



## OFF-ROAD RUNNING LE JOG



In 2009 I made the first ever attempt to run the length of the UK off-road, I succeeded.

1,254 miles across trails, mountains, moorland and highlands. An average of 30 miles a day for six weeks. The run took 45 days and 17 hours, including 3 rest days.

Two weeks before the start of the event, plans for a support crew fell through. I would have to run solo and unsupported. Two weeks before the run I almost

dropped out of the challenge. I was already having butterflies and losing sleep over the enormity of the route, which would include enough ascent to climb Everest several times over. Having no support crew would be tough psychologically, but the glaring problem it created was weight - I would have to carry all my kit, running 'mountain-marathon' style. I didn't

know if it could be done as I hadn't trained to take the extra strain of a pack for that length of time. I'd already made a commitment to go through with the run, so I only had one choice - slash weight as much as possible, 'trimming the fat' of any piece of kit and the kit list itself.

One of the biggest weight savings I made was in my sleeping system. In adventure races you carry either a very light tent or, if crazy, just a sleeping bag and a waterproof cover 'bivi bag'. I had both options available to me - but, after looking at the numbers, I realised both options were too heavy. I'd already gone to extremes- cutting the handle of my toothbrush (yes, a few grams saved here and there really does add up especially when you're running over two million steps!).



To have confidence in finishing the run I knew I had to go as light as possible - yet remain safe. I began looking at ways to ditch the sleeping bag. Perhaps using foil





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blankets inside a bivi bag would be enough to keep me alive at night yet prove light enough to carry through the day.

I knew I was being desperate now - there was no way that system would work. I realised that as soon as I moved, the foil sheets would move away from the body and all insulation properties would be instantly lost.

I spoke to a mountain leader friend of mine who always carries a vacuum-packed **Blizzard Survival Bag** made from **Reflexcell™** - asking if they were just glorified foil blankets. Apparently not. He informed me that they are actual sleeping bags made out of several layers of foil – and, more importantly for me, they were designed to be re-usable i.e. they didn't tear after one use.

After looking through the Blizzard Survival website and phoning the info line I decided to go with just a **Blizzard Survival Bag** - one piece of kit instead of two. This would do the job of both a bivi bag (it's fully waterproof) and a sleeping bag (it's insulated). I could see how, having three layers of foil, this would work like a down jacket - trapping pockets of air.

I figured the bag would last one week maybe two at most and planned to ask family or friends to post replacements ahead of me along the route. I was happy - with half a sleeping mat and a tarpaulin to cover my head, I knew I had the lightest practical



sleeping system to tackle a mountain marathon challenge. The whole system came in at under 700g.

It might seem excessive saving just 300g but the run was approximately 2.4 million steps, so that 300g would have had to be lifted on every step. That's 2.4 million x 0.3kg = 720,000kg's. 720 tonnes of extra lifting! It's that extra strain that could see an athlete fail short of the mark. It could well have been the difference between sore feet

and stress fractures and success. Imagine running a marathon, over mountainous terrain and then at the end of each week having to lift over a hundred cars, before repeating this the following week. Over these distances saving weight, whilst keeping equipment stable and safe, is paramount.





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To my surprise the Blizzard Bag lasted over a thousand miles before it started to show signs of abuse. The bag is designed to be used in emergencies and is reusable for the next emergency you may encounter. I used the bag nearly every night for 6 weeks. It was packed away wet and sat on like a cushion during food stops - this thing was abused - and it lasted.

In my opinion, any athlete looking for the lightest possible sleeping system on the market today, that is practical to use, should look no further than a Blizzard Survival bag. I won't lie, it's far from comfortable, it doesn't breathe well (but in my opinion no Goretex bivi bag can deal with the amount of sweat coming of an athlete's body after running a marathon over mountains). You will get wet with condensation - but you will be warm no matter the weather outside. The weight saving is too much of an advantage for any athlete to ignore. Quite simply, if you want to travel fast and light, nothing compares.

Kevin Carr.

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