

"New Stuff, Renewed Spirit"

From the November 2001 Port City Pacers PaceLetter

On the way out of the house to Chickasabogue Park today for a hard 25K workout I was met at the door by the UPS guy who was delivering two very large boxes. I was tired and less than highly-motivated to train, having just returned from a long weekend trip to California the day before. But upon opening the boxes my attitude took a 180-degree turn for the better. Enclosed were my new USA National Track & Field Team uniforms for the Pan Am Cup on October 27th-28th in Ecuador.

This was my last scheduled long “pace” day before the Pam Am 50K, but I was pretty beat up from the long, dehydrating flight.

Even though it was all Nike stuff, and it looked all too much like some kid’s Spiderman Halloween costume, I was happy to have it and quickly put on the racing uniform for my workout. NOW I was ready to tackle my 25K at the ‘Bogue!

Or not... Sartorial splendor can’t overcome physiological reality; I felt pretty awful. But once I got going, the new duds really did help to pull me through the workout.

I started out okay, but by 16K I was getting really dehydrated. My pace—about 8:20 per mile—wouldn’t normally be all that difficult, but I definitely could have used another rest day before tackling this particular workout. As I often do, I started rationalizing and was ready to bail out and try again in a day or two, when I looked down and saw that USA emblem on my chest. I knocked down another 32-ounce bottle of water and talked myself into another 4K.

With thoughts of 9/11 and our troops in Afghanistan running through my head, I picked up the pace. I made it to the 20K mark once more all ready to pack it in, but there was that “USA” again, urging me to carry on and get the job done. My pace quickened over the next 5K, and despite the sludgy feeling in my legs, I finished fast and completed the workout solidly under pace.

Certainly the USA stuff carries with it some special significance now during wartime. But for as long as I remember I’ve always gotten a great boost in my training from any new stuff. Free stuff from New Balance or my other sponsors is definitely the best, but even at times when I haven’t been sponsored I’ve gotten that great training high from a new pair of shoes, or shorts or a cool new heart rate monitor.

Maybe that “new stuff high” is just my feminine “shopping” side creeping to the surface, but I don’t think so. I believe everyone gets a bit of a psychological boost from a new pair of shoes—and I don’t mean the runners high you get when you sniff too deeply the new shoe glue fumes from the empty box.

So if you want to help your training—and your country—go out and buy something. Anything will do, but a new pair of training shoes or a winter rain suit or a heart rate monitor could be just the thing you’re looking for to get you through the next month or two of your Turkey Ten-Miler, Holiday Half-Marathon, or First Light Marathon training.

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