

BEGINNER GUIDE

ZERO-TO-5K IN JUST EIGHT WEEKS



**RUNNING
SHOES GURU**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peyton Hoyal was a 2009 NAIA All-American in the Marathon event while attending Berry College in Rome, GA.

After graduation, he worked as a high school teacher, track/cross country coach, and continued to run competitively on the roads.

He began honing his coaching craft at this time, experimenting with his own training and researching the physiology and methodology of training theory extensively.

This produced a US Foot Locker Cross Country Championship Finalist, a Pan-American Games berth, a Junior Olympics top finisher, three USATF National Championships, and dozens of Boston Marathon qualifiers.

He continues to coach privately with ZAP Fitness Elite, and now works in the running industry as a territory sales manager for On, Inc of Switzerland.

PERSONAL BEST

8K - 0:24:56

10K - 0:31:27

HALF MARATHON - 1:08.12

MARATHON - 2:30.39



Disclaimer: although this training plan has been developed by a professional coach, the advice given in this E-Book does not constitute or replaces medical advice. Please consult with a doctor before starting any exercise or nutrition plan. Run safe!

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INTRODUCTION

Running is alive. It is a living entity that is organic, dynamic, and as individual as each person who takes up the activity. Some days, running gives you unparalleled energy and impressive stamina to take on your day. Others, it leaves you weary and worn, wanting only to lie down and rest your tired body. Through this exhaustion, though, there is a freedom that only the runner can know. It can be exhilarating, like setting a hard-earned personal best or breaking through a lengthy plateau, and is always there for you at the end of the day.

There is much written about how to take up a running program or train for your first 5K. This e-book is intended to be entirely different, yet will accomplish the same end goal — getting you off the couch and out the door, on your way to starting a lifelong partnership with running. As with any partnership, there will be good times and bad times. There will be struggles and moments of pure joy in the simple act of moving your body rapidly through space.

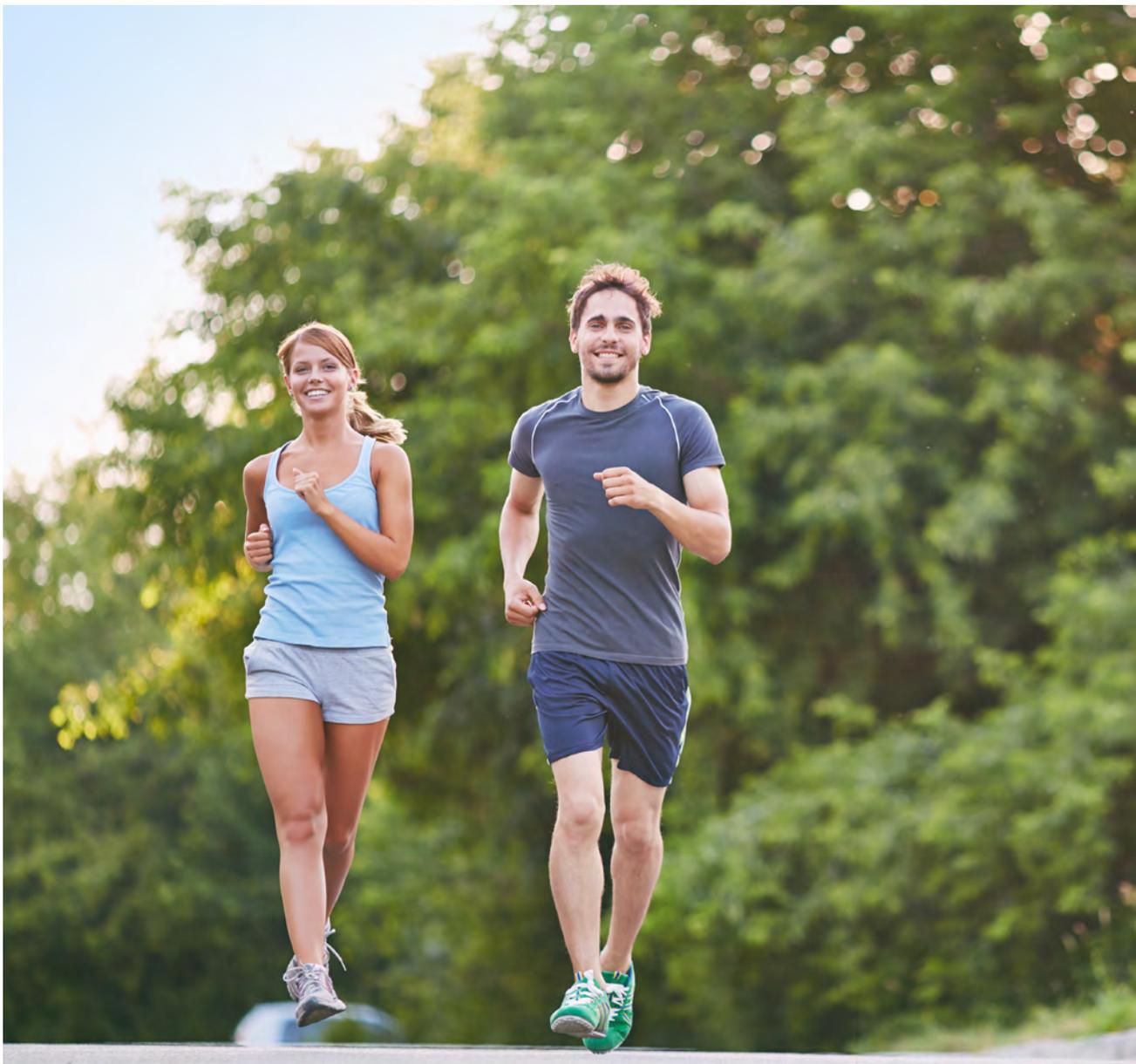
You see, we are all actually beginning runners no matter how long we have pursued the activity. Every new training season, every new goal, every single time you lace up your shoes you have the opportunity to be a new, better, and stronger runner than you were before. There is nothing wrong with newness, novicehood, beginning... In fact, most veteran runners would do almost anything to relive their glory days when running was brand new and at its most pure. Revel in starting something new, and we are very glad that your new pursuit is running!

