

Try this: Juggling while running the marathon

Toronto native will "joggle" through Victoria marathon

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As if running a marathon isn't tough enough, Michal Kapral of Toronto has flown into Victoria to run while juggling the entire route of the 29th annual Royal Victoria Marathon.

Kapral juggles three objects in a traditional cascade pattern while running, a sport known as juggling. The objects of choice for Kapral are millet-filled synthetic-leather "joggler" balls, about the size of tennis balls.

Kapral, 36, a Reebok-sponsored athlete, holds the Guinness world record for the fastest marathon run while juggling.

It's not his only record -- he also made it into the storied record book in 2004 for running the fastest marathon while pushing a baby stroller. It was from that record that he decided to try for the fastest marathon while juggling, a milestone he achieved in 2007 when he juggled a marathon in 2:50:12.

A year earlier, he made it into the book for juggling the world's fastest 10-kilometre race, which he clocked in at 36:27.

"I always wanted to get into the Guinness World Records book for something, I didn't know it would be this," said Kapral, just before demonstrating his juggling style down a hallway at the Fairmont Empress hotel.

Slender and soft-spoken, Kapral swings into a light-footed gait, juggling the balls while looking straight ahead. From the rear, his arms move in a typical runner's swing and the fact that he's juggling is imperceptible. That is, until someone passes him.



CREDIT: Bruce Stotesbury, Times Colonist

Runner Michal Kapral has set many Guinness records over the years, including the fastest marathon ever run while pushing a baby stroller. Victorians will get a taste of his latest milestone when Kapral juggles his way through this Sunday's Royal Victoria Marathon.

"I was running in the Boston Marathon when a runner passed me," Kapral recalled.

"He looked surprised, and then he looked over and saw Zach Warren juggling next to me. His eyes popped." Warren, an American, is Kapral's chief competitor for juggling records.

Kapral taught himself to juggle at the age of 10, but said he was never very good at it until he made a concerted effort to juggle in 2002. It took him about four months to become proficient.

"The trick is not to look at the balls, which I did when I started out," Kapral said. "Now I look straight ahead and just keep an eye on them with my peripheral vision."

At first, he would drop the balls 30 times over a marathon. Now he averages two drops a race.

Juggling does slow him down. When running a marathon without juggling, his time is around two hours, 30 minutes. Juggling adds 20 minutes to that time.

For novices, Kapral recommended learning how to run first, then learning to manage a three-ball cascading pattern. He suggested keeping arms close to the body so they move in a regular running arm-swing, and juggling the balls in a tight pattern with the balls going only as high as your eye level.

His desk job -- where he refrains from juggling -- is as editor-in-chief for Canadian Running magazine.

The 26th Royal Victoria Marathon takes place this Sunday, with early starts beginning at 6:30 a.m. Online, go to www.royalvictoriamarathon.com for more details and to see the course map.

The men's course record, set in 2006, is held by Nanaimo's Steve Osaduik at 2:16:49.

The women's course record goes back to 1989, when Edmonton's Val Cowaniec ran it in 2:42.32.

To find out more about the marathon, go to www.royalvictoriamarathon.com or to read about TC editor Denise Helm's journey to the start line go to her blog [Woman on the Run](#).

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