in conjunction with the Dartmoor Search and Rescue Team Tavistock. Endurancelife is the fastest growing adventure sports company in the UK and hosts a full range of events from trail and ultra-trail running, off-road triathlon and mountain bike orienteering. With the addition of the DMM this makes their portfolio of events even stronger and with the promise of this challenging mountain marathon in the South West the number of devotees of this sport has got to keep growing.

For further details and to enter see the Endurancelife website at www.endurancelife.com

The Cross Border Relay

It's been many a year since the last bloody skirmish between English and Scots happened on Northumbrian soil but this bitter rivalry is all set to kick off again with the first Cross Border Relay Challenge in June. One of the few trail relays to be held in the country this four stage, twenty eight mile race will be held on the newly-opened Lakeside Trail that circles Kielder Reservoir in Northumberland.

Set in the heart of Kielder Forest, the reservoir is the largest man-made stretch of water in northern Europe and provides a scenic backdrop to this new event as does the remote North Tyne valley in which it is placed. One thing is guaranteed, no matter where you come in the race you'll enjoy the views.

The race is a four-stage relay requiring teams of four, either same sex or mixed with a minimum of two ladies. Further details can be found at www.allterrinevents.com



Kielder Water, the setting for the newest trail relay in the country. Photo courtesy of the Kielder Partnership.

The Secrets of Tapering

By Keven Shevels

All training is tiring and the secret of continuous training is getting the balance right between effort and recovery. Get it wrong and it is so easy to over-tire which can lead to weakness and injury. The same can be said for when you are competing in races, train at your normal levels all the way up to the day of the race and you will stand on the start line already feeling tired and not able to perform at your best.

Tapering-down is where training levels are gradually reduced in the weeks leading up to competition in order to reduce the strain on the body and help ensure that you are at your optimum fitness at the start of the race. This is most noticeable by a decrease in mileage although other factors such as the number of training sessions and the intensity of those sessions can also be manipulated. The training style and physical constitution of the individual runner is also of considerable significance as athletes do adapt to training at different rates and this will have an effect on the structure and duration of the taper period. The ideal taper will vary from runner to runner.

Despite this complex nature tapering is well worth investing in. It is one of these activities that wouldn't produce any additional fitness gains but it does let you take the best advantage of all the hard work committed into the training. By providing additional rest, tapering will eliminate fatigue and microscopic muscle damage that has been caused by hard training thus giving you time to recover and heal. By contrast, as the benefits of a training session don't really materialise until two weeks after that session then there does seem to be little benefit in working hard right up to the race day.

Other benefits also accrue from this taper or resting period including a replenishment of the glycogen



Reducing the amount that you run in the period leading up to a race can improve your time but is it as simple as that or are there other factors to consider as well ???

stores and rehydration. From the physiological point of view there will be an increase in blood plasma which is essential for hydration and sweating, the red-blood cell numbers will increase enabling more oxygen to be transported to the muscles and there will also be an increase in the enzyme activity within the leg muscles which will improve the muscle's ability to use oxygen.

This cutting back in activity helps both your body and just as importantly your mind to be rested and ready for the race. Tapering is the final touch to any successful training program as it comprises the time when the body is resting and absorbing all the hard work performed previously and, if done correctly, by the time race day comes around you should be just itching to be out there running.

So what factors count towards determining this ideal tapering period.

Volume

Reducing the amount that you run has an immediate impact on reducing the accumulated fatigue produced by training and will improve race performance. However reducing by too much can create the feeling of sluggishness and lack of fitness within the runner which can be counterproductive. There are a couple of ways of reducing the mileage during the taper period. The most common and the one that has proved most effective in practice is one where the training load is reduced exponentially with the mileage reducing more and more as the taper progresses. As an example, during the first week of the taper the volume would be reduced by 10% of the maximum training week, in the second week of the taper the reduction would be 30% and then in the final week before the event reduce the mileage by 60%. A number of runners have reported successful tapers after having reduced their volume in the final week down to as low as 20%.

Length of the taper period.

There is no hard and fast rules over the length of the taper period as there are many variables that relate to the individual athlete. Successful results have come from periods as long as twenty-eight days and also from as short as two, however, one constant that is recognised is that the longer the distance of the race then the longer the period of the taper with events of marathon distance requiring a wind down of at least three weeks.

Generally the more highly trained runner who performs a greater number of training sessions per



Ensure that you continue to maintain the “feel” for running over rough ground by retaining these sessions within your training program.

week needs a relatively longer taper period than the more recreational runner. Similarly runners with a bigger build and more muscle mass also need a longer taper than those who have a slighter frame. Evidence does suggest that the smaller frame runner can successfully taper over as short a period as ten days for events that exceed an hour in length.

There also appears to be a gender difference as well with men tending to require a longer taper than women. This may relate to the relative muscle mass between the two sexes but there may also be a link to the relative intensity and volume of work-outs performed by the male and female runner. Tapers that are too short do not give sufficient time to reap the benefits of the hard training that have preceded it while tapering for too long can lead to loss of fitness. However when deciding the length of your taper it is always best to err on the side of caution. The benefits of any individual work-out will give less than a one percent improvement in fitness whereas the benefits of a balanced rest period can improve race performance much more.

Determining the length of a taper program is one of the trickier parts of implementing a taper as there are a number of variances relating to the individual. As a general guideline the following can be followed and then from personal experience this can then be fine-tuned:

3 to 8 miles then a period of seven to ten days.

8 to 16 miles a period of ten to twenty days.

16 miles to 30 miles a period of ten to thirty days.

30 miles and above a period of fifteen to thirty days.

