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ED'S LETTER

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

We runners love an ambitious challenge. Whether it's signing up to a marathon, setting our sights on a new PB or seeing how many plates of pasta we can eat post-race. So when *MR*'s Isaac Williams offered to see how far he could run in 12 hours, we knew it was too good to miss.

The running world is full of tales of people covering extraordinary distances: Dean Karnazes running 350 miles in one go; the Japanese monks who run 1,000 marathons in 1,000 days; Tom Hanks making innumerable crossings of America in a baseball cap and clip-on beard.

Invariably, though, these people are either incredibly fit (Dean), on a journey towards spiritual enlightenment (the monks) or highly paid Hollywood actors (Tom). Isaac, bless him, is none of these things. Before this challenge, in fact, he'd never run further than 13.1 miles in his life. Underprepared? Certainly. Irresponsible? Probably. But in the name of investigative journalism, a plan was formulated: to head west along the Thames Path in the direction of Oxford between the hours of 7am to 7pm.

Along the way, there would be self-doubt and sausage rolls, regret and river dunkings. But at the end, hopefully there would also be a lesson: that we're all capable of the extraordinary. I hope you'll find plenty in this issue to inspire you on your own running journeys. Now, if you don't mind, I'm off to see how many bowls of pasta I can consume in 12 hours.

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STEVE WAY

The marathon and ultra star looks at stretching and asks whether it's really necessary to warm-up before you go for a run (p21).

MITCHELL PHILLIPS

The director of StrideUK, one of the UK's leading running technique analysis companies, reveals his top 10 tips for injury prevention (p42).

DOMINIC BLISS

Freelance journalist Dominic gets to grips with Strava Local, a new app that tells you the best running routes in cities arond the world (p68).

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MEN'S Running READ THIS, RUN BETTER

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© Isaac Williams

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STAR LETTER

THE INSPIRATION CYCLE

Eight years ago, my four-year-old son, Lewis, was diagnosed with Leukaemia and spent eight months in hospital. Inspired by his fight and the help he received, I decided to run more, enter events and raise money for Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research. Roll forward five years and Lewis, who is now a talented runner, has since applied the same determination to his training as he did to beating his illness. In February 2015 he won the U13 800m at the Scottish National indoor championships, breaking the age-group record in the process. Inspired by her brother, Lewis's twin sister, Lauren, also decided she wanted to try running. She is now training alongside him at Pitreavie and is already achieving times in 800m and 1500m that I could only dream of! Proving that inspiration is contagious and cyclical, both of them are now inspiring their ageing dad to keep running.
Campbell Blair, Edinburgh

Ed: That's a great story, Campbell. It sounds like your kids are quick, though, so here's a speedy pair of trainers to help you try to keep up. Good luck!

The writer of this month's star letter receives a pair of Skechers GOrun™4 trainers. The flexible, lightweight shoe is perfect for a variety of distances, from 5K to marathon **skechers.co.uk**

The female vote: Kate is a fan of *MR*

GIRLS ALLOWED

My boyfriend has been a runner for many years, and it's recently started to rub off on me. I'm really enjoying the physical benefits of running, and now my boyfriend and I have something healthy and fun in common. I tried reading women's fitness magazines, but found them far too focused on burning calories and getting a killer butt. *Men's Running*, while definitely not aimed at me, is far more enjoyable and useful. Your magazine is enjoyed by both genders in this household. Thanks!
Kate Lansley, Derbyshire

Ed: Always good to get the view from the 'other side', Kate. We aim to be a running magazine first and a men's magazine second, so it's great to hear *MR* is being enjoyed by both sexes.

BEATING THE BLUES

I wanted to comment on the 'Outrun depression' article in the August issue. I have suffered from depression for many years but only about three years ago decided to join a gym, lose weight and get into running. The science stuff in your article was very interesting and it is encouraging that it does reinforce the reality. The sense of personal achievement is a wonderful feeling, even when doing a 5K parkrun or out on your own and basically living in the moment. My biggest achievement to date is completing two half marathons but the will and desire to step up to a full marathon is still there. I have very much bought into the whole 'mindfulness' approach and running fits so well with that. I really related to the article and it has given me the extra push to join a local running club to help give me that structure, routine and support from fellow runners.
Martin Graham, County Antrim

Ed: Thanks, Martin. We were keen that the 'Outrun depression' piece contained plenty of scientific facts, rather than wishy-washy rhetoric about how running makes you feel good, so I'm glad you appreciated that element of the article. Good on you for joining a running club!

Moving forward: Tony has embraced parkrun

PARKRUN PERFECTION

Having lived in Germany for six years, the parkrun phenomenon has passed me by so far, although it sounded like a fantastic concept. Fortunately, I was home in Salisbury on 4 July to run my first parkrun and Salisbury's fifth edition. The event was also timely in that I had just read Martin Yelling's excellent article in the *MR* August edition on how to 'Perfect your parkrun'. I have to say that parkrun has to be the best running idea in recent years. An ideal distance for all standards, shapes and sizes and absolutely free! If you haven't tried one yet, you are missing an absolute running treat.
Tony Hodge, Germany

Ed: parkrun is a joy, isn't it? Free, welcoming and available to all, it's providing an easy entry point to runners of all abilities. Welcome aboard, Tony!

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Engadin SwimRun, Switzerland

A two-man team runs through the beautiful Engadin Valley during the brutal 53K SwimRun event. For a full race report, turn to page 93.

engadinswimrun.ch

worldmags.net

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#RUN

Ocean Floor Race, Egypt

Christian Schiester races through Egypt's White Desert during the 160-mile event. The winner, Steven Sleuyter, clocked 47hrs 59mins.

oceanfloorrace.com

worldmags.net

MY RACE FACE

Races are not catwalks – which is lucky, because few of us look good coming down the home straight. Here's a selection of some of your best/worst race faces

Alex Weston
Two Castles Run

Jonathan Scahill
Walled City Marathon

Patrick McCann
Spartan Stadium Sprint

Stephen Lewis
BUPA 10,000

TOP GURN

Paul Guy
Wheathampstead 10K

Karl House
Lichfield Half Marathon

Paul wins a 'Doggie Bag' from skincare brand Bulldog for all his grooming needs **meetthebulldog.com**

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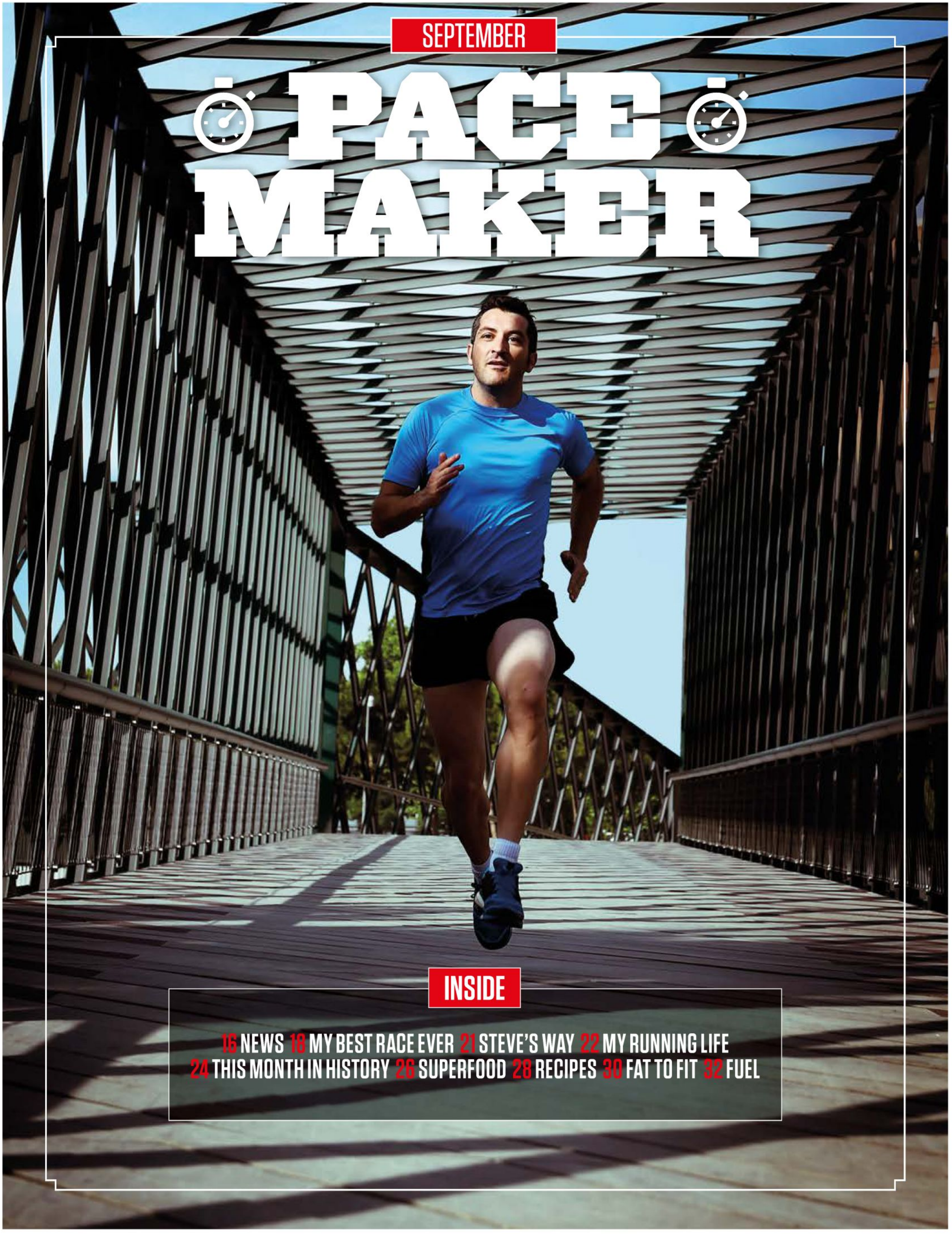

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IN THE NEWS

BEAT THE SUN

At sunrise on 21 June, five international teams set off from the mountain-sports mecca of Chamonix to attempt what's been described as "nature's toughest trail challenge" – to run around Europe's highest peak, Mont Blanc, before sunset. Of the five teams, each made up of three pro athletes and three amateurs, only two managed to 'beat the sun': with Team Americas pipping Team Europe South to the victory by a mere 10 metres in a dramatic sprint finish.

beatthesun.asics.com/uk

© ASICS

15 MINS WITH...

NICOLE SAPSTEAD, UKAD CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Doping in athletics has been under the spotlight recently. How is UKAD helping to keep the sport clean?

It is incredibly important that we educate our athletes from a young age, to help them make the right choices during their career; giving them confidence that when they step onto the start line, they are doing so 100% clean. UKAD works to identify cheats by strategically testing sports and athletes who we know are at a high risk of doping.

Is doping only a problem in top-level sport?

