

Red Cross-Herald Sun Murray Marathon Paddlers Guide

Preparing For The Marathon

Preparation (and plenty of it) is the key to a successful and enjoyable Marathon. Those paddlers who undertake appropriate and sensible training and plan their participation have fewer injuries and achieve greater results than those who don't.

The preparation and care in the following pages applies equally to land crews and officials. We are no use to our paddlers if we don't look after ourselves.

Training

ADEQUATE PREPARATION is necessary to complete the five-day journey.

The training should start at a gentle pace early in the year, leading up to more intensive work just before the Marathon.

Good technique improves your speed, conserves energy, and reduces the possibility of injury. Training is needed to develop:

- Whole body fitness eg swimming, running and aerobics
- Increased heart and lung fitness and endurance
- Increased muscle strength
- Flexibility (Stretching and strengthening exercises)
- Specific paddling skills

All of the above should be included in your training routine.

A typical training session should include:

A: Warming Up

ALL PADDLERS should warm up properly before training or competing. Concentrate on warming up, loosening up and stretching all major muscle groups.

B: Training

THE BEST training is in your canoe, but time in the gym working on weaknesses, or swimming, jogging and/or riding for general fitness can be of help. While in your canoe, concentrate on your style, speed and skills e.g. balance, wash-riding.

A good coach will help plan your training session, as well as ensure good paddling style. Contact a canoe club for access to paddling coaches.

C: Cooling Down

Slow paddle for 5-10 minutes so that muscles are gradually cooled down. Stretch out all muscle groups to lengthen muscle fibres.

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If you cool down correctly, you increase your flexibility and redistribute blood from the muscles to the digestive system.

You can also identify injuries and problem areas and start treatment early. Waste materials that build up in the muscle tissue during competition are also removed by slowly moving the blood through the muscles.

Training Under Race Conditions

Having a pre-race run is the best possible way to test your capabilities in the Marathon. It's also important to find out how compatible you really are with your partner(s) and your land crew.

Marathon Diet

Pre-event

A Marathon effort needs a Marathon diet. It is recommended that paddlers consult with a nutritionist before participating to ensure that their own specific dietary needs are met. Experiment with different varieties of food so you can see what agrees with you best and generally a high carbohydrate diet is ideal. Any paddler on a special diet or medication should discuss their participation with their doctor.

During the Event

Easily digested food such as fruit or fruit juice, cereal, pasta and bread or toast is best to keep you going.

Breakfast is important even if you do not feel hungry. A good meal of complex carbohydrates (oats, muesli or Weet Bix) will provide an energy base. Lunch should be basically liquid with a few light solids if you feel like it. Dinner should be nutritionally balanced and attractively presented to appeal to tired paddlers.

If you want snacks to maintain energy levels during the day, your best choices are small quantities of biscuits, peeled orange slices, bananas, sultanas, mixed fruit, nuts, health bars, jelly beans or glucose tablets. Some successful paddlers swear by jam sandwiches and creamed rice!

Salt is lost when you sweat, but it is risky to take salt tablets and they are especially dangerous when you are dehydrated. There is no need for deliberate salt replacement of any sort, as salt loss from free sweating does not cause cramps. Cramps occurring in an event like the Marathon are more likely to be due to loss of fluid.

Boiled water (for at least 10 minutes to kill bacteria) will help prevent stomach upsets. Many paddlers prefer to carry their own local water for drinking and cooking throughout the Marathon. At least 4 litres of fluid should be carried on board your boat.

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Do not attempt a deliberate weight reduction diet during the event.

Drinks

Paddlers should drink at least two glasses of water before training or racing, then keep drinking small quantities at least every 15 minutes. The volume of liquid required will vary according to the climate and the individual. Basic Marathon drinks are water, unsweetened fruit juices and cold tea with a dash of lemon and glucose. All drinks should be very diluted - just palatable flavour is best for long races. Try to vary flavours daily to avoid boredom.

There is a variety of "high energy" and "sports" drinks available on the market, designed to support endurance activities. It is recommended that you:

- Try them out prior to the Marathon, and
- If you decide to use them ensure they are diluted and alternated with water - **water is your major need.**

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Do not wait until you feel thirsty to drink, as thirst is a late indicator. Also the stress of competition slows absorption from the stomach. Ice cold drinks can cause stomach cramps.

Drink containers and tubes must be thoroughly washed every day to prevent contamination.

Avoid alcohol during the Marathon as it accelerates the loss of fluids.

Remember...

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