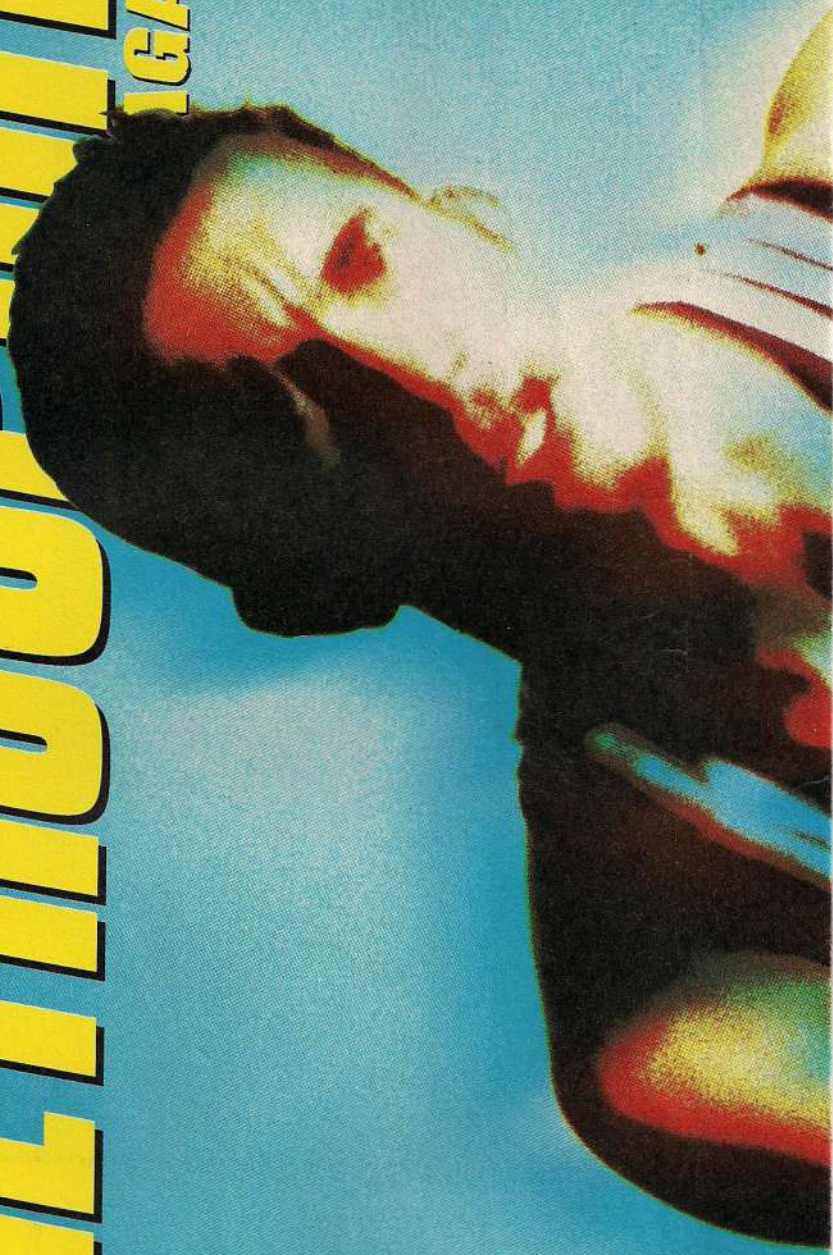
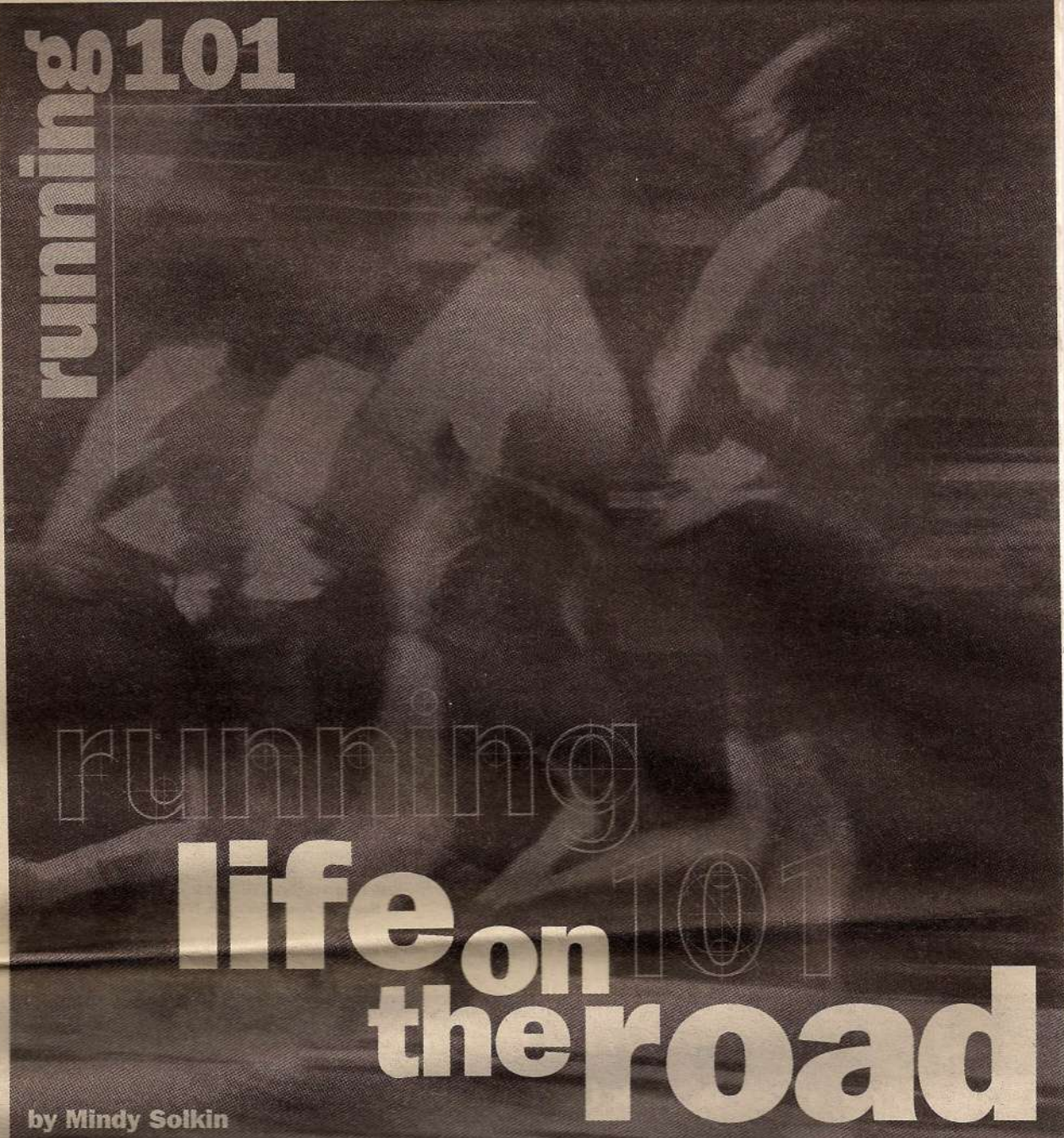