Doping is a concern at all levels of sport. Unfortunately, where there's a system or rules, someone will always try to cheat or break them – that's human nature. We have research and anecdotal evidence to suggest that in some sports doping is prevalent at the amateur level as athletes don't think they will be tested or don't understand the risks.

Dopers are constantly finding new and sophisticated ways to cheat. How are you managing to keep up?

The biggest tool in the armoury is that we we can now store samples for up to 10 years. So just because you are cheating now, and you don't get caught, doesn't mean that we won't catch you in the future.

For more information, visit ***ukad.org.uk***

EWWWWW

© @TheMudDay - Twitter

POO LA LA! IS THAT MERDE IN THE MUD?

More than 1,000 runners fell ill last month with vomiting and diarrhoea in a French mud run, after animal faeces was suspected to have been found in the mud. After a surge of complaints from runners, event organisers promised they would find out what caused the upset stomachs. However, it is thought that animal manure had been mixed in with the mud.

9news.com.au

HUGHES THE MAN?

Zharnel Hughes, a teenage sprinting prodigy who's been training alongside Usain Bolt, has been ruled eligible to compete for Team GB. The 19-year-old, who was born in Anguilla but has held a British passport since birth, is now eyeing the 2016 Rio Olympics.

bbc.co.uk/sport

Words Isaac Williams

HELP!

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Q **I've been running for just over a year now and have had two pairs of trainers during this time. I haven't spent a great deal on them – mainly around the £40 mark. I roughly run around 15-20 miles each week, and a group I run with every Sunday morning have told me to get my gait analysed. Do I really need to get it done?**
Karl House, via email

A That's a tricky one to answer, Karl, as it really depends on what you're looking to get out of it. If you have lots of trouble with injury, then a gait analysis could definitely benefit you. The analysis will reveal what element of your technique is placing unwanted stress on your body and the experts will then be able to advise the best type of shoe to remedy your problem. On the other hand, if you feel comfortable in your shoes then there really is no need to do anything differently. Remember, comfort is king.

KRAR TOO GOOD

© Let's Wander Photography

Rob Krar delivered an ultrarunning masterclass to seal his second straight Western States victory in a time of 14hrs 48mins 59secs, less than three minutes behind Tim Olson's course record. Of the four 100-milers Krar has entered in the past year, he has won all four, cementing his status as the world's foremost ultrarunner over the distance.
wser.org

LOOSEN UP

Skinny jeans may pose a risk to your health. That's according to new findings in *The Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, which describes the case of an Australian woman who was left immobile for several hours after her legs swelled up in excessively tight trousers, as a result of restricted blood flow. Russell Brand is said to be very nervous.
jnnp.bmj.com

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THE QUESTION

HAVE THE RECENT DOPING ALLEGATIONS SURROUNDING ALBERTO SALAZAR SHAKEN YOUR FAITH IN ATHLETICS?

That's the question we asked you on Facebook. Here's what you said...

© Cal Hopkins / Wikicommons

Simon James Bosher No – if he's guilty, the only winner is athletics as he will have been found out and will be out of the sport he loves. If he is innocent, those who have created the pack of lies should be held to account. As an athlete, he never cheated so why would he start now?

Stephen Wimpenny Unfortunately I think most top-level athletes are doping to some extent. The promise of an undetectable performance-enhancing aid, giving athletes the chance to win a medal, receive sponsorship and financially secure their future is a carrot to the big time. Just make the drugs safe, legalise them and level the playing field.

Campbell Blair I watch my own kids, and hundreds of others, train and compete on a weekly basis. With the support of their dedicated coaches, parents and supporters, they improve through pure honest endeavour and drive. Scandals like this disappoint but they don't take away from the sport, particularly when you see the future athletes working so hard.

Tim Dawson All sport has cheats. It's just a shame the clean and talented sportsmen and women get caught up in it all.

Stephen Cook Faith in athletics? Really? As if it's ever been clean.

Want to join the debate? Get involved at **facebook.com/mensrunningmagazineuk**

worldmags.net

MY BEST RACE EVER

The South Downs Way 50 is an iconic ultra. Fifty miles is never going to be easy, but Louis Waterman-Evans found himself in the rare position of feeling in control throughout

NO.8

Look at Lou: superb organisation and well-stocked aid stations helped Louis to an impressive seventh place finish

The South Downs Way 50 is epic in all senses: distance, route, organisation and people. It travels from Worthing to Eastbourne, taking in some 5,700ft of elevation along route.

Any race that requires you to run for 50 miles is always going to be memorable for one reason or another, but this race is truly an event for your running bucket list.

As anyone who has run a Centurion event will tell you, the organisation is nothing if not meticulous – a factor that shouldn't be underestimated as you've got enough to think about as it is. Arriving at aid stations to find them stocked to bursting with fresh fruit and friendly folk goes an awful long way in any race, even more so after you've been running for five hours!

"ANY RACE THAT REQUIRES YOU TO RUN 50 MILES IS GOING TO BE MEMORABLE"

I remember stopping briefly at an aid station, just past the 26.2-mile mark, feeling pretty shot. But after seeing so many friendly people with cups of berries and juices, I was instantly rejuvenated.

In ultras, everyone has ups and downs – it's simply too long a distance to just be steady throughout. That said, the SDW50 route seemed to fit perfectly with my levels of exhaustion, each aid station arriving in the nick of time to keep me ticking over. I clocked up the marathon distance in about 3hrs 30mins and knew I was doing quite well.

I felt comfortable in the top 10, pushing up the next hill. Suddenly, what had meant to be a simple first outing at the distance turned into a race. Sometimes running can seem like the most awful, arduous activity ever; luckily, today was the opposite for me.

Crossing the finish line in seventh, I was exhausted but elated. The pain in my legs was sweetened by the organisers offering a plate of homemade chilli, followed by some equally tasty brownies. Now, you don't get that at every race!

OVER TO YOU

Tell us about your best race ever. Email **mensrunning@wildbunchmedia.co.uk**

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STEVE'S WAY

Sage advice from former 'fat bloke' turned elite marathon runner Steve Way

Lunge break: Steve demonstrates his pre-run warm-up

STRETCHING THE TRUTH

Show me a research paper that says stretching is good for runners and I'll point you to another two that suggest you are just as likely to get injured with a diligent stretching routine. So who to believe?

The consensus these days is that static stretching before your run is a no-no, and I agree. In my opinion, the best way to warm-up for your run is to run – just a lot slower.

Post-run warm-down routines are an area where my opinion has changed over the years. Early in my running career, I used to do nothing and I got away with it. However, just like a new car, once you have clocked up a few thousand miles, you have to start thinking about a bit of maintenance otherwise things will break down.

Now I always finish my runs a little way from home and add a five-minute walk to the end followed by some dynamic and static stretching. My goal with this post-run routine is to ensure that, when I next go for a run, my legs feel as fresh as possible.

I follow a general policy of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it', so you are unlikely to see me do any quad stretching as I never have any issues with those. Hamstrings and hip flexors are a real issue for me, on the other hand, which is why you'll find me doing lots of lunges and trying (but failing!) to touch my toes.

Don't just follow a warm-down routine because some bloke in a magazine told you to; monitor what works for you, and stick to it!

Q Steve, how much longer do you think you can keep on getting faster?! At what age do you expect to peak?

Richard Cooper, via Facebook

A After my third 2hrs 19mins London Marathon in a row in 2012, I had a few negative thoughts that I might have already peaked when it came to marathon running. But then in 2014, at the age of 40, things looked very different with my 2hr 15mins Brit Vet Marathon record at the Commonwealth Games.

I think the key will be how long my body allows me to continue the high-mileage training I need to perform at my best. Until the day when that simply isn't possible, I'm going to continue under the assumption that there is plenty more to come!

"I FOLLOW A GENERAL POLICY OF 'IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT'"

OVER TO YOU

Got a question for Steve? Tweet us: **@mensrunninguk**

TIP OF THE MONTH

PROGRESSION RUNS

If I'm doing a training run that is not a specific speed session, I often make it progressive in terms of pace. As mentioned in this month's article, I always like to start with a slow first mile to warm up but I also like to maintain control with my runs by gradually increasing the pace as I progress, finishing off at a faster pace. It helps with pace management and if you can manage a "Royal Flush", by making every single mile faster than the last one, just think of the extra kudos you'll get from your Strava followers!

worldmags.net

MY RUNNING LIFE

Michel Roux Jr

The Michelin man talks to *Men's Running* about pre-race meals, marathons and how he manages to fit in running around a hectic schedule

Michel Roux Jr is a two-star Michelin chef, TV presenter and award-winning author. He's been at the helm of Mayfair's world famous Le Gavroche restaurant since 1991. Away from the kitchen and the limelight, though, he's also an avid runner. He's run no less than 20 marathons – including the London Marathon 13 times. Roux enjoys a running rivalry with close friend and fellow chef Gordon Ramsay, although he won't mind us saying that he's a fair bit quicker than his potty-mouthed counterpart.

When did you first fall in love with running?
At school, I was one of the few kids to take pleasure in cross-country. But my running went on the back burner in my teens as I began living like a typical chef – i.e. drinking and smoking lots, and sleeping very little. It all changed when my daughter arrived, 23 years ago, and I decided to give up smoking. Like many other people, I was inspired by the London Marathon. I said to myself: "I'm going to run it one day, and run it well." So I trained like mad and got round in 3hrs 27mins, which I was very chuffed with.

What does running mean to you?
Running is a great way to keep physically fit but also mentally nimble. It clears my mind and I find I think in a more defined way after a run. As a bonus, it also means I can eat as much as I like and whatever I want.

What do you eat before a marathon?
I always eat at the same restaurant the night before the London Marathon – Le Pont de la Tour. I eat grilled Dover Sole, boiled potatoes and spinach, washed down with one glass of wine. When it comes to pre-race nutrition, my advice is to keep it simple: don't try anything new.

What was your best ever run?
It has to be my London Marathon PB of 3hrs 13mins. Out of all the big city runs, London is unquestionably the best.

If you could run with anyone, living or dead, who would it be and why?
Paula Radcliffe – truly inspirational, an icon and a treasure.

Where's your favourite place in the world to run?
A coastal path called 'Smugglers Way', which starts in Monaco and ends in Menton, France. It's awesome, with views that take your breath away.

How many miles will you run in a typical week?
Normally around 30 unless I'm in full training, when it goes off the scale!

How do you fit in running around a busy schedule?
I hate running first thing in the morning so I run in-between shifts, which usually means my afternoon break. I have run half-marathons in the afternoon, then gone back to work in the kitchens for the evening session.

Who, if anyone, is your running hero?
It's got to be Haile Gebrselassie. I had the pleasure of meeting him once – a true gent who always runs with a smile on his face.

Finally, describe yourself as a runner in one word.
Possessed.

