



## **Coach's Corner, Buffalo Stampede**

**By Brendan Davies**

### **Part 10: Executing Your Race Plan**

Much time has passed since we started this 10 week coaching series; no doubt a lot of training, mental preparation, episodes of anxiety and probably a little bit of panic too! By now you would have also planned the most important part of your race; the hydration, nutrition and pacing strategies. So all that is left is to get to the start line, reap the benefits of all the hard work and knock off this run.

But so many people sacrifice all the hard training and seemingly logical and thoughtful mental preparation by making some poor decisions in the heat of the moment. You know the case, when we get a little too 'racey' at the start line and get carried away in the moment. Before we know it we are well off our race plan and putting our main goal, that of finishing, in grave jeopardy.

The first common mistake - don't be carried away in the hustle and bustle of the start line and take off too fast. Before you know you'll be facing saying hello too Mr Lactic Acid way earlier than you should be and facing the dreaded glycogen debt. I suggest taking a back seat at the start line, after all, a couple of minutes being caught up in the crowd could be a good thing. It will settle you into a slower than race pace rhythm and your body will certainly appreciate this later on in the race. The race also starts climbing, deceptively so, through Bright town centre even before the course goes to singletrack. Surging past slower runners on this section is a sure way to

The first climb up Mystic Mountain is the shortest and least taxing of all. The top runners will be looking at running the whole thing but for everyone else a run/walk strategy will be adopted. The second common mistake, common in trail ultras is runners casting aside this strategy and running hills they had planned to run/walk. Just because you may be feeling fresh at Mystic, don't jeopardise the rest of the race by running all of the climb. Even if you don't feel you have to, implement the walking breaks frequently from the start. Your body will thank you for it.

For most of us, the Mystic Mountain descent and for that matter, the descent down Clear Spot are really all about 'getting down them in one piece'. Sure you could bomb down them, taking unnecessary risks, but remember, you want your legs to feel as fresh as possible for as far into the race as possible for optimal performance. Thrash them here and it could be a long, unpleasant day with only your complaining muscles as company.

For those in the marathon, Buckland Rd Aid Station should mark the start of your race. Aim to get to this spot relatively fresh. There is a grinding climb and descent up and over Keating Ridge, and a conservative tactic should be adopted on this leg to Eurobin Creek. Once here, there is only the Big Walk up Mt Buffalo and the Chalwell's Loop to the Chalet to finish. The Big Walk is 10km of mostly uphill, but with many runnable sections especially on the second half of the climb when the switchbacks come into play more and more. Once past the mid way point of this climb, it's time to race!

For those of us fortunate enough to be doing the ultra, the race tactics are more complex, largely due to the more significant amounts of climbing and descending that will have to be tackled, especially later in the race. I believe the same rules apply, although we may see more runners running (or walking) 'to their strengths' earlier in the race, especially if King of the Mountain titles are sought. I have no magic race plan, however, needless to say, always keep in mind that 75km is a long way and 4,500m is a lot of up/down!

Lastly, don't ignore your fluid and nutritional needs. Stick to the plan that you've set in place but come with a level of flexibility to adjust according to the unique conditions that each race and day brings. The key is that being proactive is always going to be better than being reactive. Waiting until you are hungry or thirsty before eating and drinking is often too late.

I wish you all the best with your race on the weekend. Come to the race with a sense of adventure and curiosity and hopefully you will find the experience rewarding and fulfilling. Come Saturday or Sunday afternoon at the finish line, you will join an elite group of people who have triumphed over one of the toughest trail races ever staged in Australia.

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