



Team Merrell Elite Tips and Tricks!

For the past 15 years, my Adventure Racing teammates and I have learned the "hard way" about what it takes to get through any difficult endeavor. So part of my goal as the Captain of Team Merrell Elite is to help you avoid those mistakes and help you prepare to stay in the game longer, feel better, and kick more butt than ever before! Over the next few months, I'm going to share with you what we have learned about nutrition, care and maintenance of your body and equipment, getting yourself and your teammates across that finish line together, what to wear, how to get the most from your training, and how to access the most helpful resources to help you Get Outside and Rule the Earth beneath your Merrell Barefoot Shoe covered feet. :)

Food/Nutrition

TIP #1: Pre Adventure

1.5-2 hours before your adventure, eat a meal of 300-600 calories that's balanced in a 30-30-30 ratio of protein, carbs and unsaturated fats. I love a bowl of oatmeal with vanilla protein mixed in (and some brown sugar, of course :). I also take some Udo's Omega Essential Fatty Acids with my morning meal because it gives me longer lasting energy. Also, drink about 32 oz of water when you wake up on adventure day. I don't drink much within 30 minutes of my start time to avoid sloshing.

TIP #2: During Your Adventure

Don't wait until you're hungry or thirsty to eat or drink! At that point it's too late. And your performance will have begun to drop off long before your thirsty/hungry senses alert you. My teammate Louise Cooper looves to tell people this story about me: "...So it's 5am and they just said 'go' on this 50 mile run, and before I even have a chance to break a sweat, I hear these package crinkling noises like a squirrel next to me in the dark, and there's Robyn already diving into her waistpack for a bar!" To which I always respond, "I didn't bonk, though, did I?!". I have learned this lesson the hard way again and again, especially when it comes to hydration, despite that story. Even if you don't feel thirsty, you must drink at least 16oz/hour in cool weather and more in warm weather. Regarding electrolyte mixes: I am a fan. But when you are going hard, you MUST mix them half strength or your stomach will not process it. OR drink at least one bottle of straight water for every one bottle of full strength electrolyte mix. I love Sportquest Direct's new "Hydra C5" because it also has some calories and tastes great. IMPORTANT: sometimes you cannot get the right mix of potassium, magnesium and calcium in your mix to save you from a crampy electrolyte bonk. That's why, whenever I'm going for a ride, hike, etc that's more than an hour long, I always bring Sustain Electrolyte Tablets (www.zeemedical.com). They come in individual packets and I have them in nooks and crannies of every pack and gearbag and shorts pocket. If you don't need them yourself, you will always find someone who does! And you will be their hero(ine!). I take them at the first sign of muscle vesiculations (pre cramp firing of muscles) and/or every 1.5 hours of my training, whichever comes first. :). Regarding food: If you're racing, it's hard to eat! So if the race is 4 hours or less, it can be done with liquids like CarboPro from Sportquest. Carbopro is a white powder that you can dissolve into any drink and add 250 calories per bottle without changing the consistency or taste. If you need solid foods, go for the salty/fatty stuff. I'm no physiologist, but whomever came up with Fritos and white powdered doughnuts should be honored in the Endurance Sports Hall of fame. I try to eat well most of the time, but when it comes to performance, I fuel the engine with the quick sugar/salt hit (for an immediate effect) that also includes enough fat to slow down the insulin rush (for longer haul energy).

TIP #3: Post Adventure

Back to a 30-30-30 ratio food! But this time in the form of something semi-healthy. For my initial recovery fuel I like peanut butter, chocolate milk, or a protein shake or smoothie. Studies show that you increase your rate of recovery significantly if you eat @200 calories of fuel in the first 20 min of finishing your workout. I also immediately take amino acids to help my muscles recover. SportQuest Direct makes a great one called Recover. I don't work for Sportquest, btw. :) I have just been using their stuff for 15 years and they rock.