Photography Le Gavroche

Garroche
Garroche

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Winning ugly: Zátopek's running style was almost comically untidy, yet it helped him to incomparable success

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

27/07/1952

On 27 July 1952, Emil Zátopek bounded across the finish line in Helsinki's Olympic Stadium and, in doing so, wrote his name into the distance-running history books. The 29-year-old Czech had just won the Olympic marathon, the 10,000m and the 5,000m at the same Olympics – a feat never accomplished before or since. The achievement becomes even more remarkable when you consider that, prior to the marathon itself, Zátopek had never run the 26.2-mile distance. Unsure of whether the blistering early pace was sustainable, the Czech asked the pre-race favourite, Great Britain's Jim Peters, "Is this pace too fast?" "No," Peters replied, lying. "It's not fast enough." Taking him at his word, Zátopek sped off to victory while Peters retired with cramp. Nothing if not unorthodox, Zátopek's marathon training was made up largely of short, intense sprints, repeated an innumerable amount of times. "It's at the borders of pain and suffering that the men are separated from the boys," he said.

Words Rick Pearson

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MAN VS FOOD

SHOW THE KITCHEN WHO'S BOSS

MACK FOR GOOD

When it comes to heart health and blood pressure, good things come in small packages

WHAT IS IT?

The mackerel is a small species of pelagic fish, found in temperate and tropical seas. Fortunately, it can also be found in a small rectangular tin on your local supermarket's shelf. Over five million tons of the oily, omega-3-rich fish are hauled in every year.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT?

If you opt for the tinned or smoked variety – the former setting you back a whopping 70p – no prep is needed and you can add it to anything you're brave enough to think of. That being said, you may wish to forewarn those in close proximity, as it packs a somewhat potent smell. If you opt for the fresh stuff, simply de-bone, season and drizzle with lemon and olive oil, then cook, skin-side down with a couple of cloves of garlic and a few bay leaves.

WHY IS IT GOOD FOR MY HEALTH?

Oily fish is the undisputed king of heart health and, among the oily fish, mackerel is hard to beat. Just two portions a week can help to keep blood pressure at a normal level and lower your cholesterol, thus greatly reducing your chances of cardiovascular disease. Moreover, when put in the ring with other healthy meats, mackerel more than stands its ground: it has over four times the amount of vitamin B12 of salmon and almost triple the selenium of chicken. A study in 2008 also suggested that eating oily fish two or more times a week could reduce the risk of sight loss. Add to the above the fact that it can be bought with the loose change in your pocket, and it's clear that mackerel leaves other foodstuffs trailing in its wake.

Words Isaac Williams
Photography thinkstockphotos.co.uk

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ROAST BUTTERNUT AND BUTTER BEAN SALAD WITH TAHINI DRESSING

Tahini is made from ground sesame seeds and is a really versatile ingredient for use in dips, dressings or even on its own. Although a simple ingredient, it is rich in many essential nutrients, including protein, fibre, healthy fats, B vitamins and copper.

INGREDIENTS

Serves 4

- 500g butternut squash, cut into 1-2cm chunks
- 1 red onion, peeled and cut into thin little wedges
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 150ml tahini
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 75g kale
- 100g walnut halves
- 1 x 400g can of butter beans, drained
- 50g feta cheese, crumbled

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F)/ gas mark six.

2. Place the butternut squash, red onion, cumin seeds and olive oil in a roasting pan and toss together. Roast in the oven for 35-40 minutes, until they're tender and slightly charred.

3. Meanwhile, make the dressing by whisking together the tahini, lemon juice, garlic and 150ml water.

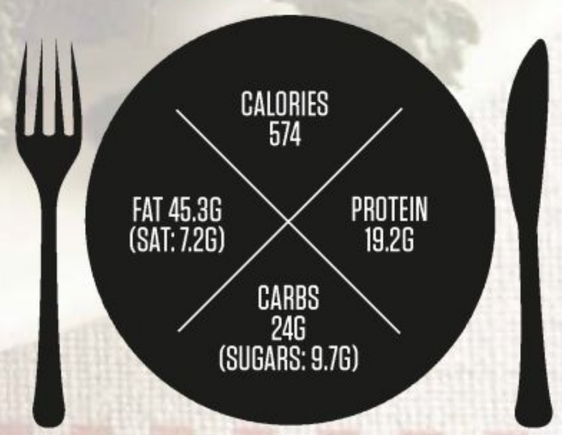
4. Toss the kale and walnuts into the roasted butternut squash and return to the oven for 10 minutes.

5. Remove the roasting tray from the oven then toss in the butter beans.

6. Serve on a large platter sprinkled with crumbled feta and drizzled with the dressing.

ON YOUR PLATE

PER SERVING

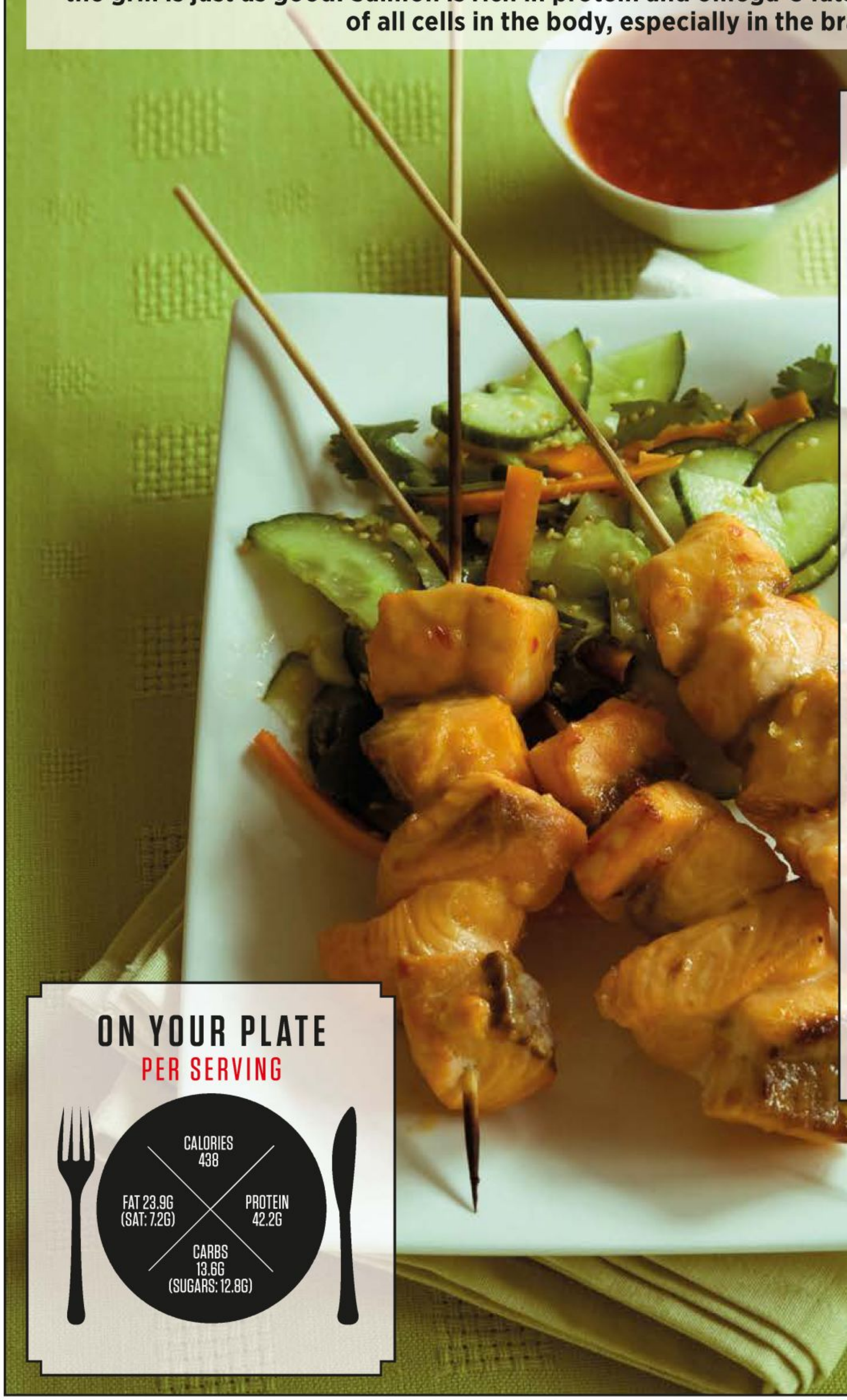


Words Joy Skipper
Photography Joy Skipper

POST-RACE RECIPE

CHILLI SALMON KEBABS WITH ORIENTAL SALAD

Hopefully the weather will still be warm enough to cook these on the barbecue, but if not the grill is just as good! Salmon is rich in protein and omega-3 fats – important for the health of all cells in the body, especially in the brain.



INGREDIENTS

Serves 4

- 800g salmon fillet, cut into 2cm cubes
- 4 tbsp sweet chilli sauce
- 1 cucumber, thinly sliced
- 2 stalks celery, thinly sliced
- 4 spring onions, thinly sliced
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into strips
- 2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 2 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted
- Small handful of coriander leaves

METHOD

1. Place the chunks of salmon into a bowl and stir through 2 tbsp of the sweet chilli sauce. Leave to marinate for at least 20 minutes.

2. Soak bamboo skewers in water for 20 minutes to prevent them from burning when cooking.

3. Meanwhile, place the cucumber, celery, spring onions, and carrots in a bowl and pour them over the rice wine vinegar.

4. Leave to stand for 10 minutes.

5. Thread the salmon onto the bamboo skewers. Cook over a barbecue or under a hot grill for three to four minutes on each side.

6. Sprinkle the cucumber salad with the sesame oil and seeds and stir through the coriander leaves.

7. Serve the kebabs on a bed of salad, with the remaining sweet chilli sauce in a bowl for dipping.

ON YOUR PLATE

PER SERVING

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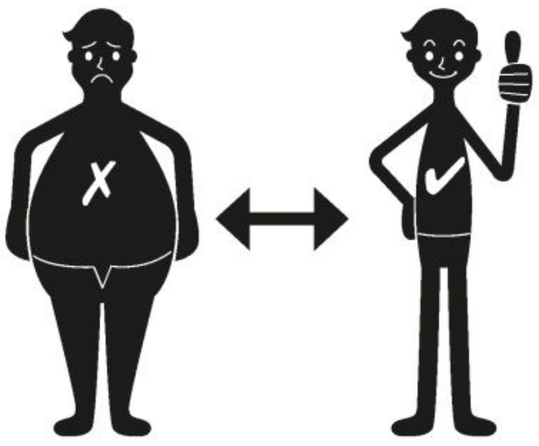

FAT TO FIT

For Steve Jay, despite a sport-filled childhood, his early 20s were a time of weight gain and ill health. Since then he's shed six stone. Joining a running club, he says, was the best decision he's ever made

It all started going downhill for me when I hit my 20s. After a childhood that was filled with sport, I never gave eating junk food a second thought because, well, I didn't really need to. However, once my metabolism came grinding to a halt, my weight quickly escalated. Due to the fact I was still playing football on a Sunday morning, I didn't really pay much attention to my weight because I thought I was still fit. Having said that, the cruel jibes from the opposition were starting to make me think it was more than just a bit of banter.

