

Training and Nutrition for Multisport Racing and the Coast to Coast Longest Day World Multisport Championship

OK, so you are probably asking “what is multisport?” This involves running, often off-road mountain running over difficult terrain, cycling, either mountain biking or road biking, and lastly kayaking, often on a river with grade 2 white water rapids.

Arguably the premier Multisport race in the world is New Zealand’s 243km long Coast to Coast which is raced over one Saturday in February each year as the World Multisport Championship. The day starts from Kumara Beach on the west coast of the South Island at 6am and finishes at Sumner Beach (Christchurch) between 11 and 17 hours later (depending on how fast you are!). The day involves 36km of running, 67km of kayaking, and 140km of road cycling. The map below shows how this is divided up. Each competitor has a support crew of friends and family to get all the gear to the start of the next stage.

PUT MAP, RUNNING, CYCLING, AND KAYAKING PHOTOS HERE

In 2007 approaching the ripe old age of 50 I decided the Coast to Coast (C2C) might be a fun thing to do so I bought myself a kayak and a road bike (already had the legs for running!) I enrolled in a kayaking course to obtain the Grade 2 River Certificate that every competitor needs to enter the race and started to build up my fitness in each of the three disciplines.

So what does training for a race like this involve? My training week involves 3 or 4 sessions in each discipline spread over 6 days of the week (Friday was the day off!) so if you do the maths that is 9–12 sessions a week so some days I might have to do training sessions in 2 or even 3 disciplines to fit it all in! This training built up to a maximum training week of about 24 hours so that is an average of 4 hours per day. Here is my schedule for the PMW (peak mileage week)

Monday	Run off road 240 minutes / Bike 40km 90 mins
Tuesday	Bike 60km 120 mins / Kayak 60 mins
Wednesday	Run 90 mins / Kayak 120 mins
Thursday	Bike 100 km 240 mins / Run 20 mins
Friday	Day Off!
Saturday	Run off road 60 mins / Bike hills 40 km 90 mins / Kayak 60 mins
Sunday	Kayak 240 mins

So on to nutrition. My normal meals didn’t change too much as I always eat pretty healthily although I guess I probably ate slightly larger meals. A typical day might be

Breakfast: Tinned fruit / muesli / yoghurt / trim milk / 2 pieces whole grain toast with marmalade / 1 banana

Lunch: 2 large sandwiches (4 slices wholemeal bread) with ham and salad fillings / 1 banana and 1 apple

Dinner: Pasta, meat sauce, salad or veg

Treats: Maybe an icecream and a little dark chocolate

Alcohol: Not very much! Maybe a beer or a small glass of wine with dinner

The real difference in nutrition in comparison to a normal diet when training for the C2C is the addition food supplements taken during training and immediately after training to speed recovery. During training for any exercise of over an hour I drank a good quality sports drink at a rate of 600–1,000ml (0.6–1.0L) for every hour of exercise. In the kayak I had a drinking system which could take up to 4L which was enough to do a 6 hour paddle. When running I often carried a camelbak drinking system in a back pack. As well as drinking I trained myself to eat without stopping. Good food to eat whilst on the move included bananas, muffins, muesli bars, One Square Meal bars, and creamed rice. The general rule is to eat or drink up to 1g of carbohydrate for every 1kg of body weight per hour so I ate about 70g of carbohydrate per hour when training.

For example:

- 750ml of sports drink contains 50g of carbohydrate
- 1 large banana contains 25g of carbohydrate
- 1 muesli bar contains 50g of carbohydrate
- 1 One Square Meal bar contains 90g of carbohydrate

For a 3 hour run in the hills I would need at least 200g of carbohydrate:

2L sports drink	100g carbohydrate
2 bananas	50g of carbohydrate
One Square Meal bar	90g of carbohydrate
Total	240g

In addition after longer training sessions I would make a protein shake to help recovery of muscles damaged during training. Hard training produces small micro tears in muscle fibres which need to be repaired by the body as much as possible before the next training sessions. My protein shakes contain 30g of banana flavoured protein powder, 250ml of trim milk and 1 banana all blended up together.

For the last 3 days before the race I drank a carbo loading liquid which gave me an additional 200g of carbohydrate each day. Before a long endurance race this has the effect of building up glycogen supplies in the muscles to help you get through the race with less chance of muscle cramps.

On race day I have calculated I spend at least 40,000kJ of energy. Normal adult energy requirements are about 8,000kJ per day.

Here is my food for race day:

		Carbohydrate (g)
Breakfast: (at 4am!)	Muesli, banana, peaches, blueberries, yoghurt	50–100
	2 slices toast and marmalade	50
	2 energy gels	50
		150–200
First bike	1.5L sports drink (camelbak)	80–100
	1 large banana (halved)	25
	Bev's fruit loaf	30+(?)
		130–160
Mountain run	8 x energy gels (1 every 30 mins)	200
	Em's Bar	50
	1 large banana	25
	Bev's fruit loaf	30+
		305
Second bike	750ml sports drink	40–50
	Em's Bar	50
	1 large banana (halved)	25
		115–125
Run to kayak	Creamed rice (half a large tin in snaplock bag)	40

Kayak	3L sports drink	200–250
	1 large banana	25
	Em's Bar	50
	Bev's fruit loaf	30+
		300–350
Third bike	2L sports drink (camelbak)	100–125
	Creamed rice (half a large tin in snaplock bag)	40
	Bev's fruit loaf	30+
		170–195

Race History (so far!)

2008: 15 hours 25 mins (7th classic Man 50–59 years)

2009: 16 hours 12 mins (4th classic Man 50–59 years)

Oh, in case you are wondering it takes at least 6 weeks to recover from race day!

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