METROSPORTS

MAGAZINE





running 101

running

life on the road 101

by Mindy Solkin

Our April issue often focuses on the Boston Marathon, the spring's premier running event. As we devote our pages to this annual gathering, it dawns upon us, "What about runners who haven't reached that level yet? How about those who are just beginning? Those who simply run for the joy of it and are not consumed with racing?" The following article is devoted to you guys. (Note: experienced runners will enjoy this piece too, as it just might reinforce the reasons you fell in love with running in the first place.)

Quick! Name a sport where you don't have to be an elite athlete, yet you can perform the activity right alongside of them? A sport where there aren't any referees, judges, teammates or balls to alter your performance? If you answered running, you're right. The act of running in and of itself doesn't require a great deal of athletic skill, but as the late, great running philosopher George Sheehan once said, "Runners do not run because they are too slight for football or don't have the ability to put a ball through

a hoop or can't hit a curve ball. They don't run primarily to lose weight or become fit or prevent heart attacks. They run because they have to." "So," you might ask, "what can I learn from running, why should I choose it as a sport, and what makes it unique to all other sports?" Here are a few good answers:

- Running is the most efficient path to cardiovascular fitness and weight control. It's a great conditioner of strength, speed and stamina for other sports. For example, you don't play tennis to get into shape to run, you run to get into shape to play tennis.
- Running is the most accessible sport. No matter where you are, running shoes will travel. I have often toured many a city while running.
- Running is a great stress reliever and self-esteem booster. Moreover, since it requires discipline, it helps you through some of life's other pressures. Consider it as your shrink on the roads.
- Running is environmentally correct. Since our venue is the road, it is our duty to keep it clean. Rarely will you see a runner throw litter on the ground. *Respect the roads* is our motto.
- Running is an equal opportunity sport. Everyone who lines up for a road race is respected for their abilities, no matter what their pace, race or religion.
- Running is a social sport. During many other sports, you can't have a conversation with your partner. But with running, many friendships are developed on the roads. *Running buddy* is a familiar term.
- Running is a sport that continues to award and reward you with its age-group structure at races. This structure enables you to compete

against your peers in the same five- or 10-year age group and possibly win an age-group award. This is called *bringing home hardware*.