This work features a host of great information for new runners via an interview with someone who has been there and done



that with his running, yet chooses to retain the title “beginning runner.” Through his word of wisdom, and coach’s notes to follow, you will take away key points as to what awaits you as you take your first running steps. Following the interview, you will be presented with a detailed beginner’s running plan to get you fit and ready for your first test as a new runner – a 5K race or time trial.

We hope that you find this production inspirational and informative, but most importantly that you will take up the sport for many, many years into the future as an ever-beginning runner!



RSG ZERO-TO-5K BEGINNERS' RUNNING PROGRAM

This eight-week plan will involve four days of physical activity a week, and will culminate in a 5K race at the end of the program. You have complete control over this plan in regard to what days best fit your schedule, but it is recommended that you space your running sessions out by 48hrs most of the time to allow for recovery and adaptation. Below is an example of how you might plan your week, just for reference-

Monday — Run/Walk + Core Exercises

Tuesday — Rest

Wednesday — Run/Walk + Drills

Thursday — Rest

Friday — Run/Walk + Core Exercises

Saturday — Long Walk

Sunday — Rest

You may ask, “do I have to complete a race at the end of this plan?” No, you absolutely do not! You can simply complete a 5K run on a local track (12.5 laps) or on a measured route near your home to validate your recent efforts. However, consider this — if you are a student attending a university course for eight weeks, working hard on all of your assignments, and you don’t take the final exam, how do you prove that you learned anything new? Comparatively, a race at the end of a solid training block is your opportunity to show-off your improvement! Be proud of what you have accomplished as a runner, whether it be in a race or not, but don’t be afraid to test yourself from time to time.



COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN

Running — Most of the run segments in the plan are interspersed with walking breaks. After a few moments of these alternations, your heart rate values should remain consistently elevated so your aerobic system will be stimulated throughout the outing. Run these segments at an easy to moderate effort unless otherwise stated. Faster is not better when you are just starting to build fitness! You should be breathing in a controlled manner during your runs, not doubled-over at the end of each segment. Easy running will also place less stress on your bones and joints as you are accumulating additional time spent running.

