

FINISH LINE

THE LAST WORD

TOILET TRAINING FOR RUNNERS By Mike Searle

How one runner played an April Fools joke - on himself

Unlike a large percentage of the population, runners rarely encounter difficulties making regular visits to the toilet, indeed their problem is often the reverse, all too frequent trips to the smallest room.

Clearly this can prove rather tricky if you have to pull up mid-run for an emergency pit-stop, so if you're ever unfortunate enough to find yourself in this situation, I suggest you take greater precautions than I did when out running a few years ago . . .

On April 1st, 1988 (yes, April Fools Day), I was midway through a hard 12 mile run and several miles from civilisation, when I suddenly got that feeling we all dread. I needed the toilet and I needed it IMMEDIATELY! Mustering all my willpower in a desperate attempt to delay events, I upped my pace and attempted a dash for home (well I've always been an optimist!), but if you've ever tried sprinting with your buttocks clamped tightly together, you'll appreciate it's nigh on impossible!

I managed to hold out for about a mile but there was no way I could maintain this feat of endurance for the remaining 5. (in fact the signals I was receiving from my abdomen indicated that 5 yards would be too far!).

Turning a corner, I spotted a haven in bricks and mortar - a solitary house. Hiding my embarrassment, I screeched to a halt and politely hammered on the knocker.

What a sight I must have looked to the occupants; a squirming, sweating, scantily clothed stranger, gasping for breath and audaciously pleading to be allowed into their nice clean home to use their private facilities.

Yet despite my appearance, amazingly they said YES!

The owners were incredibly welcoming and I sprinted upstairs (Linford Christie would have come a distant second to me that day), straight into the bathroom, dropped my shorts and sat down with such force I even felt the toilet move! Everything was over in a few seconds but the feeling of relief lasted much longer, I was in heaven! Relaxing, I viewed my surroundings.

The bathroom was in total chaos, tools scattered across bare floorboards, a new wash basin propped up in one corner and a second toilet on my immediate left. Peering into the bowl of 'my' toilet, I was puzzled to find it totally devoid of any water. Suddenly the penny dropped (so to speak), or in my case, the entire Bank of England; clearly a new suite was being installed.

My worst fears were confirmed when I twisted around and saw that the toilet on my left was plumbed in, whilst the one I had just comprehensively christened wasn't! I had fouled up in good style!

Realising my blunder, I debated what to do. Should I go downstairs, act normally, thank my hosts and beat a hasty retreat, ensuring I never passed their door again lest they planned violent revenge?

No, that would be unforgivable after the hospitality they had shown me, I knew I must attempt to rectify matters.

I've never been much of a Mrs. Mop but I gave a passable impression that afternoon, especially considering the limited cleaning materials available. Returning downstairs, I profusely thanked my hosts, who even generously remarked that I could call again if ever I found myself in the same predicament.

Thank goodness I chose the honourable option!

The moral of my story is simple:- if caught short, forget your embarrassment and put your faith in human kindness, you might be pleasantly surprised. However, if you stumble over a selection of plumbing tools and the toilet feels slightly unstable . . . ■

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Mike Searle is a member of Helsby Running Club in Cheshire. He recommends carrying a toilet roll as essential kit if training on April Fools Day.