3.2 of the “Checklist” Series:

FIT-4-PURPOSE – Garments & Gear

Deliberately making it uncomfortable now so feeling uncomfortable doesn’t faze you during the event.

This is not a post about mandatory and recommended equipment as such. That will be next time.

This one is about getting out & about with the intention of testing some of the seldom used big ticket items to make sure they are, in fact, Fit-4-Purpose. Particularly in adverse weather conditions.

The items discussed will be:

Footwear - Lighting – Pack/Vest/Belt – Clothing

Why test these out now?

Most of us restrict our run training to desirable weather. Why wouldn’t you? Being wet can be unpleasant and uncomfortable. However, precipitation and/or fog are a very real possibilities for our event. Unless you are a seasoned all-weather campaigner, I would suggest giving your go-to running layers and other gear a try in wet conditions while there is still enough time to borrow or buy something more Fit-4-Purpose.

Fit-4-Purpose Footwear.

To help with your footwear decision I’ll give you are rundown of the terrain:

Chunky Gravel farm roads.

Paddocks pockmarked with the hoof imprints of mighty beasts.

Gully’s that could be wet and muddy at best and ankle deep wading, with shoe consuming suction at worst.

Clay inclines / declines

Bush tracks with exposed tree roots.

Oh! Did I mention that Kangaroobie is a working cattle farm?

So, it goes without saying that you can expect to come across both varieties of cow-pats: wet and dry. And lots of them.

Just be sure to test out your shoe & sock combo when wet. Lace up your shoes and fully submerge your feet before going for your next run to find out how well your shoes shed and drain water. You are aiming for a squishing noise and sensation that diminishes with each step. Extended squishing suggests that your shoes don't have drainage holes/vents, or your socks are holding too much water.

It's best to discover that your socks of choice are water sponges or are prone to giving you blisters or hot-spots when wet now instead of finding out mid-event.

I'll discuss fabric choice further down the post, including why cotton is a no-no.

Fit-4-Purpose Lighting.

Or the alternate heading:

> Getting accustomed to performing night-time terrestrial locomotion with poise.

If you haven't done much running with a head torch, try and get a few night runs under your belt in the next week or so.

Dial in the adjustment of the strap so the pressure feels just right.

Get used to how the strap feels when wet or sweaty and if it causes any hot-spots on your skin.

Get accustomed to the position of the button(s) and toggle through the various functions your light has.

Find the strap placement & tilt function combo that gives you optimal light coverage while holding your neck is in a neutral position. (That is: The way your head sits when you stand with your back against a wall, positioning your head & shoulders so they are touching the wall, while maintaining a direct line-of-site that is square to the floor.)

You want to be able to look at the terrain in your field of vision by predominately moving your eyes down, not your neck. Scan the path with your eyes, to the edge of the light field and back to where your next step will land and repeat, with the occasional glace around at your surroundings.

This is not about having a rigid neck. It's about avoiding having your neck in a constant forward tilt.

Fit-4-Purpose Pack/Vest/Belt

You will need to wear either a running pack/vest or a running belt during our event.

The things you will need to carry are:

- First Aid Kit

  Supplied kit specs -240g , 15.5 x 10 x 5 cm.

  This kit has loops that are compatible with a running belt.

  Trail Survivor Ultra Running First Aid Kit

- Spot Gen4 GPS Tracker.

  Specs – 142g, 8.8 x 6.8 x 2.4 cm.

  Each device has a velcro strap so it can be attached to vests/belts. It also fits (snuggly) in the waist pocket on my running shorts.

  Spot Gen4 GPS Messenger

- At least 500ml of water.
- Mandatory wet weather /cold weather clothing if that decision is made.
- Any goodies you want to consume on the trail.

Fit-4-Purpose Clothing.

Purpose of clothing?

Beside modesty and looking the part?

To keep you as dry as possible and to regulate your core body temperature so your legs get permission from the circulatory system to keep moving with purpose.

The main aspect to be tested for all garments is moisture wicking.

For a baseline test you don't have to perform a rain dance or stand under the hose/shower. You just need to grab the clothes you intend to use straight out of the washing machine after your next load of washing.

The best clothes are the ones that feel almost dry when they come out of the wash.