Walking — Your warm-up/warm-down walks, walk breaks interspersed within runs, and your Day 4 “Long Walks” should all begin as a leisurely stroll and build to a brisk walking pace. Don’t underestimate walking as a prime feature of this beginner plan! The walking motion is very close to the running action for your leg muscles, your heart rate will be elevated above its resting level, and you will be burning calories at a rapid rate.

Core Exercises — These should be completed twice per week as stated in the plan, immediately following your run/walks. The goal of these is not to “build six-pack abs,” but to strengthen the postural muscles in the trunk and hips to best support your running. These moves will help you stay injury free as you complete your eight-week plan, and work to protect some of the more vulnerable structures that take a pounding when running. Start these exercises at your ability level, and progress as you get stronger. This full session will take 10-20min to complete, and is well worth the investment!



These can be completed in the gym or at home, as not much equipment is needed. You may want to invest in a Swiss ball, 4-8lb medicine ball, pull-up bar, and yoga strap for stretching if desired.

Note – “**Core**” in this sense refers to fundamental muscles, not just your abdominals and lower-back.

1. Front Plank (20-60sec, hold)
2. Side Plank (both sides, 20-60sec hold))
3. Reverse Plank (20-60sec hold)
4. V Sit-Up (8-20 reps)
5. Superman Back Hyper (8-20 reps)
6. Push-Up (5-20 reps)
7. Tricep Dips (5-20 reps)
8. Pull-Ups (3-10 reps)
9. Wall Squat Hold (30-90sec)
10. Forward Lunge (6-12 reps each leg)
11. Reverse Lunge (6-12 reps each leg)
12. Side-Lunge (6-12 reps each leg)
13. Glute Bridge (10-20 reps)
14. Hamstring Curl (on Swiss ball or with legs propped on a chair/stool, 8-20 reps)
15. Clam Shells (10-30 reps each side)

Finish this set with some light stretching for the glutes, hip flexors, hamstrings, quadriceps, lower-back, abdominals, and upper-back/neck region. “Foam rolling” is also a good practice for self-massage following these exercises.

Technical Drills – These drills should be completed over 30-40m with an active pause of 20-60sec in between. A smooth, level surface is best for these (track, asphalt path),



but a greasy area can also be used for a bit more resistance. The purpose of these drill sets is to help you improve your running technique, strengthen/lengthen the running-specific muscle groups, and reduce injury risk by helping you spend less time on the ground when you are actually running. As you get stronger and more adept at the drills, you can extend each exercise out to 70-80m for an added cardiovascular stimulus; just be sure you are able to good technique on these, no matter how far you choose to go. Once form has begun to deteriorate, it is time to cease the exercise and walk for 30-60sec.

- Lateral Skips** — begin as you would a “jumping jack” and move laterally in a fluid motion
- Backwards Skips** — slightly exaggerated skipping, moving in the reverse plane
- High Knee Run** — run forward with an exaggerated knee lift; try to see how many times you can touch the ground over your given distance rather than rushing through these
- Tail Kicks** — run forward slowly while bringing heels to buttocks with each stride
- Hamstring Reach-Outs** — run forward with legs reaching out in front of you; land on your midfoot and try to reduce ground contact time
- Fast Feet** — run forward with feet and ankles moving as rapidly as possible with very small steps
- Caraoka** — move laterally with feet crossing over the opposite leg in a fluid motion with good rotation at the hips
- Bounding** — run forward with a driving style to exaggerate stride length
- High Skips** — run forward while exploding off the ground with each stride; knee lift and push-off are the keys here



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 4-5x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- 5-6x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 3x (Run 3min, Walk 2min)
- Walk 5min
- Core Exercises

DAY 4

- Long Walk (30-45min)



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 6-7x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- 7-8x (Run 1min, Walk 1min), ■ Walk 10min

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 4x (Run 3min, Walk 2min)
- Walk 5min
- Core Exercises

DAY 4

- Long Walk (40-50min)



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 8-9x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- 9-10x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- 1x Technical Drills
- Walk 10min

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 5x (Run 3min, Walk 2min)
- Walk 5-10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 4

- Long Walk (50-60min)



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 11-12x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- 5x (Run 2min, Walk 2min)
- 1-2x Technical Drills
- Walk 10min

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 3-4x (Run 4min, Walk 2min)
- Walk 5-10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 4

- Long Walk (60-75min)



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 12-13x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

Optional Challenge — Run 4-5 of your 60sec segments faster than normal! Think, “hard but controlled” on these, not a full sprint. This will raise your heart rate, boost fitness, and allow you to burn more calories overall than running your normal pace.

