

Dave's ASPCA-Approved Hot Weather Training Tips

From the July '98 Port City Pacers PaceLetter

Must've been the heat... If any of ya'll (that's Southern, for any of you Yankees out there) read "Dog Days of Summer" in the September '97 issue, you know I can handle myself around any yapping, snarling, fang-gnashing canine. And you would also know that my rule #1 is to ignore the owner and go right after the ankle biter if you're attacked. Well, the other night I was attacked, right over on my "safe" loop at Spring Hill College. I was doing my last hard workout before the National 20km--an 8 x 2 kilometer repeat workout from 9:30 down to 8:30 each (that's 7:38 to 6:50 for anyone STILL thinking in terms of miles). It was about 7:30pm, so things had cooled down to about 86 degrees or so (30 centigrade), but I was getting pretty woozy anyway since I was on my seventh repeat. Just before the 1km turnaround a giant, vicious, man-eating... oh, all right, I'll say it: Schnauzer came after me.

The last thing I wanted to do four days before Goodwill Games Trials was sprain an ankle tripping over a dog, so I gently kicked him in the ribs three or four times. As gently as one would kick a football from the 50-yard line, but gently, I swear...

He persisted until that last boot to the head right before I made the turn. That's when I saw the dog's 300 lb. owner. I was in the middle of a hard workout so I sure as heck wasn't going to stop and discuss Mobile's leash law with the guy, instead I just let a few choice words fly. Well, he yelled back, and I am from New York, so it escalated from there. Anyway, Mo says I can't write an article about kicking a dog nearly to death and then calling the owner horrible (yet pleasantly alliterative) three and four letter names, so the point is this: This heat and humidity can get to you. It can make you do crazy things, and may even be life threatening (especially if the fat guy has a gun....) So consider the following:

- 1. Get Out Early:** It's always cooler in the morning. If at all possible try to time things so you finish your workout by about 9 a.m. Then go back home and take a nap. You may have to call in sick the rest of the summer to get away with it, but so be it.
- 2. Or Late:** It usually starts getting nearly bearable by about 10:00 o'clock at night. If you have a safe place to train after dark and don't have a real reason to get up in the morning, think about training in the late evening.
- 3. H2Overload:** Stay well hydrated. That's Latin for: Go easy on the beer and margaritas. Drink lots of water any chance you get during the day, then at least 8 ounces every 15 minutes of exercise.
- 4. Stay Inside:** If you just can't get out at a reasonable hour, a treadmill is good in a pinch--especially for any fast, sustained work like a hard 10k tempo workout. Added bonus: it doesn't hurt the ego for everyone else at the gym to think you go that fast every day.
- 5. Stop Before You Drop:** If you feel dizzy or disoriented, take it out on someone else: kick a dog if you have to, but then stop. Get out of the heat and into a cold shower, put your feet up (after the shower or you'll get water up your nose) and drink lots of cold water. Then flip on the Nature Channel and watch Sumatran Tree Toads for a while--it's all your brain will be able to handle, trust me.

I've been coerced into racing 20Ks in Congo-like conditions too many times over the years by the geniuses at USA Track & Field to not know that heat and humidity can really fry your brain. No race is worth training yourself into a coma over. Train, and train hard for those fall races, but be smart out there dog gone it!

[Editor's note: No animals were harmed during the author's research for this article, but the same can't be said for any dog owner's feelings.]

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