

Inspector Gadget

I like gadgets, so it's no surprise that I made my new hobby an excuse to collect more of them.

GPS Watches

I really enjoy my [Nike+ GPS watch](#).



Nike+ GPS Watch

It's simple, and I love how it's an all-in-one package, with built-in USB. It records all the basics, including heart rate, distance, pace, and such – and it has a nice web interface as well.

I know that other watches record a bit more data, or have features like a virtual pacer, but this one had everything I needed, until now.

With a few weeks to go before the ultra, I had to accept that the Nike+ wouldn't cut it for the simple reason of limited battery life. Up until that point, I'd never run more than six hours, and the Nike+ watch only has about a 6-8 hour battery life when the GPS is turned on.

I wanted access to distance and heart rate data throughout the ultra, and I had to accept that it might take me eight hours or more to complete it. I might even need all twelve hours, so I had to go shopping again.

I accept that while I've played it loose with my training so far, I'll likely get more serious in the future, so I finally chose a watch made by Polar, a company that's focused first on athletic training and only secondly on GPS navigation.

The [Polar RCX5](#) probably has bells and whistles I've yet to discover, but I've configured it to show me what heart rate zone I'm in, the distance I've run, how long I've been running, and the time – all on one screen and I'm happy with that.

The reason it's good for ultramarathons is that it has a separate GPS unit that clips to my shorts, with a 20 hour battery life. What's more, when and if I start running ultras that take longer than

20 hours, I can buy a secondary GPS unit and it will switch from one to the other when the battery runs out. I hope that means it's a watch I can use for many years to come.



Polar RCX5

Hydration

On the somewhat lower-tech side, I bought a belt with water bottles that was terrible. They leaked and were made of such hard plastic that I struggled to suck from them. Lesson learned.

Now, for shorter runs (under 40k) I carry an [Amphipod 12 Ounce handheld](#).

For longer runs, I have an [Ultimate Direction 20 ounce handheld](#).

Both are nice, but I really like the form factor of the Amphipod. It just grips my hand, which is so much nicer than my hand gripping it, especially after a few hours. Also, using a handheld bottle appeals to me in that it keeps things simple. Just me and my water, in my hand.



Nutrition

When the time came to put together my kit for my first ultramarathon, I took into consideration what I'd found to work for me on my long runs, and so in terms of fuel and water, I had my Shot Bloks and Cliff Shots and a tube of [NUUN electrolyte tablets](#).

Light

For running in the dark, I found a small flashlight was more comfortable in rough terrain than a headlamp, and so I carried a [Fenix LD22](#) which has several advantages.

- It's light
- It's comparatively cheap
- It clips on a race belt or shorts
- It can be VERY bright (was that a bear I heard in the woods ahead!) or dimmed easily to conserve battery life
- The build quality makes me tingle. I just love carefully machined metal gadgets that glide, slide, and shift without sticking or rattling.

First aid and other gear

Most of the rest of my gear was required by the rules of the race. I'd be disqualified if I didn't have:

- an ACE bandage
- an emergency blanket
- a hat (I choose a Buff thingy because it was versatile)
- a cell phone
- a headlamp (I picked the smallest, cheapest I could find, since I was depending on the handheld flashlight - a [Fenix HL10](#))
- a mug that could hold hot liquids (for tea and hot chocolate at aid stations). I choose a [collapsable silicon](#) one that I never needed to use.
- and a whistle.

Additionally, I had a pair of running gloves (fingers get cold first), gaiters (to keep rocks out of my shoes), and a lightweight, breathable but waterproof, hooded jacket from The North Face that folds into its own pocket.

Amazingly, all this fit into my Amphipod waste pack.

You'll also see a stick of ProGlide. I don't have problems with chafing, but I wasn't taking any chances. On race day, I lubed everything from my navel to my knees, but mostly my waist band area, groin, and under my heart rate monitor strap.