My weight peaked at 17st 7lbs. Finally, in September 2013, I decided enough was enough. Having suffered a health scare, I took it upon myself to turn my life around.

I joined the local gym, knocked beer on the head and made sure my fridge was full of healthy food. The first time I managed to run 3K without feeling like death was a euphoric moment, and in March the following year I ran my first half marathon in 1hr 45mins.

"I WAS HOOKED"

I was too embarrassed to run on the roads, so I stuck to a treadmill for the first couple of months. Thankfully, two of my best friends were training for a half marathon, so one evening after work I joined them for a run outside. It was hard at first but suddenly I realised I was enjoying it and we ended up running six miles. After that I was hooked and proceeded to run outside twice a week and go to the gym twice a week as well.

Since then, I've done another three half marathons and in April this year completed the London Marathon in 3hrs 48mins. I've already got another five half marathons booked for this year, two full marathons next year and am even contemplating an ultra as well!

Sing yourself thin: a lack of exercise in his 20s saw Steve's weight spiral out of control

BEFORE 17ST 7LBS

Medal of honour: running has helped Steve to shed an impressive six stone

AFTER 11ST 7LBS

One of the best things I did was join my local running club, Hart Road Runners. I joined about two months prior to London as I felt my training needed a boost. The extra lift this gave my training, not to mention the support and camaraderie, was just what I needed. This was the best decision I made and the friendly advice, and being able to run with other people, certainly had the desired effect – I feel as if I'm improving with every week!

"HAVING SUFFERED A HEALTH SCARE, I TOOK IT UPON MYSELF TO TURN MY LIFE AROUND"

I now weigh 11st 7lbs and feel and look better than ever. I get so much more out of life now, especially at weekends when I am outside doing things, rather than being stuck in a pub or laying in bed hungover. I've got more energy than ever before and really enjoy it when I treat myself to a few beers or a meal out!

OVER TO YOU

Have you gone from fat to fit? Email your weight-loss story to **mensrunning@wildbunchmedia.co.uk**

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UPGRADE YOUR GRUB

Nutritionist Emma Patel shows you how to pimp your plate on the cheap

RIB-EYE STEAK AND OVEN CHIPS

Eating red meat has been discouraged because many cuts are high in cholesterol and saturated fat. However, red meat has a place in a healthy diet as long as you choose the right cuts of beef. Unfortunately, rib-eye is the fattiest part of the steak, with 37.6g of fat per 100g. Compared to other cuts of steak, it's also relatively low in protein, offering 30g to sirloin's muscle-boosting 39g.

Chips may be a popular accompaniment to steak but, from a nutritional perspective, there's little to recommend about these processed strips of potato. Some oven chips can be fattier than traditionally fried chips, while most have high levels of salt and saturates – the enemies of a healthy heart. Eat them only rarely or, better still, not at all.

UPGRADE

SIRLOIN STEAK, CELERIAC CHIPS AND PEAS

1. The king of cuts, sirloin is high in protein and relatively low in fat. For extra points, remove all visible saturated fat/rind from the steak and, if your budget allows, go for grass-fed and organic options. Grass-fed beef comes from cows who have grazed in pasture year-round rather than being fed a processed diet. This makes the beef richer in omega-3 fats, vitamin E and betacarotene. The protein you get from red meat contains all the amino acids necessary to build muscle and repair tissue – essential for regular runners. If you're feeling particularly pious, try swapping the beef for venison, which contains less saturated fat.

2. Swap your oven chips to homemade celeriac chips. They are tasty, nutritious and cost a lot less than a bag of oven chips. Celeriac is a low-starch vegetable that allows the body to maintain blood glucose steadily, rather than spiking it rapidly as oven chips will do.

3. Finally, give peas a chance. These little powerhouses are a great source of vitamins.

Photography thinkstockphotos.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

TRAIN

INSIDE

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ANATOMY OF A RUNNER

NAME: BROWNLEE BROTHERS
DISTANCE: TRIATHLON

RUN LIKE THE BROWNLEES

SURFACE:

Alistair and Jonny run the vast majority of their miles on trails or track. This is less brutal on the body than all that pavement-pounding. While the Brownlees are fortunate to have the Yorkshire Dales on their doorstep, city-dwellers can take a leaf out of their book by heading to their nearest park. Trust us, your body will thank you for it.

HILLS:

Hill running improves leg strength, lung capacity and mental strength. The Brownlees were raised running on the fells and still include hill workouts in their weekly workout mix. Aim for eight hill repeats, with each ascent lasting one minute. Alternatively, a continuous hill workout (10-minutes of hard running up *and* down the hill) is a great, time-efficient way to boost fitness.

CROSS-TRAINING:

Swimming and cycling clearly play a huge part in the Brownlee's training – but out-and-out runners should also consider adding these disciplines to their schedule. Swimming is a great aerobic workout, while cycling builds leg strength without the risk of picking up high-impact injuries such as shin splints.

The brothers trim: Alistair (left) and Jonny (right)

Words Rick Pearson
Photography Nick Mangos

MENTALITY

Alistair once ran barefoot over broken glass in order to finish a race after his shoe had fallen off. "You can't out-suffer Alistair," noted Jonny, while their father, Keith, said, "Alistair has no fear at all, so he gives it absolutely everything from the start to the finish."

LUNGS

Before the Brownlees were triathletes, they were champion fell runners. These lung-busting races, up and down near-vertical slopes in Yorkshire, are fantastic for improving lung capacity. To this day, Jonny and his brother compete in fell races when their schedules allow.

CORE

Like all top athletes, the Brownlees add core strength exercises into their weekly schedule. Single-leg squats, side planks, back extensions, press-ups, sit-ups and front planks are all part of creating a core of steel.

LEG STRENGTH

What better way to build leg strength than quick, hilly miles in knee-deep mud? We're talking, of course, about cross-country. Jonny clearly understands the benefits, taking time out from triathlon to finish ninth in the hugely competitive National Cross-Country Championships in 2014.

BODY WEIGHT

Standing 6ft tall but weighing just 11st, Alistair's physique is closer to that of an elite distance runner than a typical triathlete. Body weight has a marked impact on running performance – the lighter, the better – so by keeping lean and mean Alistair has an advantage over his bulkier peers.

STRIDE

Long legs and a powerful knee drive combine to give Alistair a long stride. Coupled with a quick cadence, this results in his lightning pace. In London 2012, he ran the final 10K in 29mins 7secs, having already swam 1.5K and cycled 40K. In a word: rapid.

FEET

Both Brownlees are forefoot-strikers, landing lightly on the balls of their feet. However, it's not something that's been coached. "It's just what feels natural," said Jonny. "Since we were kids, we've run with a forefoot strike."

WORLD-BEATING BROS

Born into a sporting family in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, the Brownlees were keen swimmers and runners from a young age. Alistair was also particularly academic, gaining a place at Cambridge University to read Medicine, although he soon left to focus fully on triathlon. The brothers soon exploded onto the world circuit, Alistair winning the ITU World Championship in 2009. Jonny won the same title in 2012, before the brothers took gold (Alistair) and bronze (Jonny) at the London Olympics.

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MAN UP!

Ultramarathon man Dean Karnazes shares his secrets to mental strength

If you're serious about becoming a better runner, you're going to have to change your mindset and tweak your lifestyle. Push fitness to the forefront, says **Dean Karnazes**, and reap the running rewards

You're an athlete – no, seriously – so it's time to start acting like one. Being a complete athlete requires a 360-degree approach and 24/7 commitment. In my world, there's no such thing as compromise: training is life, and life is training.

So how do you go about making yourself a complete athlete? Start by viewing yourself as one. Change your mindset and start reviewing your life and lifestyle through the lens of an athlete.

The main pillars involved in this are: diet, exercise habits, sleep patterns and relationships. Let's look at each of these and see where you can improve.

When it comes to diet, how's yours? Most of us are aware of the right foods we should be eating, but don't always possess the willpower to comply. That's OK. Perfection is a road, not a destiny. But seeing yourself as an athlete will help you choose those foods that are consistent with your new persona.

Exercise is clearly the cornerstone in every athlete's life. But along with your formal training plan, start making other adaptations that will help you progress towards your goals. For instance, I have a pull-up bar and sit-up mat in my office and cycle between sets of pull-ups, push-ups, dips and sit-ups throughout the course of the day. Think of what you can do to incorporate exercise into your nine-to-five.

We've all heard about the importance of quality sleep for optimal athletic performance, but how many of us have actually taken measures to implement positive changes? Many times this comes down to making sacrifices. Shall I go out late with the lads, or return home at a reasonable hour? Again, these are decisions that come easier once you're viewing yourself as an athlete.

Awaken the inner athlete: from fitness to nutrition, every little helps

Finally, the quality of the relationships you keep influences the likelihood of your success. Surround yourself with other likeminded individuals and they will help to reinforce those positive behaviours you're working to implement.

"CHANGE YOUR MINDSET AND START VIEWING YOUR LIFE AND LIFESTYLE THROUGH THE LENS OF AN ATHLETE"

DEAR DEAN

"How do you manage to maintain a positive mindset, even when you're really hurting?"
Steve Jones, via email

I maintain a positive mindset *because* I am hurting. Instead of dreading the hurt, I celebrate it as my body's way of purging itself of weakness and growing stronger. Once I learned to embrace the pain, I discovered a certain magic in misery. Inevitably, the hurting will always subside and the pain will be transformed into power. My guidance to you is to alter the way you think when the going gets tough and view the hurting as a good thing; for soon you will be stronger!

OVER TO YOU

Got a question for Dean? Tweet us: **@mensrunninguk**

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CROSS-TRAINING
OF THE MONTH

ROCK CLIMBING

Our monthly column on the benefits of cross-training gets to grips with rock climbing. **Rick Pearson** discovers how this full-body workout can help you scale new heights as a runner

While rock climbing may conjure mental images of Sly Stallone flexing his guns in *Cliffhanger*, there's now a weedier breed of climber taking to walls and rock faces around the UK: runners.

Why? Because it's a great cross-training activity. Requiring a blend of strength and flexibility, it can bulletproof your body and help to make injuries a thing of the past.

I'm here at Vauxwall, a popular climbing facility in south London, to try it out firsthand. Today, I'll be focusing on bouldering, a form of climbing performed without a rope or a harness. After a 30-minute session, it's clear that my talents lie in running forward rather than climbing up. But it's hugely enjoyable and, as centre manager Tom Hull tells me, jam-packed with runner-friendly benefits...

