**ULTRA MAMMA’S CORNER**

BLISTERS… (PART 1) PREVENTION BEFORE EVENTS

by Nancy Shura-Dervin

Of all the things that can throw a wrench in our ultra running plans, the blister tops the list for me! Blisters are one area where "damage control" really makes a difference and improves your chances of making it to the finish line of a long distance race!

First... think "prevention"!

To begin, examine your feet. Areas of concern to look for are (1) callouses or thickened skin and (2) thick toenails. Failure to eliminate these two "issues" will increase your chances of blistering and will make repairing the blisters more problematic.

Next, get yourself a "Ped-Egg" for sanding down callouses when your feet are damp.

Then, get a large emery board for sanding down callouses when your feet are dry. These are about 8"-12" in length and have two sides (a smooth side and a rough side). You can often find these in spa salons or maybe the drug store.

About every other day, you will need to spend a couple of minutes working on your calloused areas to wear them down and maintain them to keep them away. The object is to sand your callouses gently at frequent, regular intervals versus getting too aggressive on rare occasions. Using the callous tools to regularly maintain your feet will keep callouses from re-developing each time you run. While feet without callouses may still blister, the blisters are not as deep, are easier to drain and less likely to become infected.

You also want to work on your toenails. Toenails that are thick tend to develop pressure blisters under the nail, which are very painful and very difficult to drain. For your toenails, you will need a regular 6" emery board (the kind to use on fingernails). About 3-4 times each week, you want to just sand down the thickness of each nail for about 30-seconds. The whole process should take about 5-minutes. You probably will need to put your thumb on the top of the file to move the file over the nail bed. After about 4-weeks of regular filing, your toenails will become thin and pliable and will be less likely to blister against pressure from the toe box. You know how good it feels after a black toenail falls off and there is no toenail there at all? Filing your nail surface down to paper-thin causes the same result. Just do it "gradually" and do not get too aggressive or it will cause pain. Keeping your nails thinned will reduce the likelihood of toenail blisters and if they do form, they will be much easier to drain. Keeping your nails trimmed straight across and very short will also help; suggest trimming the toenail length approximate bi-weekly.