



Checkpoint and Crewing Tips for UTA100

By Brendan Davies

Checkpoints are the key stoppages during the race. They are there to replenish you physically, nutritionally, mentally and psychologically. Paradoxically though, the longer you linger the harder it is to get the benefit. A good set amount of time I believe is between 2-5 minutes per Checkpoint (if all is going to plan, perhaps even quicker!)

The key is to be prepared. Just like your race kit, you have to plan and prepare your needs and brief your crew well in advance. Don't leave it to the last minute as it will only add stress to everyone in the time when you should be relaxing and mentally preparing for the race.

A small stoppage can do you the world of good so it's important not to rush too much. You can lower the heart rate, take a slow drink, eat something substantial, chat to family and friends and receive encouragement.

UTA50

- One major CP at QVH (28.4km)
- Fairmont Resort at 17km and Helipad Basic Station at 41km
- Do not hang around at the CPs – easily done and time 'lost'
- Ask the vollies for help if needed – refill water etc
- Don't use any food unless you have tried it before during training (potential for gut issues)
- Carry water based on time needed between CPs – minimise weight wherever you can
- Make sure you are well fuelled at 41km Emergency Station to conquer the climb and stairs

UTA100

In UTA100, there are two approaches to checkpoints and crew you can take.

1. WITHOUT CREW (Using Drop Bags)

- Remember that CPs are manned by volunteers – be nice to them, they are giving their time for you.
- Use a safe and sturdy bag or small insulated cold bags. Anything with a zip will keep it safe and secure in transportation. Cold bags will keep cold drinks chilled too, which is very helpful.
- Label your bags using a sticker. Don't write directly on the bag as you will probably use these bags again one day and you don't want to permanently mark the bag.

- Have pre-filled bladders or bottles of water ready to 'swap and go' if you own multiples. This will save time having to fill up out of the communal tubs. As you run into Checkpoints, get your bladder out and ready to swap. Little seconds all count.
- If filling bladders at Checkpoints, don't forget to vacuum seal the bladder by turning it upside down and sucking the air out before putting into your pack. Trust me, the slushing sound will drive you crazy!
- Pre measure and nutrition powders in bottles in advance so all you have to do is fill the bottles with water at the checkpoint.
- Any unused food and drink is returned in your bags at the end. Pack extra gels, bars, bananas, solids. Better to have more than less.
- If you don't carry Vaseline, sunscreen etc in your pack, make sure it's in your drop bags.
- Have a plan and back up plan for what you think you will need at each CP:
 - ✓ Fueling – replacement of fuel, gels etc
 - ✓ Clothing – dry shirt, socks etc
 - ✓ Medical – rub, blisters, hot spots

Advantages: You are in control of everything on race day, you don't need to worry about organising and briefing anyone else, it's logistically easier to organise and plan and takes the burden of you planning crew movements and timings.

Disadvantage: Will take longer to collect drop bag and replenish drinks/bladders on your own, lack of moral support when you may really need it. No one close to you to help problem solve, give you a kick along if you need it!

2. WITH CREW

- Only one vehicle per runner is permitted at CP3 & onwards, but unlimited crew are allowed. Consider your crew taking 'shifts' if you are going to be out there during the night.
- If possible, visit each Checkpoint with your crew before hand or at the very least get the GPS set or maps ready for them.
- Prepare bags as if they are drop bags, clearly labelled with Checkpoint number, write out detailed instructions for crew. It's hard work and a long day crewing so make life easy for them.
- Work out your rough splits and then be generous with the ETA at Checkpoints. Even though you may be very unsure, write out a list of times for your crew- start with 'likely', then add 'if I'm having my dream run' and 'if I'm having a tough day'. It just has to be estimates, after the first CP your crew will be able to use that time to judge the next CP time etc.
- I like my gear/food and water laid out on the ground before my arrival. That way I can see it all and take what I need. Stick to your nutrition plan even if you don't feel like taking all the food or water, at least you'll have it if you need it. But listen to your body i.e. don't fuel because you are suppose too if you are feeling unwell
- Have crew pre-fill bottles, bladders as per your instructions. This will save time.
- Take a blanket and pack a chair(s) for your crew, but not one for you!
- Have a look at the Checkpoint diagrams and organise a spot for your crew to be (roughly, eg left or right of the shute, towards the front or back etc.). There are always lots and lots of people around at CP 3 and sometimes your crew may not see you come in.

- Crew, try to minimise gear to carry at each CP to 1 basket/bag as sometimes the walk from the car to the CP location may be up to 300m.
- Crew, do NOT hang round at CP 3 - the fastest run leg is CP3 to CP4, so get going straight to the Aquatic Centre in Katoomba
- Don't forget to thank them profusely and if it's a loved one, give them a big sweaty hug and kiss. If they get something wrong, let it go and don't sweat the small stuff if things are perfect.
- Suggest a range of clothing for your crew. It will potentially be warm during the day so light clothing is best, but come early afternoon and especially night it gets very cold very quickly so warm gear will be needed. Every time I have raced, my wife Nadine has worn a T-Shirt at CP3, then jacket and gloves at Queen Vic (CP5). Crew will feel the change in temperature sooner and more intensely than you will. They are more exposed to the elements (waiting at Checkpoints) than you tucked away in the bush with your body heat keeping you warm.
- Encourage crew to take a book or MP3 player to keep them occupied. It's OK for them to get to Checkpoints early, but they will get bored quickly especially if they are solo.
- Don't forget you have your phone, you could always ring ahead when you are near CPs, especially if you need something unusual or out of the ordinary.
- Don't forget your crew are not mind readers. Think about what you are going to say as you approach the CPs. You can never have enough detail. If you need to request something out of the ordinary for the next checkpoint, speak slowly and calmly and repeat if necessary.
- There can be long delays (1/2 hr) getting in to CP 5, so although you don't need to rush, be careful you leave time as half of Tablelands Rd is blocked off, so traffic is held back
- Write a plan and brief your crew on how to support you if things go pear shaped. Do you need tough love, support, problems solved, encouragement etc? What is the best things to say and do if you are injured, feeling soreness like you've never felt before, mentally over it, cold, feeling like pulling out etc.
- This is just a personal thing that Nadine and I have agreed to, but for Nadine crewing ceases a maximum of 24 hours after I finish the race. If I can't tie my own shoelaces, get my own drinks etc after that, bad luck...it's thirsty and thongs to work for me!

Advantages: Much quicker transitions, support both mentally and psychologically, can provide solutions to unforeseen circumstances. (Has helped me each year!) and much much more.

Disadvantages: More planning involved, if it's your wife or husband crewing, there is the obvious 'payback' too!

To view a FREE webinar presentation that UP Coaching presented on this topic, which also included detailed descriptions of both UTA50 and UTA100 courses, please download here:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/4774564746163284484>