Clothing/Gear

TIP #4: Layering

I'm a big fan of layering clothing in order to avoid carrying that BIG puffy jacket that you don't know what to do with when you get hot 15 minutes into your adventure. :) . It's hard to strip to your base layer at the start line when you're freezing, but we always say "start cold". Otherwise you will have to stop within a mile of the start line and remove layers while all of your teammates stare at you and shake their heads (don't ask me how I know this. :)

From the inside out, here's what to wear and pack:

1st layer: Polypropylene or Polyester top and tights/shorts, non-cotton socks

2nd layer: 100 weight fleece top, lightweight warm hat, lightweight gloves (keep all at the top of your pack for easy access so your friends can hand them to you). The Merrell Fractal Half Zip is a great choice.

3rd layer: Lightweight Windproof/waterproof jacket and pants. Ie. The Merrell Norgate Shell

4th layer: If you're stopping at night, facing foul weather, you're the trip leader, or believe you may have an extended stop, It's never a bad idea to carry a tiny disposable emergency blanket (the sleeping bag type) and/or a lightweight synthetic down jacket in a waterproof bag. If someone in your party does bonk hard and has the associated chills and inability to keep food down, just staying warm can make a huge difference in their ability to recover.

TIP #5: Don't Leave Home Without!

For any BIG adventure (aka in an unknown place, multiple hours/days, where I may be 'off the grid' with no cell phone coverage, facing varied temperatures, leading a group), here are the "Must Haves":

*Merrell Seismics, Cruise Controls, Moab Ventilator, Eagle Origins or Barefoot Trail Glove Shoes

*Balaclava (I always have this around my neck or over my mouth to regulate temperature and to keep the cold air or dust out of my lungs)

*Lightweight hat and gloves

*Waterproof case and iPhone (tunes, tweets, calls, maps)

*Bivvy sleeping bag (Adventure Medical Kits--can be multi-use. Its WARM! And SUPER light)

*Lightweight waterproof/windproof jacket. Merrell Norgate Shell is perfect

*Change of socks (I like thin ones for preventing blisters. Non cotton!)

*Blister Kit (duct tape, Sportslick, mini scissors, Glacier Gel, Nexcare waterproof tape, moleskin, syringe to suck the juice out of blisters (yay!))

*Tow lines (so you can help someone who is suffering to stay with the group). Grab about 5 feet of 2mm "shock cord" at your local outfitter and tie a carabiner on both ends. Voila! One carabiner is attached to the back of your pack (lower the better), and the other attached to the chest strap of the person who needs a little help while they recover.

*Medical Kit with diphenhydramine for allergic reactions, anti nausea pills, Immodium for diarrhea, pain management, wound care and blood coagulating compresses. These are all things that can truly be the difference between a great adventure and a massive bummer.

*Lighter

*Compass

*Water purification tablets

*Lots of duct tape

*Two types of water containers. If your camelback has a leak, you must be able to carry water

*Ginger/Peppermint/Wintergreen candy. These have saved my but when I could no longer ingest solid food

*Sustain Electrolyte Tabs, Oral Rehydration Salts, or The Right Stuff Oral Rehydration

*Tell someone where you are headed -- Your exact route, planned time to return, and what to do and whom to alert if you don't make it back by the cutoff time you set. I have a friend at a company called Life Beacon who will soon be offering this service on-line

*For the BIG or off grid trips: lightweight 3 person tent (you MUST have shelter if the you-know-what hits the fan) and a SPOT satellite tracking device or similar. Many companies, ie Magellan, are now making devices through which you can send and receive texts via satellite

TIP #6: Best Gear for Water Activities!

*Merrell Barefoot Water River Glove

*Bomber Sunglasses--They float!

*Bars/food in watertight packages. Completely submerge whatever food you planned to bring for 1 minute and see what happens. Always assume that swimming is inevitable. It is.

*Waterproof Iphone carrier--for tunes and emergencies

*Dummy Cords! When I go for a long paddle, everything is attached to the boat with a carabiner or small piece of string ie my seatpads, camelback, iPod, gps, zippered waterproof bags of 'stuff'. I can't even tell you how many things I've lost to the water Gods. At least they can't get too far if they're attached to the boat when I flip.