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- 6x (Run 2min, Walk 2min)
- 1-2x Technical Drills
- Walk 10min

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 4-5x (Run 4min, Walk 2min)
- Walk 5-10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 4

- Long Walk (70-80min)



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 13-14x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- 7x (Run 2min, Walk 2min)
- 1-2x Technical Drills
- Walk 10min

Optional Challenge — Run 3-4 of your 2min segments uphill at a hard, but controlled effort. Fast hill running will drastically elevate your heart rate, strengthen your running-specific leg muscles, and zap calories at a faster rate than steady running.

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 4-5x (Run 5min, Walk 3min)
- Walk 5-10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 4

- Long Walk (80-90min)



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 15-16x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- 8x (Run 2min, Walk 2min)
- 2x Technical Drills
- Walk 10min

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 2x (Run One Mile, Walk One Mile)
- Core Exercises

Optional Challenge — Run your second full mile at a hard effort to gauge your fitness level after seven good weeks of training! These miles can be on a local track, treadmill, or measured outdoor course.

DAY 4

- Long Walk (70-80min)



DAY 1

- Walk 10min
- 10x (Run 1min, Walk 1min)
- Walk 10min
- Core Exercises

DAY 2

- Walk 10min
- Run 10min
- 1x Drills, Walk 10min

DAY 3

- Walk 10min
- 5K Race!!
- Walk 10min

DAY 4

- Long Walk
(after race day, to help with muscle recovery; 50-60min)



That's it! You have gone from Zero to 5K in eight weeks!

Now, it's time to assess how you are feeling both subjectively and objectively. Ask yourself the below questions

- 1.** Do I feel more fit and healthier than I did at the beginning of the plan?
- 2.** Did I incur any injuries over the course of the two-month program? Did they set my training back at all?
- 3.** Did I surprise myself in my 5K test effort? Was it faster or slower than I expected? Was it easier or harder to run 3.1mls without stopping than I thought?
- 4.** Did I lose any weight along the way commensurate with my goals? Did I build lean muscle mass and reduce body fat?
- 5.** Do I want to keep running for a long time into the future? Do I have the "bug" now and am already looking to go further and further up the race distance spectrum?

Hopefully, you answered yes to number five and are ready for your next challenge! RSG has a host of Beginner and Intermediate training plans available to help you on your next running journey. We hoped you enjoyed this e-book as much as we enjoyed composing it, and we look forward to reading your comments on the site. All the best as you start each day as a new and better runner!



INTERVIEW WITH A “LIFELONG BEGINNING RUNNER”

We all have something that spurred our running along in its infancy. What was it for you? When did you first start running?

Ben R.

AGE 54
USA

Ben R. I was an athlete in high school, playing baseball and football all four years, but I didn't really start running until I joined the Army in the 1980s. Our physical training in the military back then was very rigorous. We ran two and three times per day, but it was always in formation and usually over short durations. I continued to run after basic training for leisure, but didn't pick it up again for almost twenty years after leaving the service. Work, life, marriage, and kids took over there for a while.

In the early 2000s, I picked running back up to lose weight and be more active. My son started running around that time, so it was something we could do together at our own paces. I convinced a close group of friends to start running with me, and before we knew it we were all fit enough to start running 5Ks, 10Ks, and eventually half-marathons.

How much weight did you lose? What techniques did you employ to fit dieting around your running, and were you able to keep the weight off long-term?

Ben R. I lost over thirty pounds in less than a year of consistent running and walking. At the time, the low-carb diet was all the craze. I cut-out most breads, starches, sugar, junk food,



and really tried to watch my portion sizes. Veggies and lean meats were a big part of my diet, and I would supplement with gels on longer runs to give me a boost if needed. Even during periods when I wasn't running as much, I tried to maintain a healthy diet in order to keep the weight down. Honestly, though, I admit that running made me very hungry and sometimes I would splurge on a burger or Chinese food.

Coach's Notes — Running is an excellent way to lose weight, as you will be burning approximately 100 calories per mile (no matter how much walking you do). Ben's story only confirms this fact, and developing a love of running is a big step in losing weight and keeping it off for good.

