

**By Paula Shingler, BSc, MCSP**

As the end of September fast approaches, the time for serious competition approaches - or as serious as you want to be. Even if you are not a place contender, if you're planning to do State, Oz or Schools Champs, or any combination of these, then you need to consider how you can survive without injury! Competing on consecutive weekends can be harsh on the body so let's have a look at some ways you can limit potential crumbling.

### What distance are you racing?

Initially you need to decide if you are going to focus on long, short or sprint distance. You may well have already tailored training to this but if you haven't it is still worth while preparing the body in the last few weeks. It is too late to get fit for a particular event but it is worth putting a few strides into your run if you want to focus on the sprint, or a longer run if the long is your thing. This way your body can adapt to this sort of run and this minimises the risk of straining muscles that are doing unaccustomed exercise.

### Reduce the chance of injury through careful planning

Try to discuss the competitions with your physio and coach, especially if you have a chronic injury, have recently recovered from injury or have an ongoing 'niggle'. This way you can get

advice on how to minimise recurrence of injury and remaining injury free throughout the competition period. For example - you had a nasty ankle twist about 2 months ago which is now feels fine but you didn't really do much rehab on it. You don't feel 100% confident that it will withstand tough competition, so why not do ankle exercises and balance re-education so that the ankle builds up strength and you go into competition with any potential problem taken care of? Then you can focus on tricky navigation and not niggling ankles.

### Develop a personal warm up regime

Work out your personal warm up and down regime. Ensure that you have enough time before your start to physically prepare your body so you can start quickly and not have to 'ease into' the first control. Taking some time before your start helps you prepare physically and mentally. This means you can start relaxed and focused on the job in hand. A relaxed body is less likely to get strained.

*(Ed's note: If you don't know what your warm up regime should be, read Paula's article in the August E-News)*

### Look good, feel comfortable

Check your outfit out now and don't leave it to the day before the competition. I don't mean this just so you look good, important

though this is, but poorly fitting clothing can cause irritation and rubbing - potential injury stuff. Please check the elastic in your pants. I did have an elastic malfunction once and I can guarantee running with one hand holding up your pants is tricky and it does leave you vulnerable to falls or strains! Look at your footwear - make sure your laces are in good condition, the soles have plenty of tread and the shoes are worn in. New shoes are a recipe for disaster as they will be inflexible and not into your specific shape so leaves you open for blisters and rubbing. Make sure your socks are perfect without holes or worn patches or this can do the same. Any problem with footwear will affect your gait and concentration and will make you slow down, run less efficiently and be a prime injury candidate

### Confident and prepared – and looking forward to a great set of races

Good racing experiences are about careful planning. This may be looking at your training, physical injuries or attire before the competitions. Whatever it might be you will go into those weeks of competition ready, confident, and looking forward to success, injury free racing and a knowledge that you did your best.

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