*Sew a mesh pocket that fits your camelback sleeve onto the back of your PFD. That way your water is always with you and not sloshing around your feet. :) The straw can be pulled over your shoulder and weaved under your pfd shoulder strap to keep it in place against your chest. That way you drink

more and never have to stop to dig around for your water. If you're uber serious, you can do what we used to do for races: take a coat hanger and cut off about a 12 inch long piece of the wire. Wrap duct tape around both the drinking tube and wire down the entire length of the wire, with the terminal end of the wire stopping about an inch short of the bite valve. Now you can position the hose so that it sits just under your mouth and drink without putting down your paddle! Fancy stuff.

*Thin neoprene gloves--for longer paddles (more than 2 hrs). NRS makes some of my favorites

*A PFD that zips up in the front instead of goes over your head. I like to have the option to take it off and put it on quickly. My PFD also has several easily accessible pockets in the front. I have discovered its a pain in the butt to have my food, phone, pill bottles, etc, floating and rolling all over the floor of the boat.

*Mysterioso top, tights and socks! AWESOME technical paddling clothes. Made from supersoft thin polartec that wicks water away from your body immediately. I even wear Mysterioso tights and socks for hot races because they seem to insulate from warm and cold both. Don't ask me how. :) But once you try their Mtech gear, you won't want to be on the water without it

*For SUP (Stand Up Paddling), there are many very cool water carrying devices, most of which center the water weight on your lower back since you will be twisting a lot in your torso when you paddle with the long canoe blade and don't need water flopping back and forth on your back! Just google SUP hydration and you'll find a ton of em.

*Paddle! I'm a fan of carbon fiber "wing" or "scoop" blades (versus flat blades). Epic makes great kayak paddles and Quickblade seems to be a favorite among the SUP crowd

Adventure Resources!

TIP #7: Adventure Racing Event Resources

If you're keen to try an adventure race or simply train with a great group of people for outdoor off road multisport adventures, check out www.usara.org. The United States Adventure Racing Association is a great source for race calendars and Adventure Racing Clubs. They also put on the 24 hour US National Championship each year. Grab a team and start training! Another good source for information on local races and events is www.checkpointzero.com. For information and event calendars for the international racing scene, check out www.sleepmonsters.com and www.ARWS.com (the world series of "expediton length"-- 4+ day races).

TIP #8: A Cool Group Adventure Resource!

Here's to Merrell and the great causes they support! One of them is the Project Athena Foundation, a 501c3 non-profit that helps Survivors (of Cancer or other traumatic/medial setbacks) to live an adventurous dream as part of their recovery. I'm the Founder/Ceo and trip leader for all of our adventures--COME PLAY! If you're interested in an awesome big-team-love, noncompetitive adventure in which you can hike/paddle/ride side by side with a Survivor for whom you've raised money to help live her dream, this is your official invitation to become a Fundraising God/Goddess! We especially love Gods/Goddesses like our Team Merrell Elite members because you become additional "trail angels" that help the less experienced folks make it to the finish line. Project Athena Fundraising Adventures for 2012 include: 2 Grand Canyon Rim to Rim to Rim 45 mile/2 day treks (June and October), The Project Athena Richmond Relay Marathon (July 14), The Project Athena Moab Trail Marathon/Half Marathon and 5k (Nov 3) and The Florida Keys to Recovery 100 mile Multisport Adventure (3 days of paddling, riding and hiking/running from Key Largo to Key West--Nov 15-18). Apply/enter or get further scoop at www.projectathena.org. Let's get as many Team Merrell Elite members out there as possible and help others inspire and amaze themselves on the journey!

Tip #9: Paddling Resources

Kayaking--If you're interested in Kayak or Surfski Racing, especially the longer and/or downriver adventures, check out www.fit2paddle.com and www.paddle24seven.com. Most of the big races are listed there, as are links to events and used boats/paddles for sale. For forward stroke technique, google Greg Barton, Olympic K1 paddler turned top surfski racer. He's the MAN.

