

Coaching Column, part 2

by Geoff Ellis BOK/RAFO

RACE PREPARATION

"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail," *Benjamin Franklin*

Race preparation is a discipline in 'controlling the controllable' and putting you in the best mental and physical condition possible. There will always be elements of a race that will be outside the control of the competitor. The ability to deal with the unusual or unexpected is facilitated by preparing effectively. The extent and type of preparation will vary between individuals, therefore the preparation is, and must be, specific to each individual. Whilst recognising this fact, there are common themes and the preparation for races should be applied to training events and to target races with specific goals to develop consistency and maintain control.



Geoff Ellis RAFO & BOK at British Sprint Championships Finals in Olympic Park.

Administration covers all the aspects from event choice, to entry, travel and accommodation. The choice of events and courses will be determined by the target races selected for the year. Entering early confirms the commitment to that event and aids in the other areas of administration. Travel arrangements, including the journey time and route should be considered before setting off to ensure that adequate time is allowed and to relieve the stress of route-finding on the fly. Administrative aspects are easy to control and should therefore be one area that does not cause concern.

Tapering is a term used to describe the reduction in training prior to a target race. The amount of Taper required depends on the individual, but the nature of the taper is important. The aim is to reach race day fresh and sharp. If the Taper is too long there will be a dulling of ability, whilst if the Taper is too short the competitor will be fatigued at the start line.

A common misnomer is that hard sessions should be avoided in the period (week) before the race. Be consistent with the intensity of the training. This keeps the sharpness. To prevent getting to the start line fatigued reduce session duration. Perhaps do a hard 5km instead of 10km, or 50% of the intervals sessions, whilst still retaining the quality, but avoiding hard sessions in the 48 hours before the race.

Hydration is important if we are to optimise performance. The most basic solution is to drink water but give consideration to the weather, in particular temperature and humidity, and the provision, or not, of drinks points on the courses to help determine quantity. It is generally accepted that it is best to drink little and often before a race and that it is necessary to replace fluid afterwards. For hydration during the race there is the choice of relying on drinks points or taking fluid with you. Another option is to use a sports drink which has been designed to replenish fluid, salts and minerals, and in some cases carbohydrate as rapidly as possible. There are many offerings available and it is important to understand which product works for you.

Hydration issues can start before the day of the race with consumption of diuretics. Tea, coffee and alcohol can all compound the hydration problem.

Nutrition is also important. On a daily basis balanced healthy eating will suffice but it is important to understand how long before we race we can eat. Eating too long before the race may result in energy depletion in the latter stages, whilst too close to the start may cause discomfort when running. There are also energy gels and bars that are designed for easy consumption that will replace energy whilst racing, keeping you competitive. An example of when to take them is given.

After the race food needs to be put back into the body to aid recovery and ensure the body is conditioned for racing the following day – particularly important at multi-day events. For those who find it difficult to eat straight after racing there are a

Time of Gel 1	Time of Gel 2	Time of Gel 3 (Carried) Race 70-120 min	Time of Gel 4 (Carried) Race > 120 min
start -30min	start -5min	~60min post Start	100min post Start

variety of products available as drinks which help overcome this problem. These also assist with the rehydration effort.

Routine for the lead up to the race and the race itself develops consistency and enhances overall performance. Individual routines can vary wildly. Other team mates / family need to respect your routine and you theirs. It is perfectly acceptable to go into isolation in preparation for your race; the race is important.

An example of a routine is provided, without the full detail of the routine around which it is based.

For all the Race Preparation ideas discussed it is important to determine in training, or a non-goal race, what works best for you and then to take it into a race situation.

Time to Start	Activity
2 hours	Arrive at event, meet and greet, visit shops
1 hour	Start of routine. Withdraw to personal area. Assemble orienteering equipment. Get changed into orienteering kit.
45 minutes	Check clothing, compass, dibber, CD holder.
30 minutes	Head off to start and initiate warm up
5 minutes	Be at start, clear dibber and relax
0 minutes	Go

CompassSport

Orienteering Magazine

Published six times a year.

SUBSCRIPTIONS address:
 subscriptions@CompassSport.co.uk
 COMPASSSPORT SUBSCRIPTIONS
 85 Deacon Road
 Kingston Upon Thames
 KT2 6LS