

SaltStick Review (regular dispenser, \$23.95, mini dispenser, \$19.95)

BY CID CARDOSO, JR.

Anyone who has taken salt tablets during a long race has probably thought, "There has to be a better way to carry these things," especially on the bike. I've seen some pretty creative ways to carry these pesky but necessary salt pills, and I've tried many of them myself, ranging from film canisters zip-tied to the handlebars, to Tic Tac containers, to small Ziploc bags. Finally, now there is a better way. Invented by Jonathan Toker, triathlete and innovator, and manufactured and marketed by Toker Engineering LLC, the SaltStick is the best salt tablet dispenser on the market.

The SaltStick is a long cylinder, approximately 3-inch in diameter, which uses a concept similar to a Pez dispenser.

Dispensing one unit at a time, the Salt Stick holds the salt tablet in place until the user is ready to grab it, and then automatically moves the other units to the front of the dispenser, allowing the process to continue until there are no more tablets. The SaltStick achieves this process using a clever and simple coiled mechanism to move the tablets along the cylinder. By rotating the end piece, which is slightly larger in diameter, you move a smaller piece inside the main cylinder along the coils, thus moving the tablets toward or away from the mouth.

Available in two sizes, it can carry three to four tablets in the "mini" version or five to seven tablets in the regular version, depending on the need of the user and perhaps the length of the race. The end piece also matches the diameter of most bars, so it can be mounted on the ends of conventional drop bars, aerobar extensions, or in the back of the aerobar extensions, if these happen to be hollow and if the rider uses bar-end shifters.

I have used the SaltStick on long rides with good success. It is important to note though, that as much as I like the concept and the product, there are a couple of things that the user needs to be aware of before using it during a race. Because I use a flat or aero basebar, the mounting unit that comes with the big SaltStick did not work well.

Consequently, I used the rubber band that also comes with it to get a clean, simple, and aerodynamic mount, next to the aerobar extensions. However, as I rotated the end piece, the entire cylinder turned as well, so I had to make the rubber band tighter (which easily solved the problem). Then, the first time I went to grab the tablet, the plastic dispensing mouth came out as well. Miraculously, I was able to get the plastic piece back and then the tablet out without losing

any tablets or crashing. The trick is to actually allow the tablet to eject a little further before attempting to grab it. Perhaps I should have read the instructions a little more carefully—but after all, it is a salt stick, and the instructions had small print. From then on it was smooth sailing. I got tablets out easier than ever, while riding in a paceline without dropping a single one. I liked not having to search for Ziploc bags in my jersey pocket and not having to worry about trying to close film containers.

The SaltStick is really a neat and useful product that fills a need for those who enjoy long-distance races and workouts. Salt tablets are essential when going long in the North Carolina heat, and until now there was no great way to carry them. At \$23, it may seem a little pricey at first glance, and it may not be worth it if you're only using salt tablets once or twice. However, after dropping my Tic Tac bottle when grabbing my first salt tablet at Ironman Lake Placid a couple of years ago, I would gladly pay the price to have a carrier that works as



well as the SaltStick.

Note: The SaltStick can also be attached to belts, such as Fuel Belts and number belts, so that it can easily be carried during the run portion. Also, the makers of the SaltStick make their own salt tablets, which were developed with triathletes' needs in mind. Although the Salt Stick tablets work best with the SaltStick, due to the size of the tablets, they are not essential when using the SaltStick and are sold separately.

Cid Cardoso Jr., owner of Inside Out Sports, has been doing triathlons for over twenty years. He has competed in the Hawaii Ironman five times and has completed a total of fifteen Ironman races. A veteran of ultramarathons, he has competed in Team RAAM twice. He has seen equipment evolve with the sport and continues to test new products to assess their impact in performance. He trains, works, and resides in Cary, NC, with his wife, two daughters, and son. You can reach him at cidjr@insideoutsports.com.