

Lazy girl running

It's taper time for Laura Fountain, but as she explains, it doesn't always go to plan...

Don't do anything stupid. These are the words that echo round my head during taper week, and as I taper for the biggest race I've ever done, they're louder than ever. Unfortunately it seems it's only me that hears them.

As I tapered for the London Marathon back in April I did all the right things: I reduced the amount of miles I was running; I avoided people with coughs and colds; I even gave the street food vendors near my office a wide berth. But on the Monday morning as I slowly cycled the five miles to work, thinking I'd do one last bike commute before the race... BANG. I was hit by a car. A driver turning right hadn't seen me coming the other way and stupidly turned right into my path. I collided with the passenger side of the car and fell to the floor with my bike. I scrambled to my feet and the first words out of my mouth were: "I've got a [expletive] marathon to run on Sunday."

I walked away from that collision and after a shaky few minutes feeling like I needed to vomit into a hedge, I was back on my bike with a few aching joints that I hoped would feel better by Sunday. The London Marathon didn't go to plan for me but I'm not sure how much a less-than-perfect taper is responsible for this.

It's pretty much a universal truth that runners don't like tapers. After months of training, getting up at the crack of dawn sometimes and being out in all weathers, suddenly being told to take it easy does strange things to a runner. Phantom aches and pains appear which you convince yourself are the injury to end all injuries. You immediately forget every single training run you've done for the past four months and convince yourself you're unprepared for a run to the bus stop, let alone a race. This last one can lead some to attempt to squeeze in some last-minute miles, convinced that they're losing fitness with every day they're not out training.

I've never been troubled by sitting on my bum doing very little in the weeks prior to a big race. Back in 2012 I even put myself through a vigorous 'Extreme taper' (copyright, trade mark and



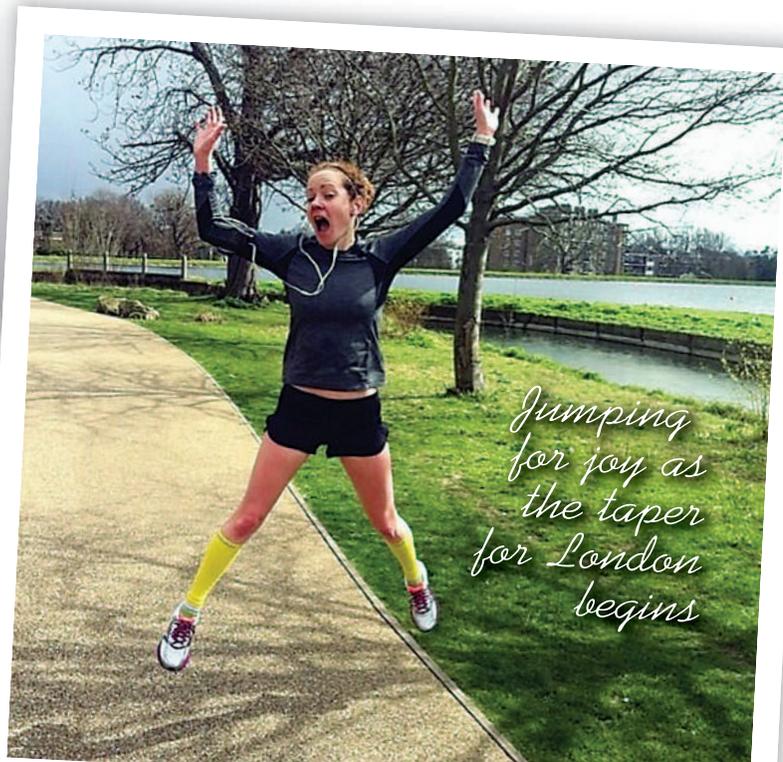
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Laura Fountain is a blogger, author and editor living and running in London. She's run seven marathons and is now training for an Ironman but just six years ago she couldn't run 400 meters. Her book *The Lazy Runner* was published in 2012. She's a UK Athletics qualified run leader and helps beginner runners learn how to run and, more importantly, how to enjoy it.

patent pending, Me 2012). This consisted of doing no running in the three weeks leading up to Edinburgh Marathon. It hadn't been the plan to taper in this fashion; it was brought about by injury. On the last long run of my training plan I was coming into the final mile and running past the Tower of London. If you've run around here you'll know there is a high concentration of two things runners hate: cobblestones and tourists, who neither know nor look where they're going. As I dodged and swerved on the cobblestones something pulled in my Achilles that left me hobbling the rest of the mile home. For the next few days I hobbled and didn't run all week, or for the next week and then it was race week and I thought it prudent not to risk it, at least not until I was under starter's orders. The Edinburgh Marathon went much better than London and I made it round without trouble from the Achilles in the time I wanted.

On Sunday I ran seven miles across London to meet a friend. Once again I dodged tourists, one wielding a pull-along suitcase who turned into my path and caused me to hurdle the bag to save tripping over it. Today I cycled my bike to work without too much drama other than a white van driver singing at the top of his lungs as he went past. I have four more days of remembering the golden rule of tapering: don't do anything stupid. The stupidest thing I hope to do this week is the 140-mile race at the end of it.



After the Edinburgh Marathon



Jumping for joy as the taper for London begins