The traditional low-carb diet that was popularized by such as books as "The Atkins Diet" in the late 90s has begun to fade somewhat, but I agree with Ben on the whole. Carbohydrates fuel the body for exercise, but excess carbs in the system will still eventually be stored as body fat. Therefore, try to appropriate your carbohydrate intake to your level of exercise and activity in general. Vegetables, fruits, lean meats/dairy, and healthy oils should be the cornerstones of anyone's diet, with carbohydrates such as bread, rice, and pasta being consumed to supplement one's individual needs. An elite runner training over 100mls per week will have drastically different calorie and carbohydrate needs than someone running 12mls per week, so keep this in mind when choosing your carbohydrate portions if you are trying to lose or maintain weight.

Nutrient timing is also an important concept to consider when your training volume begins to increase. Eating the bulk of your daily carbohydrates soon after a run or hard exercise session will help ensure that your energy stores are replenished between workouts. If you train more than four times per week, and if



some of those sessions are longer than 60min, try to consume some carbohydrate and protein calories with lots of fluid within an hour of exercise to restock muscle glycogen and keep your energy levels consistent. If you have a sweet tooth or need to nip a craving in the bud, the best time to indulge in that is pretty soon after your run. Your body will be able to best utilize the additional sugar and calories at this time, and it will have the least negative impact on your body composition. Just remember that moderation and individualization are keys to success if you are trying to lose/maintain weight.

What helped you maintain your motivation after the initial honeymoon with running had begun to fade?

Ben R. Running was a big stress-reliever for me, and I don't know if my enjoyment really began to fade much after the first few months. It gave me a chance to think about my day, get outside, and just do something other than work and go home each day. Running with friends really helped me get out the door, especially early in the morning or when it was cold (I'm a warm weather guy...). Picking a new race every month or two also gave me that extra push to go run. You can't fake it though a 10K or half-marathon, and I knew that I had to work pretty hard to finish those races.

Coach's Notes — Often, your enjoyment of running will begin to shift in many different directions as you mature as a runner. Finding new motivations such as running with friends, choosing fun races, and selecting new challenges will all help keep your spark fresh. However, a simple enjoyment of running and the way it makes you feel is perhaps the biggest hallmark of a lifelong runner, so that does have to be in place first and foremost.



What was a typical training week like when you first started running? How did you increase your time spent running over time? Were you doing any non-running fitness activities, as well?

Ben R. I tried to exercise at least every other day when I first started. My “runs” included a good deal of walking, even at my best. I’d say that I started with around 30min of activity every time I went out the door. It evolved from mostly brisk walking with some running interspersed, to being able to run the full half-hour. Then, I added time until I had structured the week to eventually include 2-3 days of 40-80min run/walks, and one longer weekend outing where I would stay out as long as time would allow. I think I had some run/walks close to three hours by the time I ran my first half-marathon, but I don’t really know how much ground I was covering. This was when GPS units were rare.

I lifted weights occasionally with some work friends for fun, and I would ride a stationary bike some days if the weather was bad or I just needed a break from the pounding of running. I never really stretched or did any formal strength training, though. I know that I should have been doing that stuff, even early in my running.

Coach’s Notes — Ben is 100% correct about needing to start a consistent ancillary program early in your running. One of the biggest deterrents to beginning runners staying with the sport is injury and discomfort while running. To combat this, following a simple strength and conditioning program like the one below in the plan will work wonders in keeping you healthy and preventing imbalance. An ounce of prevention is truly worth a pound of cure in this case.



Another huge issue that can impact runners at any level are the detrimental effects of sitting for prolonged periods of time. If you work in an office setting, drive extensively, or otherwise sit more than a few hours per day you are in danger of the below anatomical consequences-

- 6.** Short, tight hip flexors
- 7.** Weak, inactive glutes
- 8.** Stiff hamstrings with limited mobility
- 9.** Poor posture that will carry over to your running

To combat these issues in turn, spend time each day doing the below quick fixes for these issues-

- 1.** Kneeling lunge stretch for the hip flexors and standard quadriceps stretch for the front of the thighs.
- 2.** Clamshells, body-weight squats, and side-lying leg lifts to activate the glutes
- 3.** Active hamstring stretching and drills such as leg swings to improve range of motion
- 4.** Stand with your back to a door jam, and reach both arms backward to open the chest and shoulders; this will help alleviate forward-leaning posture, and it feels really good, too



Did you have any injuries or other set-backs when you trained for your first big race?