Frequency.

Frequency relates to the number of training sessions the athlete performs a week, effectively the number of times that they run. As with the length of the taper there appears to be a divergence between the highly trained runner and those who train less intensively. Those that have a high number of training sessions per week tend to report a detraining effect and a certain "sluggishness" when embarking on a taper period. This is normally rectified by keeping the frequency of the sessions quite high usually at around 80%. In effect, only reducing the number of the training sessions by



Despite the reduction in mileage the intensity of speedwork should be maintained in order to prevent a loss in the neuromuscular coordination developed during training.

20% BUT reducing the mileage within those sessions by a much higher percentage. For those that use a less intensive training regime then it is possible to cut the number of individual work-outs by between one-third and a half without suffering the detraining or sluggishness.

One aspect of fell and trail running that does need to be borne in mind is the technique element of running over uneven ground. To a large extent the training of this is performed by repartition, repeatedly running over the appropriate terrain to train the bodies neuromusculature and movement patterns. Cutting back on training can also reduce the terrain training effect making the runner lose the "feel" of running over rough ground. This strengthens the argument for keeping the number of sessions relatively high, compared to a road runner, but just reducing the mileage within those sessions. Although the terrain aspect should be maintained, strength and energy sapping hill work should be reduced with the terrain training being performed over flatter surfaces.

Intensity.

One aspect of their training that most runners do cut back on as race day approaches is speedwork which can be a mistake. For a competitive runner there are two main factors of training, endurance and speed. The development of endurance is a long term gain with optimum performance coming from a long background of training that can reach back over years. Speed, on the other hand, is a relatively short-term gain with results often being achieved even after a short injection of speed training. The reverse also applies with endurance performance deteriorating over a lengthy period but the ability to run fast being lost fairly quickly after a cessation in speed work.

The intensity of speedwork should not be cut during the taper period, staying speedy will ensure the maintenance of the neuromuscular coordination and keep the runner fit enough to run fast. The number of individual reps or intervals in a session can be reduced in line with the overall reduction in mileage but keep the intensity or speed of those runs as high as pre-taper.

So what other aspects of tapering need to be considered.

1. Remember that tapering is only as good as the training beforehand. The best taper in the world wouldn't work if you haven't done the preceding hard work but evidence shows that if the work is done then an effective taper program can give a three percent improvement in race performance.
2. Be aware of other non-running activities during the taper period. Using the "extra" time resulting from reduced training to do hard manual work will be counterproductive and will make you just as tired. Make sleep a high priority as well and try and reduce stress and anxiety levels.
3. Watch the food intake. Less running means less calories consumed so unless intake is reduced then weight gain is a strong possibility.
4. Consider taking a day off from training the day before the race.
5. Resist the urge to run too fast during the steady runs performed during the taper period. Speed should be no faster than the pace where you can comfortably talk while running.
6. Consider the possibility of using swimming or another form of low impact cross-training activity to replace some of your running sessions during the taper. However remember to keep all activity relatively gentle.
7. During a tapering program no strength training such as working with static weights should be completed. Strength training should be focussed to the early parts of your training program.
8. Stay relaxed. The reduction in activity during the taper period can often cause anxiety and nervous energy.
9. Keep to your normal routine during the taper including warming up and down and also stretching.

New Publications for 2009.

Trailguides have a number of new publications planned for 2009 that are aimed at the fell and trail runner .

As a continuation of their "Coaching Off-Road Running" series two new booklets will be released during the course of the year, "Speed Training for Off-Road Runners" during summer and "Strength and Conditioning for Off-Road Runners" towards the end of the year.

Speed Training as the title suggests will cover all aspects of improving a runner's speed from the principles of why speed sessions work to how to construct a speed session and just as importantly how to balance a speed session to suit the specific needs of the fell and trail runner. As well as the theoretical aspects of this type of training the text will also cover practical examples and will include the outline of a number of suitable sessions that will put the buzz into your running.

Strength and Conditioning will come into its own during the winter months when the hard work starts in preparation for the next season's racing. Topics will include how strength is relevant to off-road running, how to gain strength through weights and circuit training, the advantages of plyometric training, cross training, combined training and balancing strength training with the demands of running. As per usual with these booklets not only will the theory be discussed but the text will also include numerous practical examples and suggested training regimes.

In addition to these two booklets a new range of products will also be launched during the summer focussing on specific races. In essence, a combined training plan and diary, these publications will each look at a particular event and examine the needs of the runner in terms of strength, endurance, skill and speed in order to complete the race and will then present a twelve-week training plan to achieve these goals alongside a diary where the runner can record their training and performance.

Although the names of the individual races planned for the initial release is still being kept under wraps this series should, in time, evolve to cover the majority of all the major trail and fell races in the country.

The Badger Series

The popular midweek Badger Set Trail Run series is once again being held in Lancashire this summer. The series of races is used as a fund-raiser for the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and covers four races held in May, June, July and August. As a novel feature of the series there continues to be a corporate trophy for teams from the same workplace with the team of three to consist of one male, one female and one veteran over forty either male or female.

The route of the races is over a scenic 10k course within Cuerden Valley Park and runners are promised the full rural experience including all the sights and smells of the countryside. The course consists of a mixture of tarmac and trails with the added interest of kissing gates, steps and footbridges thrown in just to break your stride. And that's not to mention an uphill run through a cow field foot placement here will tend to be important !!

All the races start at 7:30 pm and the dates are
Thursday 14 May
Thursday 18 June
Thursday 16 July
Thursday 13 August.

For more information contact Clare Kenny on
01772 324129 or email at
ckenny@lancswt.org.uk

