

Athlete diary **Helen Decker**



Ipswich JAFFA's Helen Decker is gearing up for the performance of her life at the Commonwealth Games this month, where she will represent England in the marathon. Following a stunning run at the Virgin London Marathon back in April - finishing as 3rd British woman and smashing her own PB in 2hrs 36mins 56secs - she was automatically selected for not only the Commonwealth team, but also Team GB at the European Championships in Barcelona, where in July she helped the British ladies secure the team bronze medal. The diminutive athlete from Ipswich, coached by Clive Sparkes, has seen a meteoric rise in performance and profile

over the last few years. A relative late starter to the sport, she only took up running 'for a bit of fun' in 2004, winning her local fun run and then ran her debut marathon in 2005 finishing in 3hrs 13mins 27secs. Now only five years later, she has shaved an incredible 40 minutes from her marathon PB and is making huge performance improvements over all distances. Helen's training is currently in full swing for the Commonwealth Games and she is thrilled to be representing England for what is going to be the challenge of her career so far. Helen would like to thank her sponsors - Customer Service Direct & Destination Gold project, Suffolk Sports aid foundation, Martlesham Leisure Health Club, Team Ipswich, Caring Touch, Mizuno, Suffolk Physiotherapy, Altitude Centre (Covent Garden, London) and her coach, Clive Sparkes, and family for their support. Find out more about her at www.helendecker.com.tion. I like to rest and sleep as much as I can before the day of the race, to ensure I perform to my full potential.



HERE'S HER DIARY:

MONDAY

am: easy 6 miles - ran without a watch and just enjoyed it
30 mins core stability work

pm: Hard long track session at club night. 1 mile warm up. 12 x 1k at controlled pace 3.30, with 1min rolling recovery. 1-2 mile warm down. This is a great marathon training session and I enjoy the longer intervals.

TUESDAY

am: long steady run 15-18 miles - Tuesday is always my worst day, felt 'leggy' after session last night, but good to get the miles in.

pm: 90 mins Gym for strength work & physio - gym work and cross training is so important to keep me injury free.

WEDNESDAY

am: easy run 6 miles - nice easy run, enjoyed it.

pm: Hard session: 10 miles fartlek. We have a set fartlek loop in my local park, which is around 2 miles, with 7 efforts of various lengths, some on grass, some on paths and a couple of hills. I run about 1.5 miles there as warm up from coach's house, then do three laps of the fartlek loop, then run 1.5m back as recovery. I felt good today and coach was pleased.

Massage - essential to keep me injury free

THURSDAY

am: Easy 7 miles - felt a little tired this morning, but I don't like morning runs, so just took it easy.

pm: Gym & steady 8 miles - felt great on 8 miles, quite quick.

FRIDAY

am: Longest steady run of 28 miles - I always look forward to my long run. I meet my coach at his house and we leave from there, he comes with me on his bike and has always pre-planned our route. Today went really well, felt good the whole way, one of the best long runs I have done, and as this is my longest run to complete, I feel really confident.

pm: Massage - Light Flush though to remove the build up from long run.

Physio - Will just checks my back and certain areas that characteristically tighten up after my long run, he puts things straight again and stretches and loosens me out if needed, so that I do not suffer the following day.

SATURDAY

am: Easy 5 - bit leggy again, not surprised really, so took it easy

pm: Rest/Swim/light Cross training
Massage - More deep massage to remove any knots or sticky fibres after things have settled from the previous day.

SUNDAY

am: Easy 5

pm: Tempo run 7-8 miles - I aim to run this tempo pace, which means I should be working hard, but not eyeballs out. The pace varies depending on how tired I am, but normally about 5.45 - 5.50min miling. If I am doing a marathon pace run, it will be a little slower around 6min miling, and will be a little easier. Didn't feel to bad considering I have clocked more than 100 miles this week.