Ben R. Not really. I remember being pretty sore after some longer runs, but I wouldn't call that being injured. Later in my running, I had a pretty bad case of plantar fasciitis that made me change my gait. I ended-up hurting the outside of my ankle, and needed to take some time off after that one. I think the biggest set-backs I had were working up to seventy hours per week at the business I owned at the time. Sometimes, I just couldn't keep it all together. That's why morning running always worked the best for me.

Coach's Notes – Injuries and setbacks happen to virtually every runner. It is all about how quickly you are able to correct the issue, and how ready you are to actively treat the problem area. Beginning runners are most prone to suffering from “shin splints” (medial tibial stress syndrome), plantar fasciitis (pain near the heel and arch of your foot), patella tendonitis (Runner's knee), and Iliotibial band syndrome (ITBS). The modern approach to treating each of these issues will involve the below techniques, each applied to the specific area of a person's discomfort-

- 1.** Deep tissue work (massage, active release technique, etc.) both above and below the injury site to increase circulation to the area and relieve tight structures
- 2.** Corrective exercises to strengthen the injured area and its surrounding structures
- 3.** Correctly applied flexibility/mobility exercises to relax tight muscles
- 4.** Heat and electrostimulation prior to running to bring fresh blood to the injured area and enhance the healing process



5. Consultation with a physical therapist, chiropractor, or sports doctor who works with runners regularly if a problem persists for more than week or so

Apart from acute injuries such as ankle sprains or muscle pulls, most elite athletes and coaches have begun to move away from the traditional RICE (REST_ICE_COMPRESSION_ELEVATION) approach to injuries. Ice and anti-inflammatory medication can be great for the first 72hrs following an injury, but can often delay the healing process for more chronic injuries that runners tend to get. These approaches require minimal effort on the part of the runner, but committing to more holistic, active therapies will help you treat the root of a problem rather than just the symptoms.

What were some of your biggest day to day challenges with maintaining your running routine? How did you work around those and mentally put them in perspective? How did you handle the occasional bad run?

Ben R. Getting out the door and being consistent was always the ever-present challenge. The thought of “going for an hour-long run” is sometimes far worse than actually doing it, and I just always tried to remember that when I laced up my shoes. I tried to keep my goals in mind with every run. I was enjoying feeling better after losing some weight, and it really boosted my self-confidence and mental state. Running was a treat to me, and it gave me some alone time to think or listen to music.

Bad runs... Honestly, many of the runs that started off badly for me ended-up being some of the better runs I can remember. I would just stay outside and move until I felt better. It didn't matter how slow I had to go, I just kept the



goal of finishing the run/walk in mind. Again, getting out the door is always the biggest challenge. The run often took care of itself once you got a few blocks from the house.

Coach's Notes — See above! That is really the best way to put it, I think. Aside from Ben's thoughts, it can be helpful to write your goals somewhere you can see them every day. A list of 4-6 attainable goals, placed on your bathroom mirror or on the refrigerator, will work as a gentle reminder of why you are choosing to run and take better care of your body.

What were some of your biggest motivators in terms of books or movies about running?

Ben R. I read Runner's World and a few other magazines for tips and articles to keep me motivated. While a bit repetitious at times, I would always glean something new from the publication in regard to nutrition, injury prevention, and general running advice. Runner's World introduced me to Jeff Galloway's run/walk programs, which led me to buy his various books. It was comforting to learn that other new runners used a conservative, realistic approach involving gradual increases in mileage through gentle running and walking rather than "everyone" being able to hit the ground at a sprint, so to speak.

My son and I would also watch movies like 'Prefontaine' and 'Without Limits' before his high school races, too. Secretly, I really admired the Steve Prefontaine story and it got me out the door more often than I would openly admit. I thought it was cool, and really motivating when you needed that extra push. I would even occasionally put myself mentally in a place where I was running an Olympic final or leading



a big city marathon — nothing wrong with dreaming, but the reality was that I was still running pretty slowly out there on the road!! You have to keep it fun, and when you're running, you can pretend you are anything you like.

