



Altra West Highland Way Race 2020

What can go wrong...



Running 95 miles. What's the worst that could happen?

- The runner's heart stops
- They stop breathing
- Their brain explodes*
- Kidneys stop working
- Skull gets bashed in on the trail
- A rib gets pushed through a lung
- Vision clouds to the point where walking unassisted becomes risky; see above.

* 'Expands' doesn't sound nearly as exciting a word as explodes. Uncontrolled swelling is a lot closer to the truth of the problem.

After that list, everything else is relatively minor and can perhaps be fixed or at least partly mitigated at the trailside. If you are lucky enough, allowing you to carry on.

Over-training



- Some of the problems that I see are the result of overtraining, both mechanical and also medical issues.
- Just because you know someone who is determined and is ready to do a 'Triple Crown' this year or whatever, does not mean that it is a good idea for you to do the same.
- It is very wise to regularly evaluate your training programme to prevent over training and be realistic about what can be achieved.
- Beware empty miles; they may lead to stress injuries and anxiety. Suppression of the immune system will leave you open to repeated minor illnesses such as upper respiratory tract infections, slow healing of minor injuries, loss of common sense... Are you just trying to hit numbers instead of enjoying it?

- I don't have answers to individuals' over training problems; what I'd be happier doing is helping encourage you to think about it and maybe open a debate among your running groups, friends and support. Don't just always bash on.
- If you're frequently getting minor infections, take it as a warning sign.
- If you're frequently getting minor injuries, take it as another warning.
- The amount of material on the internet is bewildering; some of it may apply to you. Much of it will not.
- Don't start the race if your training has not gone well.
- Don't start if you're ill, already being sick or feverish.
- Women; it is not normal for periods to stop just through the effects of training alone; it can mean you are over training.



Conversely: Am I doing enough?



- Probably
- Anxiety, fear and self doubt are relevant issues and feelings that are relevant in ultra running, as in most sports. Keeping good mental health is an important part of our sport.
- Running might be the central thing that helps us cope with problems, including other illnesses.
- Friendship and support from the community around you is one of the best features of being an ultra runner in my experience. Please take care of the runner next to you.



Medical problems

Pre-race medical reviews for runners are built into the race application process. New guidance will be on the race website in March 2020.

Consider getting someone in your race team to do an outdoor first aid course. Always do exactly what our medical team tells you to do.

Race day major issues:

- Hyponatraemia
- Rhabdomyolysis
- Drug impacts & interactions
- Cardiac problems