

HOW TO WASTE A MILE

"It takes me a mile to warm up and get into the race" How many times have you heard this or even said it yourself? More than once I suspect! The first question you should ask is why waste the first mile of a race that you may have prepared for for many weeks "warming up"? You also should be looking for the answer of why this happens and begin to understand how you can prevent getting into major oxygen debt early on in your race?

One major factor that needs to be understood is that the aerobic system, being a highly complex one, takes time to be fully functional. This can be up to two minutes and is the reason that at the start of an endurance race you probably notice almost everyone is breathing hard. Again in the simplest of terms, at this stage the anaerobic (without oxygen) system is prevalent as the aerobic (with oxygen) system makes ready. Running for up to two minutes anaerobically will inevitably mean that high concentrations of lactic are being produced. This will have negative effects on performance which may continue throughout the race regardless of its length.

Now that we understand this basic premise, what can be done to prepare the body more effectively for every race? Obviously if you want to get the best out of your race, and this certainly applies at any level, you need to prepare for the event both physically and mentally by warming up correctly.

Create a warm up procedure and use it!

Some people will have some individualities that they might want to add to their warm up routine however getting the basic structure right is important before adding the cherries on the top. The following warm up procedure can be used as the basic plan for anything up to around 10 miles. Your training preparation and experience will obviously influence the intensity. If you are tackling, a longer distance event you will no doubt build in an element of energy conservation into the warm up process however some form of activation and preparation is still obligatory.

What happens when you warm up?

- Muscle Temperature is increased — the temperature increases within muscles that are used during a warm-up routine and will contract more powerfully and relax more rapidly.
- Increased Body Temperature — an increase in temperature means that muscle elasticity is improved. It will also reduce the risk of strains and pulls.
- Blood Vessels Dilate — blood flow resistance is decreased and hence lower stress is placed on the heart.
- Efficient Cooling is improved — a thorough warm up will activate the heat-dissipation mechanisms in the body (and so producing sweat) you cool efficiently and help prevent overheating early in the race. An essential thought for those who think they don't need to warm up on warm or hot day!

- Increased Blood Temperature —blood temperature rises as it travels through the muscles. A raised blood temperature weakens the binding of oxygen to haemoglobin so oxygen is more readily available to the working muscles. The aerobic system is nearer to fully functioning!
- Improved Range of Motion — the range of motion around joints is improved.
- Hormonal Changes — your body increases its production of various hormones responsible for regulating energy production.
- Increased mental focus — concentrating on your warm up will also help to mentally prepare and increase focus on your race plan.

You can design, perhaps with the aid of an experienced coach, your own specific warm up routine however below is my recommended basic warm up. I suggest that you underpin your pre-race preparation with the thought that those that warm up properly will inevitably perform better as they will be both physically and mentally prepared to race.

Suggested warm up

Whatever the level of race that you are taking part in you should be beginning your warm up at least 40 minutes prior to your race start time no matter what the distance unless it is half marathon and above where some energy conservation can be kept in mind. You should NOT warm up just wearing your race kit even if it's very warm. Consider using very light clothing if it's very hot. Once you are warm, this extra clothing will help keep the muscles warm. You should be looking to shed this as late as possible. Remember also to build in time for going to the toilet and be aware of potential queue time. Your toilet breaks are in addition to the 40 minutes of warm up.

Remember to start the below at least 40 minutes prior to your race

- Easy jogging/running for 15-20 minutes
- Full warm up routine as previously rehearsed including mobility drills.
- Run 2 x 30 seconds at approximate starting race pace with 30-40 seconds walk/jog recovery.
- Easy jogging/running for 2-3 minutes
- Repeat the above 2 x 30 seconds, again 30-40 seconds walk/jog recovery
- This should take you to around 10 minutes before your race.
- During this time keep moving to keep heart rate up.
- Commence 3-4 x 50 metres quick strides
- Keep moving and/or jogging on the spot until you are ready to start.
- Remember that standing about and chatting does not constitute keeping moving!

If you have warmed-up appropriately, by the time you are in your race kit, you should feel slightly sweaty and your heart-beat should be slightly raised.

You are now ready to race. Good luck!

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