

### July blog update – *learning how to run long*

Hi everyone! Hope your training is going really well. As I begin to write this on the 21st June, it's the shortest day of the year, which means as of tomorrow the mornings and evenings will gradually start to get less dark and miserable! I quite like the cold but getting home from work in the dark every day is a real drag. Lucky I have a top notch head lamp for early morning weekend adventures!

The last few weeks have been all about...

- getting my nutrition sorted
- learning to pace myself better
- studying the course from afar
- setting up my fundraising page for One in Five

This month I ventured out in some crazy cold, windy and dark conditions'... with snow forecast above 700 metres in the mountains, I didn't venture too far up the hill, but the trail I was on at 450m elevation was still damn cold! It was one of those days where the RFS and SES advise the public to 're-think outdoor activities'... but this spot was relatively sheltered, well populated and we felt this was a pretty safe choice. However, it's the first time I've got out of the car and been seriously worried that I had not brought enough warm clothes. I'm a shorts and t-shirt girl almost year round but even with an additional thermal top and another long sleeve, gloves and 2 buffs, it took a long time to warm up! Still, this was a really nice run; I was lucky enough to introduce another lady to trail running and she absolutely loved it. Another friend joined us too, and we clocked up 23km before breakfast.

This run was only a few days after a big adventure where I ran the Woodford Oaks trail; a 27km undulating fire trail that's done as a point-to-point by catching the train to the start. I'd never done the full length of this before, so set aside some time to take it realllly easy, and just enjoy a good 4+ hours on my feet. I ended up doing 33km as I went exploring on side trails, but the whole aim of this run was to start getting my nutrition and pacing dialled in.

I am guilty of having one comfortable pace, which on the road equates to about 6 minute k's and although I like to think this is my 'go all day' pace, in reality it is way too fast for serious endurance training. Putting my ego to the side has been challenging - everyone likes to feel like they are keeping up with the Jones's on Strava but all evidence is pointing to the contrary: I need to just slow the F down in order to become a better runner! My slow runs are probably not slow enough, and my fast runs not fast enough, so I hang out in that grey zone in the middle a lot. I'm in some Facebook groups where there are some fantastic runners and generous coaches with great advice and guidance, and although I accept in theory that I need to polarise my training a lot more, it sure can be hard in practice, especially on a beautiful flowy single track where you really want to take the brakes off a bit!

So, my goal for this long run was to try and keep my heart rate under 150 and breathe through my nose as much as I could so that I could be sure it was a legitimately easy effort. I tend to hover around that heart rate at the start of any run and slowly up the effort subconsciously, so that by the end my pace hasn't increased yet my HR is now closer to 170 or more. This happens on nearly every damn run - old habits die



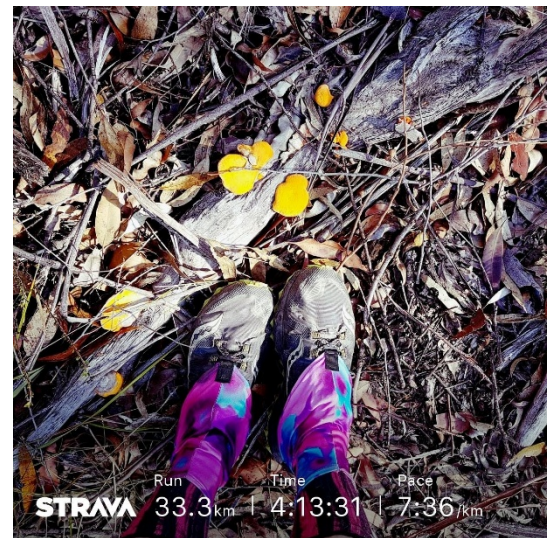
hard! Half my problem is that it often feels really easy - I can nose breathe pretty easily until my HR hits about 165, so in my head, this is still 'really easy'. I get that heart rate isn't the be all and end all but I like to keep an interested eye on it. During this long run on the Oaks trail, I walked every hill, stopped to take a few photos and felt fine in the legs the whole time. Afterwards, I had no pain or stiffness - actually less than other times - and thought the next day that I'd be right to do another long run almost straight away. Even though I hadn't actually been very successful in keeping my HR under control, I felt fine so I was fine, right?



Well, that very cold and windy run I mentioned earlier was just a couple of days later, and I found it a bit tough from the get go. My new-to-trails friend was a bit speedier than me but I hung on to the pace as the conversation was good. But, by the back third of this run my calves were screaming and any attempt at 'easy' was out the window. I'd pushed way too hard and was probably still carrying some fatigue in my legs from the previous adventure. To top it off, I've been out of action with a cold this week too so clearly my body wasn't 100% to begin with.

It's a hard thing to learn, pacing: I guess this is where a coach would be useful, or perhaps I just need to work on my self-control! :) Self-control also means passing up some runs with friends because I know I'm going to push the pace too much and it is more sensible for me to go solo.

Another thing I've been working on is fuelling; I'm usually the one with a whole picnic of snacks in my pack - sandwiches, lollies, shot blos, gels, chips, electrolyte, water... sometimes pancakes... but I'm trying to find a more efficient, predictable and compact fuel that will keep me going for a huge day out - although I'll probably still end up packing a picnic just in case! :)



I've used Tailwind a lot before but usually in conjunction with other things and I've never been that exact when I measure it out. The last few times I've been more exact with mixing and am finding it is working really well for me. Curiously I find it works much better in cold weather; in summer I like to have a lot of plain water on me and Shotz electrolyte mixed up separately in quite a strong concentration which tends to keep the post-run headaches at bay as I must sweat a lot more in the heat.

There's certainly not a heat problem here at the moment though - it's the cold that can be challenging! When I have had rest days recently (a.k.a. sleeping through the 4.30am alarm), I've spent some time using Google Earth to stalk the course which is giving me a fantastic insight into the type of terrain - and magic scenery! - to expect come race day.

The final thing I've done over the last couple of weeks is get on board with the official charity partner One in Five, setting up my fundraising page and sharing it with my friends and work colleagues. I've never done much fundraising before and to be honest I was considering supporting another charity, the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, who are helping protect the Blue Mountains wild rivers and nearby Gardens of Stone special areas, however mental health is such a far reaching universal cause that I have decided to try and raise \$1000 for One in Five. [Here's my supporter page if you can spare some change...](#) or if you're taking part in the event too, why not set up your own page to support the official charities One in Five or Sanfilippo Children's Foundation - [more info on the Surf Coast site here.](#)

Hope everyone is travelling ok with their training - remember to hold on to the joy of running and not get bogged down in the hard slog of training. It's a beautiful thing to have legs that can carry you through the landscape and lungs to breathe the fresh air and sometimes that can be enough.

'Til next time, run happy!

**Leonie**