ARMS:

Climbing builds a strong upper body, but don't expect to come out looking like Arnie. "Climbing will get you toned and lean, not big and bulky," says Tom. "It's about having a good strength-to-weight ratio."

CORE:

Climbing forces you to engage your core. If you have a weak middle, you'll be on the mat before you know it. "Without some core strength, you'll be unable to keep your body nice and close to the wall; your feet will come away and you'll just fall off," says Tom.

CARDIO:

Compared to running, rock climbing isn't a huge calorie-burner. Most routes require bursts of explosive power. However, it'll certainly get you out of breath and requires great strength endurance – another useful by-product for runners.

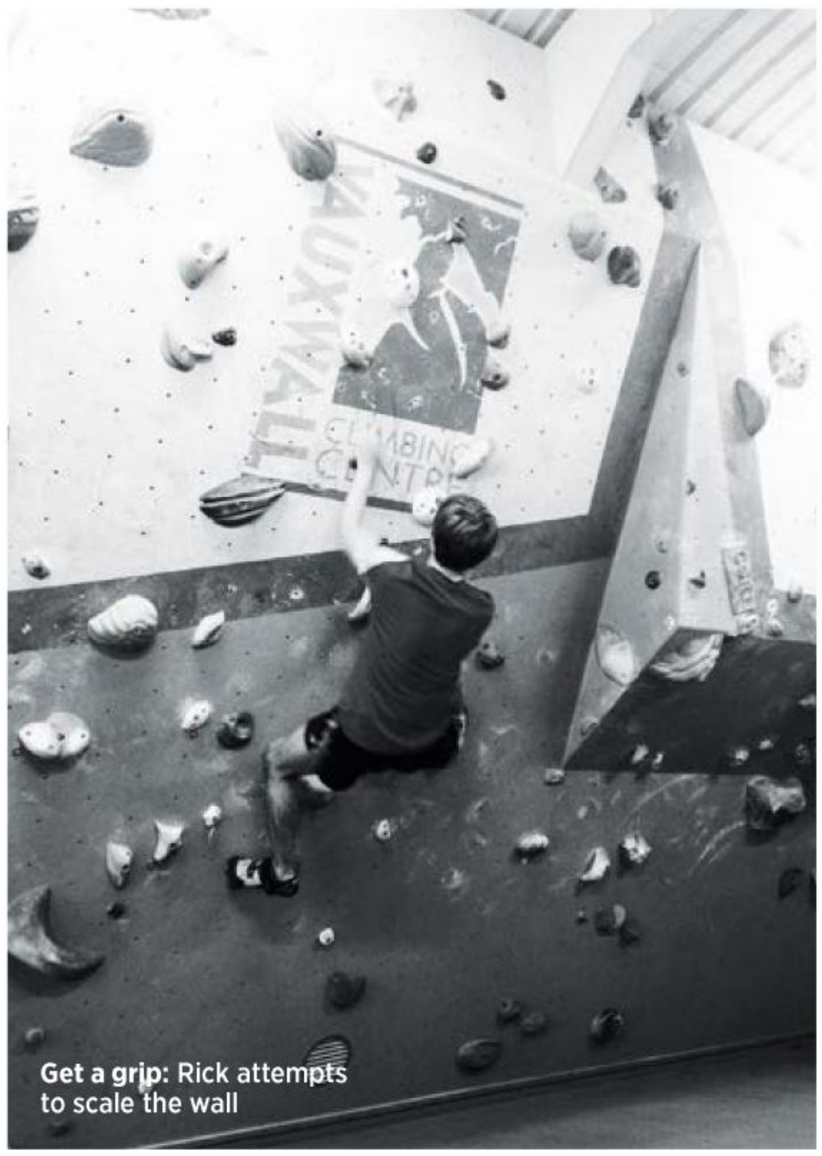
FLEXIBILITY:

Flexible hips – so important to efficient running – are also key to climbing. "Flexibility in this area allows you to create better angles, reach the right holds and more easily scale the wall," says Tom. "Some people are more naturally flexible than others, but regular climbing can certainly help here."

LEGS AND FEET:

One of the first things rookie climbers are told is to use their legs, rather than their arms, to power themselves up the wall. "Your legs are your strongest muscles and are absolutely crucial to efficient climbing," says Tom. "Climbing can help to build strong calf muscles and strengthen the arches in your feet."

"CLIMBING WILL GET YOU STRONG AND LEAN, NOT BIG AND BULKY"



Get a grip: Rick attempts to scale the wall

Photography danielhbutcher.com

Hang time: Vauxwall's Tom Hull shows us how it's done

WORKS FOR ME

ROBBIE BRITTON, TEAM GB 24HR RUNNER

Bouldering is a fun way to do some core/strength work that is accessible to all ability levels.

When I was in London, I tried to go to the Biscuit Factory, Bermondsey, once or twice a week. I found it a great way to relax and see friends that didn't involve going down the pub!

Now I'm in Chamonix, I don't go enough but try to fit it in with my core workouts. We have actual boulders to climb on here, but I need to get my own mat!

You're not going to bulk up lifting your own body weight, the impact is low and climbing up and down the problems mean you eccentrically load your muscles on the descent, which is great for runners.

Just try hanging upside down one evening at your local wall – you might love it. Make sure someone is around to chop your food up the next day, though – the grip suffers after the first time!

★ THE VERDICT

AEROBIC BENEFITS:	■■■■■■■■■■
MUSCLE BUILDING:	■■■■■■■■■■
SAFETY:	■■■■■■■■■■
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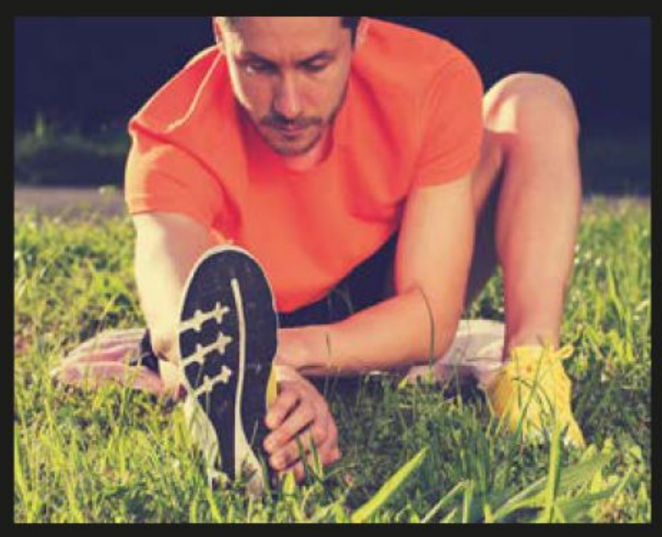
10 rules for injury-free running

When it comes to running-related injuries, prevention is better than cure. Mitchell Phillips of StrideUK reveals his top tips to keep you running strong



Injury rates among runners remain unacceptably high, with no significant decline during the last 30 years. This is because running injuries are so multifaceted: they could be related to a number of internal factors (biomechanics, age, sex, weight), or external factors (shoes, flexibility, core strength, intensity, frequency of training).

One thing's for sure: the answer doesn't lie in buying a new pair of shoes or running in no shoes at all.

Successful injury-free running starts with understanding your body's own unique set up and training it in a smart, controlled, individual manner.

To help you along the promised path to injury-free running, here are some very simple rules to help keep yourself off the treatment couch.

My greatest tip of all, however, would be to embrace this checklist now rather than needing to do so later down the line. To use the most heavily-flogged saying in the world: prevention is better than the cure!

1. Training programmes should be based on your ability, not your availability. Don't choose a plan based on how many days you've got free to train; be mindful of your ability and MAKE time to train properly.

2. Avoid increasing distance by more than 10% each week.

3. Receive training tips from friends with open arms, but remember that we're all individuals. What may benefit one person may not benefit another.

4. Don't imitate other peoples' running form; you could end up with other problems as a result.

5. Run unconsciously: switch off and enjoy the process. Try not to over-analyse things.

6. Running shoes rule of thumb: if you don't need it, don't buy it. A gait analysis is highly recommended.

7. Rotate running shoes frequently. This will prevent your body from becoming dependent on one particular shoe.

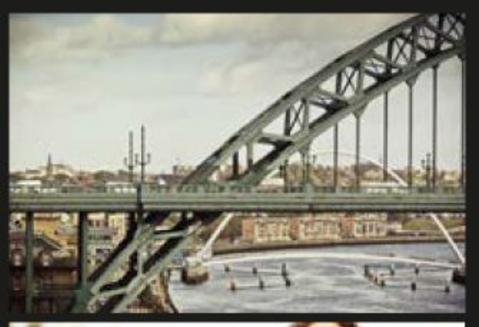
8. Always increase your post-run mobility/stretching program with your training output. Maintain a balanced moderation.

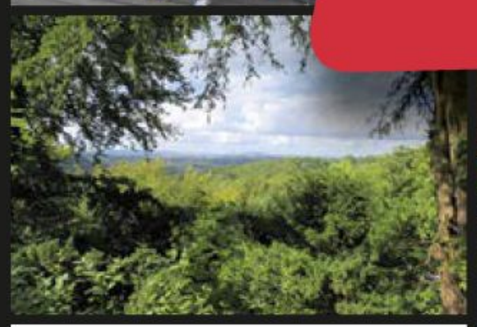
9. Never underestimate the benefits of allowing your body time to recover.

10. Seek professional advice when your muscles are whispering to you, rather than when they are shouting.

Mitchell Phillips is director of StrideUK, one of the UK's leading running technique analysis companies **strideuk.com**

Photography Thinkstockphotos.co.uk





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TALKING HEADS

Is running an ultramarathon bad for you?

With excessive exercise being linked to a number of health risks, two experts discuss whether ultras are doing you more harm than good

EXPERT ADVICE

Dr Martin Hoffman is a professor of Physical Medication & Rehabilitation. He's also a research director for the Western States 100-mile ultramarathon.

NO

■ You're conducting extensive research into ultrarunners; have you found much to suggest that ultramarathons are bad for people's health?

At this point, the baseline data shows that ultramarathon runners are a pretty healthy group. They lose little work or school due to illness or injury, and make less use of the medical care system compared with the general population. They do, however, appear to have a higher incidence of asthma and allergies.

■ Are those who take part in ultramarathons more likely to sustain injuries than those attempting shorter distances such as 10Ks?

Our work has found that the annual incidence of exercise-related injuries is similar between ultramarathon runners and shorter distance runners. Interestingly, stress fractures appear to be less common in ultramarathon runners than those running shorter distances, and when they occur they are more likely to involve the foot rather than the lower leg. This may relate to the fact that ultramarathon runners often do much of their running on uneven, technical trails. We also found there to be a greater risk of injury among younger and less experienced ultramarathoners, as well as those who spend a greater proportion of exercise time at high intensities.

■ Is there anything to suggest that ultramarathons are, in fact, a thoroughly healthy thing to attempt?