- Running is a lifetime sport. There are runners in their 70s, 80s and even their 90s!

As a running coach, I often begin my classes by asking for a show of hands with the question, "How many people run?" Then I ask a second question: "How many people know how to run?" Invariably, their hands stop just short of being fully outstretched, while chuckles permeate the air. I have always coached runners by not only teaching them how to run, but by educating them about the sport of running. For it is more than putting one foot in front of the other. There truly is an art and science to it.

The Art

Running is a very inexpensive sport. Proper running shoes, apparel, and the correct running surfaces, will get you to the finish line in comfort and without injuries. Keep in mind that a runner comes down onto the ground with a force that is approximately three times body weight. Therefore, make sure that the shoes you buy are made for your foot type. There are generally three types of shoes. **Motion-control** shoes are for overpronators, flat footed runners or heavier runners who need extra durability and medial support to stop the foot from rolling inward. **Cushioned** shoes are for underpronators, runners with high arches or efficient runners who need more cushioning and less medial support to encourage foot motion since they generally have rigid feet. **Stability** shoes are for runners with normal arches since they offer a combination of medial support and cushioning.

Technological advances in the apparel business have made running clothes more comfortable than ever thought possible. Fabrics and fibers called micro-fibers that are quick-drying and that literally wick the sweat away from your body are now available in tops, pants, jackets, socks, gloves, headbands, sports bras and underwear. To see just how these micro-fibers really work, take a cotton t-shirt and a micro-fiber top and place them in a tub of water. Wring them out and hang to dry. The micro-fiber top will be dry within 1-2 hours while the cotton top will still be wet the next day. This same reaction will happen on your body, as well.

Many of the running specialty stores carry these products. Ask the salesperson to point you in the right direction. Your body will thank you.

The best running surfaces have "spring" to them such as asphalt (the road); wood (the boardwalk); tartan (the orange-colored track that you find at most high schools); and dirt trails. Avoid running on cement for a continuous length of time since it doesn't provide any spring or absorption and tends to make your legs feel as if they were made out of cement, too.

The Science

The basic training principles of a running program come from the acronym **F.I.T.**, which stands for **F**requency, **I**ntensity and **T**ime. Frequency is the number of days per week that you run. In order to increase endurance and stamina, you should run a minimum of three days per week. If you run less than three days per week you will not build up any of the sport-specific muscles needed for running. However, as a beginner, it is best not to run more than four days per week. If you are a true novice, you might want to start with running one or two days and then build to three or four days. Try to run every other day, or no more than two consecutive days, to give your body a chance to recover.

Intensity, or the pace at which you run, is determined by your genetic ability, your biomechanics and your fitness level. Tests that determine your maximum heart rate and your resting heart rate can guide you towards the proper intensity. These topics are beyond the scope of this article, but a good rule of thumb is to take the "talk test" by being able to converse while running, without gasping for breath. Also, if you can hear your breathing you're going too

fast. Eventually, as you progress, your speed will pick up, too. Just let it happen naturally.

Time, or in the sport of running, the amount of miles, will depend on your running level and goals. To determine your pace per mile, find a one-mile flat course (most high school tracks are 1/4 mile) and test yourself by using a sports stopwatch. (A regular watch is not accurate.) Most beginners can run one mile in 10-12 minutes. A good starting point is to aim for one to two miles (approximately 10-24 minutes depending on your pace), with walking breaks as needed. Your next goal is to run continuously without stopping. Eventually, you'll want to build up your mileage to run farther, but not necessarily faster. Your mileage should never increase by more than 10 percent over the previous week's mileage. Always remember to stretch, both before, but most importantly after your run since running causes your muscles to shorten.

Running is a sport that gives you measurable results. Anyone who runs regularly will tell you that there is no better feeling for both mind and body. Because when you cross the finish line, you're a winner!

Mindy Solkin is a competitive runner and a USA Track & Field certified running coach. She is the owner of The Running Center, where she coaches runners in groups and privately, from one mile to the marathon. Mindy is also the running coach at Reebok Sports Club/NY and is the head coach for the Leukemia Society's Team In Training marathon program. She can be reached at 212-721-9863.

