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Tired of your running shoes smelling all the time?

This summer has been particular tough on running shoes with many wet days both in training and racing. If, like me, you have tried everything to get that “smell” out of your shoes you might be interested in this age old (and proven) remedy.

The “best” advice to avoid your shoes smelling is to “wear socks and keep them dry”. This is not practical as a triathlete as we tend to race without socks with feet that are wet from both sweat and water from the swim (and rain!!)

Whilst many “products” are available they simply “mask” the problem like a “cheap perfume”. The smell is caused by bacteria which produce isovaleric acid. These bacteria love the environment of a triathletes shoe and unless you kill them you won’t kill the odor.

A common (but often overlooked) natural cleaning product is called Borax. **Borax** is another name for sodium borate, sodium tetra borate or disodium tetraborate. It’s a mineral: a salt that is used in detergents, cosmetics, enamels, fire retardants, fiberglass, insecticide, and even caviar!

You can buy it at the grocery store (in the cleaning products section – a 500g container is under \$5.00 at Woolies.

Cleaning method

1. Remove inner soles and clean your shoes thoroughly with soap and water (sunlight soap is fine). Use a brush (small nail brush) to remove stains if necessary. The soap and water will not harm the shoes so don’t be afraid to give them a good scrub.
2. Rinse off the soap with clean water
3. Prepare a solution of warm water in a bucket with about 4 litres of water and ½ cup of borax.
4. Place the shoes and inner soles in the bucket and weight them down with something heavy so they don’t float.
5. Let them soak for about 2 hours.
6. Rinse and let dry naturally

Mark Browne 13 March, 2011