Firstly, I would say that most ultramarathon runners don't run ultramarathons primarily for health reasons; you can be healthy without exercising to the level of the typical ultrarunner. The question is rather: is ultramarathon running too much of a good thing? At present, there are no long-term studies that have examined a large group of people who regularly exercise at the level of the typical ultramarathon runner – this is the intent of our ULTRA Study. However, even without knowing the eventual results from further studies, it's evident that we aren't seeing an epidemic of deaths among ultramarathon runners. This fact alone should offer some reassurance that it can't be too bad!

"OUR DATA SHOWS THAT ULTRAMARATHON RUNNERS ARE ACTUALLY A PRETTY HEALTHY GROUP OF PEOPLE"

Photography Red Bull Content Pool

A healthy pastime? An ultrarunner races down South Africa's Table Mountain

EXPERT ADVICE

Dr Joseph Mercola is a renowned physician and health expert. He was a runner for 43 years and once ran a 2:50 marathon
mercola.com

YES

■ What, in your opinion, are the dangers of prolonged cardio activities?
Chronic cardio can clearly produce fitness, but it is not the most efficient way and not the healthiest. High-intensity exercises can produce superior cardiovascular fitness in a fraction of the time, leaving time for other important health activities like sleep, family and relaxation.

■ With this in mind, would you say that ultramarathons, which can last in excess of 24 hours, can be bad for your health?
In my view, ultramarathons are far worse than the typical hour or two of cardio that most people undertake. Moreover, the enormous time commitments to training also typically comes at the expense of other healthy practices such as sleep, recovery and strength training. Such overtraining contributes to excessive hormonal stresses that radically increase one's risk of injury.

"I WOULD STRONGLY DISCOURAGE PEOPLE FROM TAKING PART IN ULTRAMARATHONS"

■ What kind of running/exercise would you recommend above prolonged cardio activities such as marathons and ultramarathons?
If health is the primary goal, I would strongly discourage people from taking part in these activities and avoid the mistake that I and many others made by engaging in decades of chronic cardio. There is a silent epidemic of heart issues, such as fatal arrhythmias of elite athletes, which most people are unaware of. Don't make the mistake of engaging in excessive cardio training. Runners would be far better served taking part in shorter, high-intensity workouts, strength training twice a week and a regular flexibility practice.

Additionally, try to minimise sitting during the day as much as possible and, if possible, invest in a stand-up desk. These practices, along with a healthy diet and balanced lifestyle, are probably your best course of action if you wish to have a chance at being pain-free and highly mobile into your old age. MR

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Revive your running

After initial improvements, it's easy to let your running plateau. Freshen things up, says **Martin Yelling**, and you'll reap the rewards

The early months of running are the most exciting. You are improving all the time, the miles are becoming easier and you no longer feel like your heart is about to burst through your chest. You're breaking new ground: PBs are tumbling, distances are increasing, and you look and feel better. Surely, it can't keep going like this?

Nope, it can't. Progressions in fitness are not linear: they don't simply keep rising along with your regular training. As the months go by, you don't feel like you're improving any more. In fact, you might even be going backwards – getting slower and feeling unmotivated.

This dip in form is called a 'plateau', and you've just hit one.

EXPERT ADVICE

Martin Yelling is an endurance coach, ex-international athlete and husband to Olympic marathoner Liz Yelling. With a half marathon PB of 66 minutes, Martin specialises in running coaching and hosts the Marathon Talk podcast.

WHY DO RUNNERS PLATEAU?

Runners hit a plateau for a variety of reasons. Staleness and stagnation can come about by doing too much running, being fatigued or simply burned out. It can be a result of a strenuous training period, such as a marathon build-up, or changing circumstance: an increased workload, social stresses or becoming a new parent. More often than not, a plateau is a small dip in form that suggests you've reached your short-term limit of adaptation (progression) doing what you're doing.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

Look for the signals of low motivation, lack of progression, general staleness, tiredness, aches and pains, and a slow or dip in performance. If you notice two or more of these at the same time for more than a couple of consecutive weeks, don't keep hammering on thinking you can run through it. Ignoring the signs of a little dip can quickly leave you spiralling towards a massive hole.

HOW CAN I BEAT IT?

Rest and refresh. You need a period of transition and adaptation. Typically a short period of downtime from your running will help refresh you both physically and mentally. What this downtime could and should look like varies depending on you and how you feel. The most important thing is to take the pressure off and back it right down. It's amazing how you'll feel after a week (or more) of zero running.

Change your training routine. One of the biggest causes of a training lull is that your body has reached a peak of adaptation based on the stresses you've put it under. Not having much variation or progression in running and feeling flat with it is a sign to spice things up. Try some new workouts, search out some new run routes, explore, be adventurous and challenge yourself. This doesn't mean doing more: changing your training can mean doing less, running slower or faster, and dialling down your workouts. Mix it up and see if your dip starts to rise again.

Review your focus and targets. It may be that your goals simply aren't floating your boat. A plateau in form is a great opportunity to ask yourself some big questions about why you run and what successful running means to you.

Finally, remember that peak performance actually should ebb and flow. Your training and racing will have inevitable (and planned) peaks and troughs. Through smart planning, however, your plateaus will be periods where you allow your training to settle and simmer – before you push on, once more, to greater things. MR

OVER TO YOU

Do you have a question for Martin? Drop us an email at **mensrunning@wildbunchmedia.co.uk**

Photography thinkstockphotos.co.uk

3 WORKOUTS TO KICKSTART YOUR RUNNING

■ LOW VOLUME, HIGH-INTENSITY
10mins easy warm-up. Two sets of 3 x 60secs fast running with 3mins easy running between each 60secs run. Take 6mins easy running between sets. Finish with 10mins easy warm down.

■ GET AWAY FROM IT ALL
Set yourself a target of running somewhere totally new. If you're really brave, don't take a map or GPS; just run and see where your feet take you for as long as you like.

■ LANDMARK FARTLEK
Go off road for 30mins and pick different landmarks to run to at different intensities. Vary both the distance to the landmark (eg the top of a hill, a park bench, a tree) and the speed at which you run to it for a fun, mixed-paced and refreshing workout.

"EXPLORE, BE ADVENTUROUS AND CHALLENGE YOURSELF"

NO MORE KNEE PAIN

Do these six exercises and avoid becoming another running injury statistic, advises **Anne-Marie Lategan**

SETS, REPS AND FREQUENCY
Perform three sets of 10 to 15 repetitions.

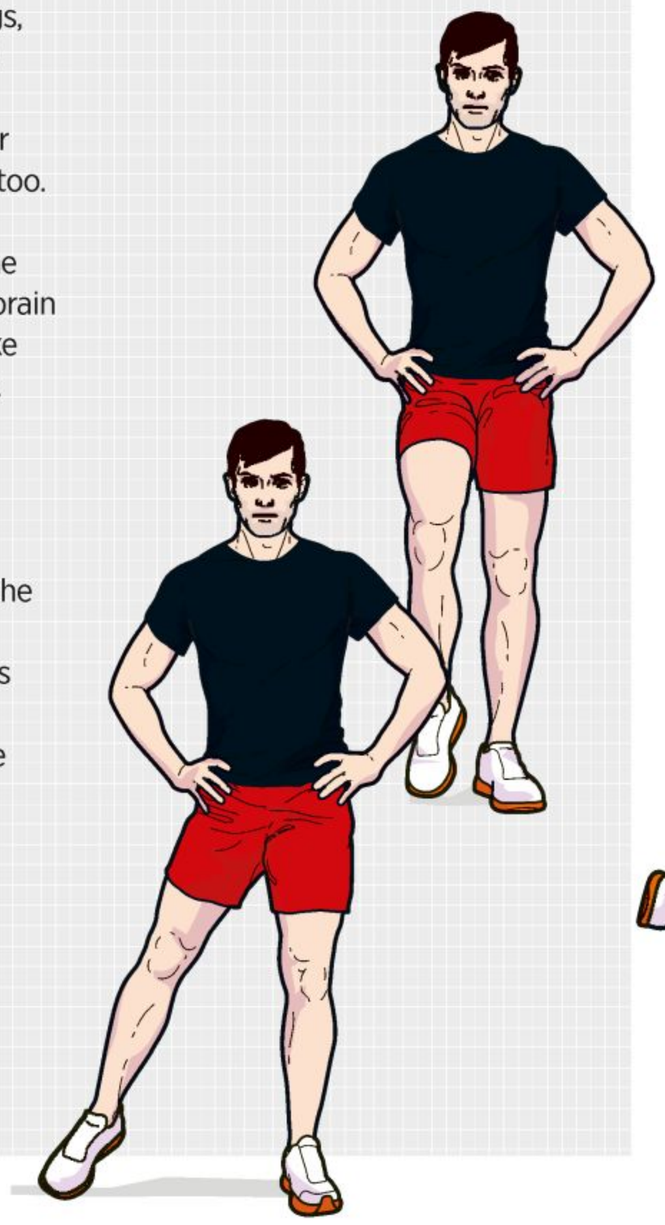
1 CLOCK FACE REACH

Muscles:
Thighs, bottom, coordination, balance (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, transversus abdominus)

Why do it?
When you injure your knee, your nervous system gets damaged too. By improving your balance (or proprioception) you improve the communication between your brain and leg muscles, which will make your muscles rehabilitate faster.

Technique:
- Stand on your left leg
- Keep your core muscles contracted
- Imagine you are standing in the middle of a clock
- Reach your right leg forwards towards the 12 o'clock position
- Then reach towards the three and six o'clock positions
- One round counts as one repetition
- Complete one set before changing over to the left leg

Safety tip:
Focus on a point in front of you to aid your balance.



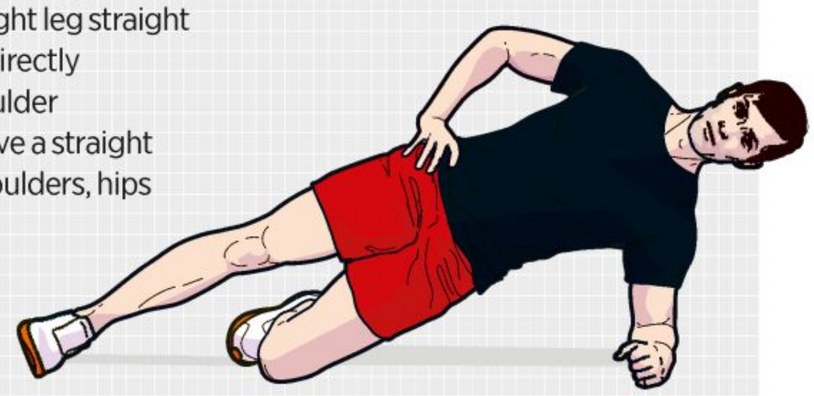
2 KNEELING SIDE PLANK & LEG LIFT

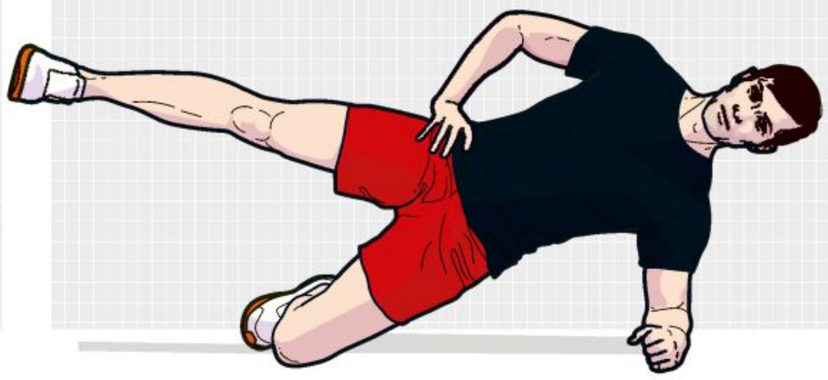
Muscles:
Core, inner and outer thigh, bottom (transversus abdominus, adductors, abductors, glutes)

Why do it?
Running is a linear sport. By strengthening the muscles in the side of your body you can improve your endurance and technique.