Stand Up--Stand up is taking over the world! If you're interested in giving stand up a try, check out www.eatonsurf.com, www.supevent.com, www.distressedmullet.com, and www.supconnect.com. For technique, google Jim Terrell, Danny Ching, Candace Appleby, and Dave Kalama. Most of these pros also have camps in awesome exotic locations. Kalama Kamp in Fiji, anyone?

Training/Technique Tips!

Tip #10: Taking Care of Your Feet

The best way to take care of your feet is to PREVENT them from getting blisters in the first place:

*Sock and shoe choice are KEY! I always wear a thin cool max or polypro/blend sock (NO COTTON) and shoes that are 1 size bigger than the size I would normally wear. Your toes should be at least a thumbnail away from the end of your shoe. If your toes touch the end of your shoes while going down steep descents, your pain-free hiking day will be over very quickly. And your nail will turn purple and fall off. Not Cute! Takes 8 months to grow back. I timed it. :)

*Prep your feet by cutting your toenails short and with no pointy edges. Make sure no toenail touches the skin of the toes next to it when they are squished together.

*Remove ALL of your callouses! And all of your rough skin. It's an urban legend that callouses protect your feet. When you're hiking for any significant distance, your calloused skin creates friction underneath and around it (the hard skin moves differently), and you will inevitably end up with the most painful type of blister: an unreachable, unfixable deep one underneath the callous!

*Before a long hike I always coat my feet with a generous dollop of Sportslick or Gurney Goo (ordered from New Zealand). Glom it all over your feet and underneath and between your toes to prevent friction and protect your skin. Your feet need to feel like they're sliding around in there. No friction, no blisters.

If, despite your best efforts you still get a blister. Here's how to FIX it! Or minimize the pain at least. :)

*Poke a needle into the edge of the skin and release the fluid inside the blister. Stand clear! Those suckers are under a lot of pressure!

*Leave the skin in place to protect from infection (cut it off when you're back at home and can keep antibiotics and bandaids on it)

*Don't layer on top of the blister too heavily because pressure is what causes the pain.

*Dry the area around the blister so that tape will stick to it.

*Cut a piece of Glacier Gel or moleskin just large enough to cover the area and place it on the blister

*Cover the Glacier Gel or moleskin with duct tape to keep it all in place and provide a slick surface to avoid future friction in that area

*For toes, I usually just pop the blister and make one turn around that toe (not too tight!) with a piece of duct tape. I also cut off all of the little sharp edges of duct tape so it doesn't touch other toes

*If you have a new pair of socks and won't be encountering a water crossing any time soon, change socks and get back to work! :)

Tip #11: How to Avoid Bonking and/or Exhaustion

A lot of your ability to beat the bonk is based on how in tune you are with your body. The moment you begin to get dizzy (which indicates low blood sugar or low blood volume from dehydration), you've got to slow down your heart rate by walking versus running or spinning on your bike versus pounding big gears up the hills. Then you have to get some food, water, and Sustain pills (Zee Medical) on board, stat. Whatever food you can find is fine. I once ate some leftover french fries from a table in front of a restaurant. Desperate times :). But dang, they were good. Now I rarely if ever leave the house without some little morsel of food. Do not try to just tough it out and get home. I had a very good friend nearly kill herself because she didn't eat breakfast and tried to ride 100 miles. She swerved her road bike into traffic and then veered off the road to a spectacular crash off a bridge and into a ditch below, to the horror of our little peloton. It's not worth it, and a hard run or ride isn't the time to work on your diet. :). Keep moving slowly as you get your food, water and electrolytes on board. If you stop completely, sometimes your blood pressure drops out and you feel worse. As you get your strength back and your mind becomes clearer, slowly run /walk/run/walk your way back up to speed over several minutes. It's better to get where you're going at a slower speed than to drop out completely! In the Ironman Triathlon, for example, most of the people, aside from the pros, will "walk the aid stations" as a good strategy to avoid exhaustion and dehydration. Just take a little bit of "slow time" to get your nutrition and hydration back on track!



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