The Test:

Before your next run perform a dynamic warm-up to get your blood pumping and your body up to race temperature. Then; put on your garment of choice while it is still damp and; gear up with the running pack / belt you intend to use. You need to experience how the damp material, compressed against your skin by the straps on your pack or belt, interacts with your skin, paying close attention to how nipple and armpit friendly that combo is. If you do experience chafing, this doesn't mean you need to swap out the garment, but it will make you think twice about bringing an anti-chafe product to our event.

Part 2 of the test:

While you are still warm layer up with your intended outer shell (i.e. rain jacket or wind jacket/vest).

The intention is to continue to exert yourself while wearing this 'protective' layer to experience what happens with your sweat.

The right combo will give you the sensation of warm, damp fabric against your skin without feeling like you are overheating or oozing sweat.

Just writing the words warm & damp makes me feel uncomfortable, but "comfortable" is something that can wait until you are sitting around the fireplace at Kangaroobie between runs.

The key is "warm". If you feel too hot with just your baselayer and jacket, then maybe your baselayer of choice has too much insulation. If this is the case, focus on moisture wicking as the main function of your baselayer and leave the insulation up to your mid layer, headwear & gloves.

Why is tried and tested garment selection important for our event?

Unless El Niño pays us a visit in the coming weeks, it's going be chilly at night.

The current trend for minimum overnight temperatures has been in the single figures, with a couple of nights in the 3° to 4° range. "Crisp" is the word that sprung to my mind the morning of Anzac Day.

Is it going to be raining during the event?

We don't know yet and it's a hard one to predict with all the "unseasonable" weather events going on around the country.

But I can tell you that when it does rain in Princetown there are usually three types: The all at once dump; the short but brutal sideways blast or; the all-day persistent super soaker.

Even if it's not raining, the clouds like to take a night-time nap this time of year, settling into gullies as a blanket of fog. Spoiler Alert: Kangaroobie has gullies!

Also, sections of the event will see you running across exposed, elevated paddocks that can cop the full brunt of the howling south-westerly's blowing off the Southern Ocean. At times it can feel like the wind has been delivered directly from Antarctica.

What does all this mean?

There's a good chance that Mother Nature will be doing her darndest to give you hypothermia, especially during the overnight sections.

How to hypothermia proof yourself with clothing – Torso, legwear, head, hands.

NB: Depending on the weather conditions, some of these garments may be mandatory to carry. We can't force you to wear them, but if the unexpected happens and you need to stay put and wait for help, we need you to have a minimum standard of protection from the elements.

Torso

Choose the right combo of Baselayer / Mid layer / Shell

Why?

Here's an over simplistic biology lesson:

As the body cools it wants to prioritise keeping the vital organs warm. When you are exercising you are telling the body to prioritise moving the limbs. Both functions rely on the blood system to perform the respective functions.

Without intervention, the organs will always win over the limbs.

This is what getting dizzy, fainting and shock is all about, your body saying, "I don't like what you're doing, let's just lay down for a bit while I look after our vital bits."

So, if we want the "keep moving with purpose" signal to win the blood flow tug-o-war then it's important to do what we can to keep the organs toasty warm some other way.

How is this done?

With layers. NOT lots of layers, just the right layers: Base / Mid / Shell.

Base Layer = Constant Layer.

This includes your underwear as well as the minimum layer of clothes you think will be suitable for the highest ambient temperature and most pleasant weather conditions you expect to encounter during your run.

Your baselayer could be the outfit you wear when you first head out, or the outfit you end up wearing as the weather improves.

The main point being; this is the minimum that you can strip down to while still maintaining modesty and not making it awkward for other participants.

For the cold, choose a base layer that, as well as providing insulation, is also moisture-wicking and breathable.

The Number 1 Rule:

NO COTTON. The last thing you want in the cold is material that holds moisture. This is something that cotton is really good at doing. Cotton is great on a breezy summer's day, until of course you get

sweaty at which point it starts sticking to your skin. Keep your comfy cotton tees for lounging around Base Camp between runs.

Most sports tops these days are made with moisture wicking technology, but don't necessarily provide insulation.

Conversely, there are some thermal garments that are good insulators but not great at moving moisture. Merino wool is a great all-rounder. My favourite tops are a merino/synthetic blend.