Technique:
- Lie on your left side with your left knee bent and your right leg straight
- Place your elbow directly underneath your shoulder
- Ensure that you have a straight line between your shoulders, hips and knees
- Lift your hips off the floor
- Hold this as the starting position
- Lift your right leg up as high as you can – aim for slightly higher than your hips
- Lower your leg until your foot touches the floor

Safety tip:
Keep your core muscles contracted.





Illustrations Peter Liddiard @ Sudden Impact

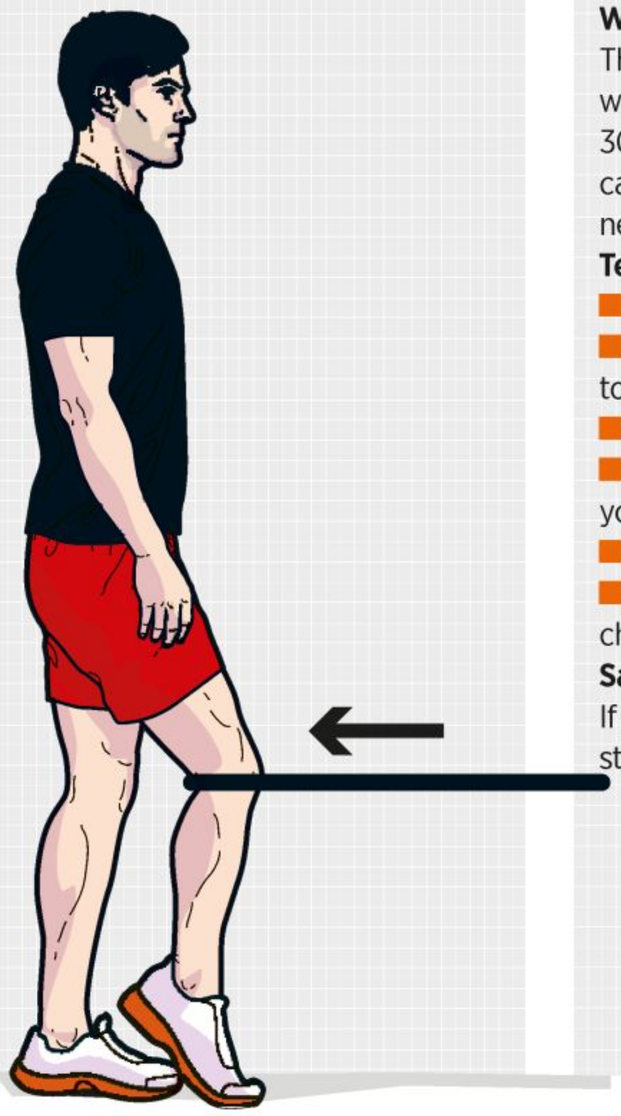
3 RESISTANCE BAND KNEE BOUNCING

Muscles:
Thighs (quadriceps, hamstrings)

Why do it?
This works through a pain-free zone for most people and will improve neuromuscular (communication between brain and muscle) stimulation to your knee.

Technique:
- Tie a resistance band in a big loop around a pole
- Stand with your feet hip-width apart facing the pole and place your right leg inside the loop
- Keep the band behind your knee
- Bend your right knee to place your weight on your left foot
- Straighten your leg and tense your front thigh muscles (quadriceps)

Safety tip:
Stand tall and don't look down.



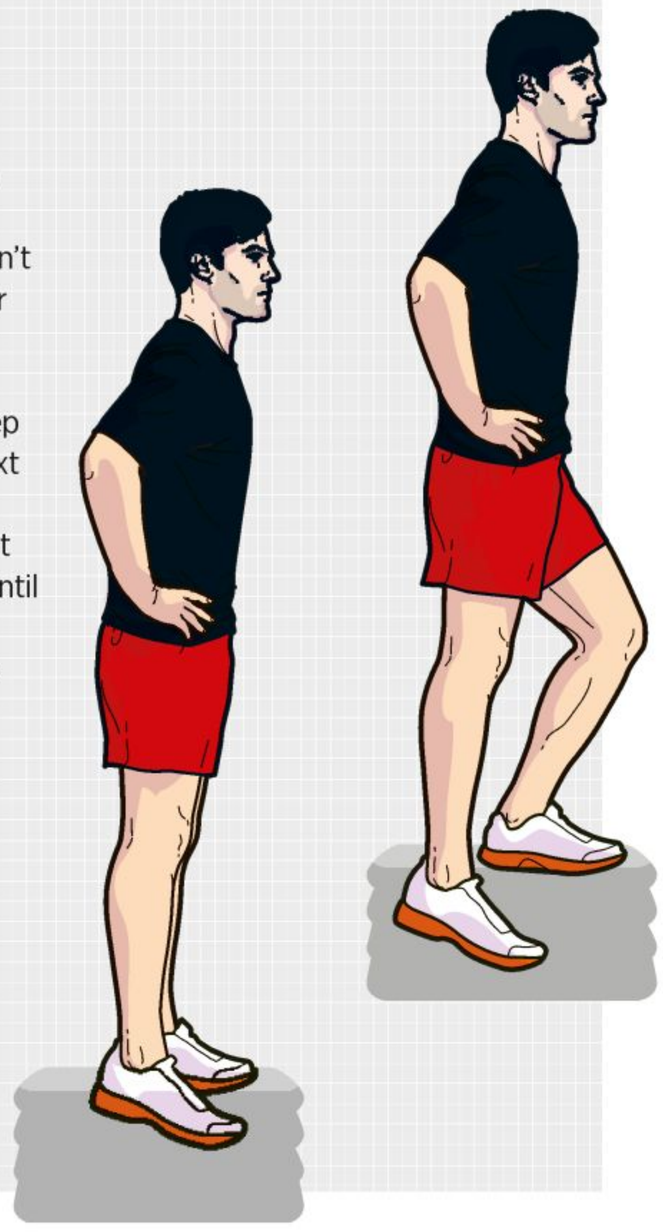
4 SINGLE LEG QUARTER-SQUATS OFF A STEP

Muscles:
Thighs, bottom, balance (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes)

Why do it?
This will improve muscle strength while keeping the knee within a 30-degree bend. It normally doesn't cause pain and it will improve your neuromuscular communication.

Technique:
- Stand with your left leg on a step
- Allow your right leg to hang next to the step
- Raise the toes on your right foot
- Bend your left knee, lowering until your right heel touches the floor
- Return to the standing position
- Complete one set before changing sides

Safety tip:
If you're returning from injury, stay within a pain-free zone.



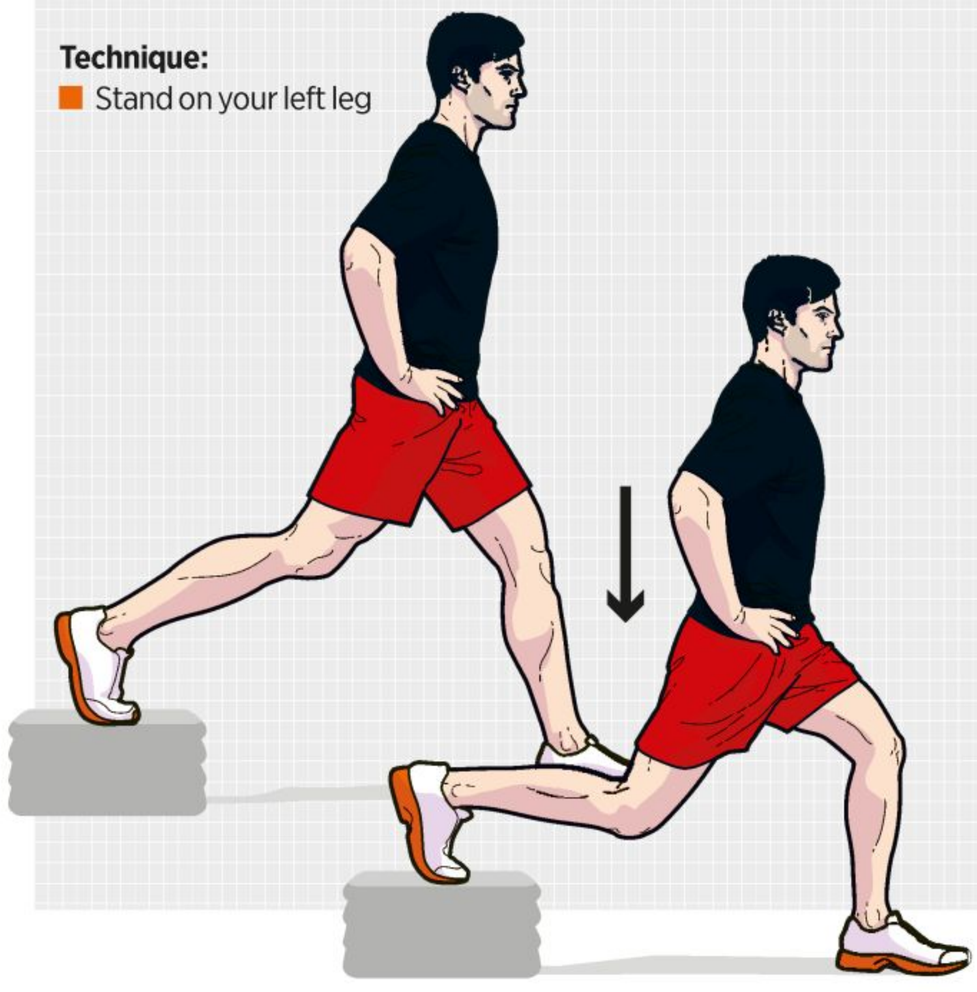
5 SPLIT SQUAT

Muscles:
Thighs, bottom, hip flexors, balance (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, piriformis muscle)

Why do it?
Doing single-leg exercises will ensure that both legs develop the same amount of strength to prevent future injuries.