One more pretty big motivator to me was the Danny Dryer book “Chi Running”. This one had some great tips on form, technique, and enjoying your running based on Tai Chi principles and common sense. I liked that one a lot, although I never really followed the method to a ‘T’ or anything like that. I still think the form tips acted as gentle cues to correct any exaggerations in my stride.

Coach’s Notes — Find what motivates you, be it a good running book, movie, or magazine articles. Sites like RSG are also a great modern resources filled with excellent articles, videos, and full-length publications to help keep you informed and excited about your running.

I like Ben’s notes on “Chi Running”, too. Running form is a very individual thing, and no two people will have the exact same “optimal” technique. The body develops what is called “preferred movement pathways” after running for a while, meaning each individual has slight muscular and joint movement preferences in regard to recruitment, activation, and biomechanics. To ensure that these PMPs are efficient and won’t eventually cause injury, establishing strong, flexible muscles and “practicing” running with greater frequency are great starting places. Also, try to keep the following pointers in mind in regard to technique, and be sure to complete the technique drills in the beginner plan below!

1. Engage your core and postural muscles while running! These muscles, when strong, will prevent excess rotation at the pelvis and stabilize the hips for greater power and efficiency.



2. Don't over-stride! Try to avoid landing far back on the heel with the knee fully extended ahead of you. Instead, gradually work on landing softer with the knee flexed rather than hyperextended. Running uphill a few times per week is the best practice for this.
3. Lean slightly forward from the hips to recruit the posterior chain (glutes, hamstrings), but don't hunch. This is the most efficient position for running, as leaning back can cause over-striding and put undue stress on your muscles and joints.
4. Minimize ground contact time by increasing your cadence. This will take time to perfect, but can work wonders in improving your overall form. Count your strides per minute to see where you currently stand in terms of cadence. Experts say that 180 strides per minute is optimal, but a range of 170-190 is probably more appropriate to accommodate various body/stride types. The key point is not to "lope" with longer, slower strides, and try to push off quickly from the ground with each step forward. The fast feet technique drill is a great asset to improve this part of your stride, as is occasionally running barefoot for a few minutes on grass.

Running footwear paradigms have shifted several times since you started running. What type of shoes work for you, and what advice would you give for new runners on selecting footwear?

Ben R. Oh, I'm no footwear expert, but I always liked fairly simple shoes that weren't overbuilt but provided plenty of cushioning. As a bigger guy, the "lighter, the better" type shoes never worked for me, but I didn't like big, clunky trainers either. Quality was important, but I wasn't going to



drop \$200 for a pair of high-tech shoes that would usually just disappoint me in their performance. My problem was usually finding a pair of shoes that I really liked, and wearing them for several weeks too long. When my legs would start to get unusually sore after runs, I knew that I needed a new pair ASAP. Honestly, I've really enjoyed various pairs of Nike, Brooks, Asics, and Hoka over the years, but never stuck to one particular brand or model.

Coach's Notes: As Ben notes, avoiding extremes in footwear is always a good rule of thumb when choosing shoes. Get fitted by an expert at a run specialty store, and try to understand the “why” behind the shoes that are selected for your foot and gait type rather than just accepting that you will always need a certain type of shoes. As you get stronger as a runner, you may be able to reduce the amount of support required to help you run efficiently, and “stability” may become less of an issue that other footwear parameters such as overall weight, materials used, and heel-to-toe drop that are highly individual. The biggest factor in footwear enjoyment is COMFORT, and that may be slightly different for everyone. The University of Calgary states shoe comfort as the number one variable in injury risk, so pick the pair that feels best on your foot based on recommendations, your pronation needs, and especially materials used in the upper portion of the shoe (to prevent blisters, chafing, etc).

What is your favorite running experience or memory?

Ben R. I ran my first half-marathon at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. It is still one of my happiest memories of running, and maybe in my life as a whole. The atmosphere, music on the course, and the excitement of doing something rather daunting that I had never done before all made for



a very memorable experience. I wouldn't change these races for the world, as ultimately the whole experience was so much fun.



Thank you Ben for your honest replies! I think that many runners will find this helpful and informative as they begin their running journey.