There are situations where a poor choice of base layer will put you at risk of overheating even though if felt like not enough at the start of the run. This is why it's always a good idea to warm up first before heading outside on a cold day.

Mid Layer.

This is a top that compliments the base layer by adding a bit more to the warm torso experience. It could be that it adds more coverage, a bit more insulation, or both.

Like the baselayer it should be made of a "technical", moisture wicking fabric. It should be easy to put on & take off on the fly.

Shell = Outer Layer

This could be a raincoat or a wind vest, depending on the weather.

If it's windy you want something that stops the windchill creeping into your bones, especially if your clothes are damp.

If it's pouring rain you will want something that prevents you from being 'dripping' wet and puts you back into the damp category.

Either way, you shell should be breathable. Rain is unpleasant but nothing like the torrent of sweat & condensation that builds up in a jacket designed to only keep the rain out.

Rain jackets are not all made the same. This is definitely one of those garments that you tend to 'get what you paid for'. However, there's no such thing as being completely dry when running in the rain. If you're moving with purpose you will be sweating, and the difference between the heat generated by your body inside the shell and the temperature outside the shell will result in condensation. Even an expensive, good quality raincoat with high breathability stats will result in a bit of moisture retention.

This takes us back to the correct choice of base layers because there's a huge difference between "damp & warm" and "wet & cold".

What's good for a jacket?

Most jackets these days have the following ratings in their specs: Waterproofness in (mm) and; breathability in (g/m^2).

When checking these specs, the bigger the number the better. For our event I'm suggesting that 10,000 for both is a good starting point.

Jackets also come with a Durable Water Repellancy (DWR) coating. This is what provides that satisfying look of water beading on your jacket. DWR can wear off over time. The good news is that if the water doesn't bead on your jacket anymore, you don't necessarily need to but a new one, you just need to invest on a bottle of DWR wash.

Here's a handy article by my mate Paddy Pallin if you want to go down the waterproofness rabbit hole.

https://www.paddypallin.com.au/blog/all-about-waterproof-fabrics/

Is your jacket Fit-4-Purpose?

All I can suggest is wear your rain jacket over the top of your baselayer on your next run, rain or shine. This gives you the opportunity to get an idea of how "damp" thing get on the inside of the jacket when you get a sweat up. As mentioned previously, if you get too hot you may have to reconsider your baselayer.

While you have the jacket on, you might as well give yourself a soaking with the hose to see how it performs at repelling water and keeping water out. As mentioned earlier, if the water isn't beading, think about buying a product to renew the DWR finish.

Wearing your jacket under the hose (or in the shower) also gives you an idea of just how wet your legs will get from the rain running off the jacket. This in turn will get you thinking about what legwear you want to use if it's going to be raining.

Fit-4-Purpose Legwear.

Legwear is one area that you can be a bit more relaxed about insulation and waterproofness. The boys might disagree, but the lower body doesn't rate very high on the 'vital' organ scale.

As a minimum guide, choose something that dries quickly and doesn't get heavier when wet. You also don't want a fabric that feels immediately cold when it makes contact with the skin.

Tights or compression shorts made from technical fabric that pass the straight-out-of-the-washing-machine-test are good all-rounders.

Fit-4-Purpose Headwear.

Peaked caps are great for keeping the rain off your face. With a little bit off forwarding thinking they are also good for keeping the hood in place during windy condition. Just bring along a little peg or clip for marrying the hood and cap together.

A “technical fabric” or Merino wool beanie/head-sock is a good intermediate insulator if you don’t want to add another layer to your torso.

The head, like the rest of your body, sweats. Blood circulates close to the skin on your scalp and the blood can cool here quicker than elsewhere. A moisture wicking cover on your noggin is an efficient way to move sweat away from you skin and help keep your blood warm.

Removing the beanie/head-sock is also one of the quickest ways to cool down without having to take off any other layers.

Fit-4-Purpose Gloves.

Refer to headwear. The hands are another place where blood moves close to the skin.

Strategically using the on-again off-again system with headwear and gloves is one of the most efficient ways to regulate body temperature when wearing just your baselayer. Save your mid layer for if things really cool down.

I will provide more details about mandatory and suggested items in the next post: Stuff I Need.

Take care,

Ash.