Technique:
- Stand on your left leg
- Place your right foot behind you on a high step or bench
- Bend your standing (left) knee and lower your right knee to the ground
- Return to the standing position
- Complete one set before changing over to the other side

Safety tip:
Only lower to a comfortable level.



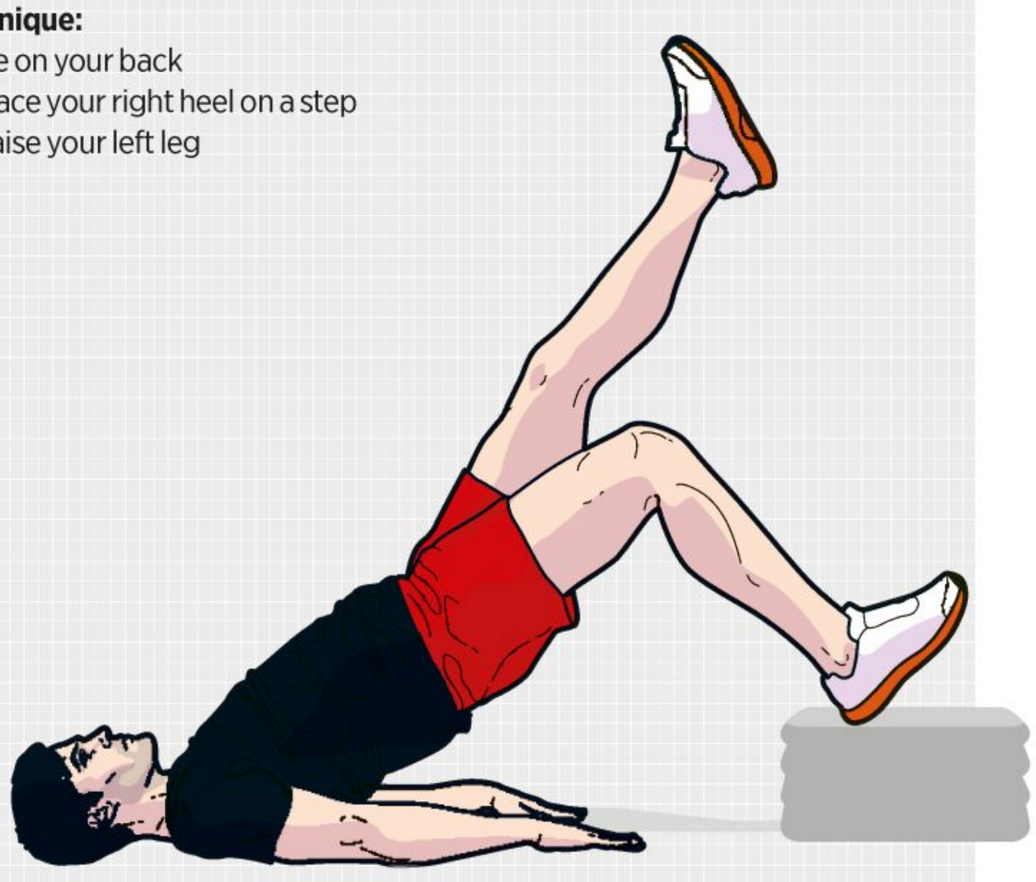
6 SINGLE-LEG STEP BRIDGE

Muscles:
Rear thighs, bottom, hip flexors, balance (quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, piriformis muscle)

Why do it?
To prevent knee injuries, it's important to avoid an imbalance between your front and back thighs.

Technique:
- Lie on your back
- Place your right heel on a step
- Raise your left leg
- Lift your hips off the floor to form a straight line between your knee, hips and shoulders
- Slowly lower back to the floor but don't rest your glutes on the floor

Safety tip:
Keep your hips level when lifting.



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MAVERICKS

12

MARCO OLMO

Meet the self-declared "peasant" who runs for revenge, hates his own victories and continues to defy the age barrier

On 25 August 2007, a spindly Italian man entered the small village of Chamonix, at the base of the French Alps, and made history. Marco Olmo had just become the first person ever to win back-to-back Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc (UTMB) titles. More remarkable still, he did so less than two months prior to his 60th birthday.

Was he happy with his record-breaking achievement? Not likely. "All of my victories have a bitter taste," he said, "because each time you win, you know that it will be the last."

Olmo's joylessness makes more sense when you consider his tough upbringing. Born in 1948 to a peasant family in the Robilante valley, northeast Italy, his childhood was one of basic survival. His first job involved working long and unrewarding hours as a truck driver. It was during this period of his life, aged 27, that he discovered running.

"IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE I'M A LOSER. I RUN FOR REVENGE, I RUN FOR VENGEANCE"

Angered by the tough hand he'd been dealt, Olmo used running as an outlet. "In my everyday life, I'm a loser," he said. "I run for revenge; I run for vengeance." Running was a release – a means of escaping the hapless life in the valley below – but it would also prove to be an avenue for success.

A NEW LEAF

At the age of 37, Olmo turned to vegetarianism, initially to improve his health, but eventually because it encompassed a deeper philosophy. "An animal to me is not a meal, but a living being," he said. "Vegetarianism could solve most of the tragedy of hunger in the world."

With a newfound attitude to his health, Olmo's running began to take on a more competitive edge. In his early 40s, he entered his first ultramarathon and, by the time he reached his 50th birthday, he was beginning to do rather well: finishing first in the gruelling Libyan Desert Marathon (1998) and then retaining his title for the following two years. Another, more infamous desert race, the Marathon des Sables (MdS) – billed as the 'toughest footrace on the planet' – also became an annual event on Olmo's calendar. At the age of 51, he finished third. The "Ageless Wonder", as he has come to be known, was beginning to make a name for himself. His best, though, was yet to come.

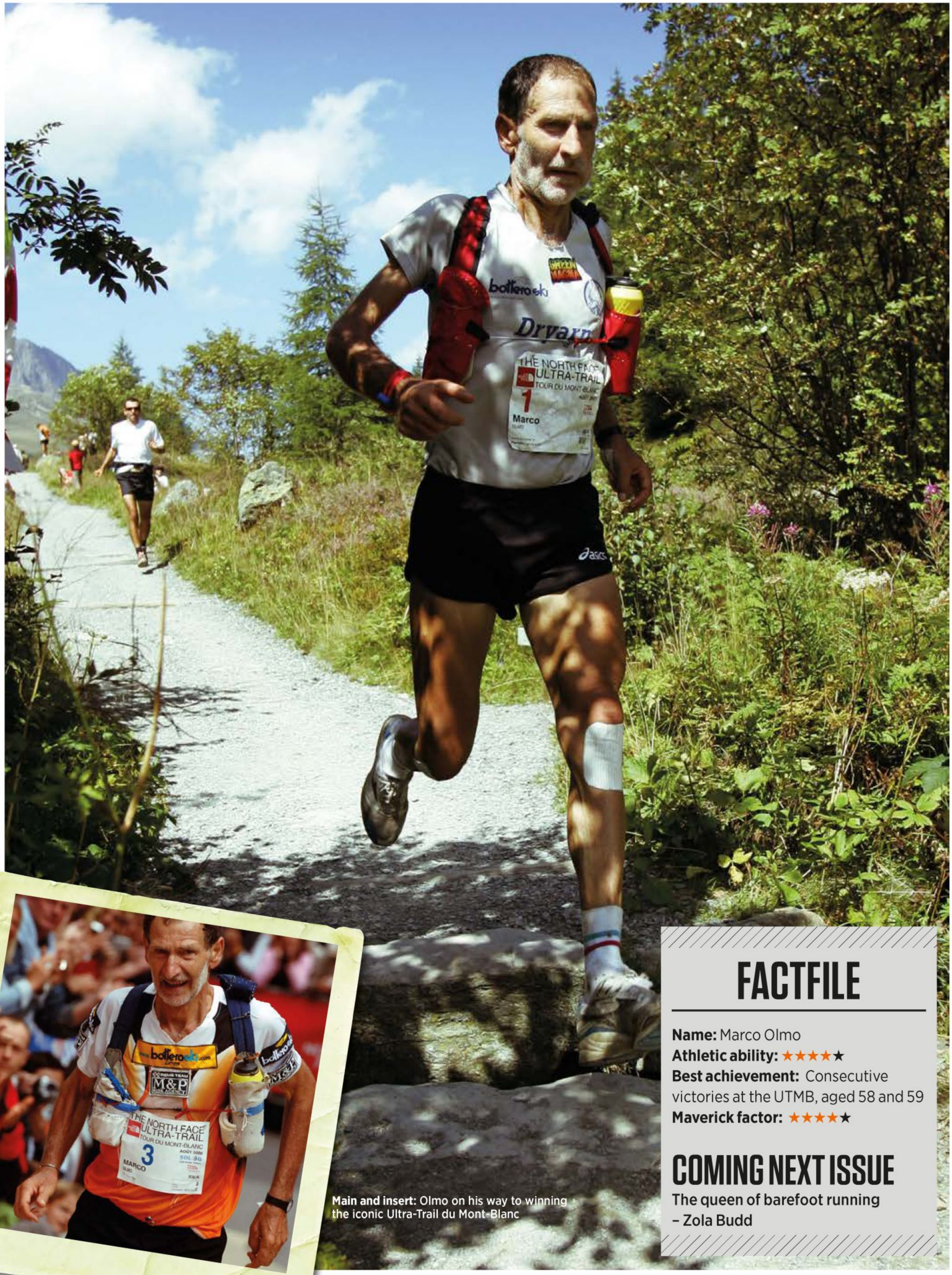
The UTMB is among the world's foremost ultramarathons, attracting a field of close to 2,000 runners a year, and it is widely considered to be the toughest in Europe. Spanning 103 miles, it takes runners across the alpine trails of France, Italy and Switzerland. In 2006, Olmo conquered the course in the second fastest time since the race's inception. Crossing the finish in 21hrs 6mins 6secs, he was a full 30 minutes ahead of his nearest challenger.

His victory one year later cemented his place in the history books – breaking his own still-standing and possibly never-to-be-beaten record as the oldest winner of the event and becoming the first person to retain the title.

For all his success, Olmo retains a fairly bitter attitude towards racing. He's also spoken of how he hates the attention that comes with being one of the world's greatest endurance athletes: "Before any race, I always feel very down. You can't imagine how highly strung you feel when almost everyone's gaze is on you."

And yet he continues to race. This year, at the age of 66, he completed the MdS for an incredible 20th time, finishing 14th. Marco Olmo's story is not a fairytale; he continues to battle the demons of his tough upbringing. His is, though, a story of enduring talent and athleticism, flying in the face of the one thing that none of us can beat: age itself. MR

Words Isaac Williams
Photography Marco Luzzani



Main and insert: Olmo on his way to winning the iconic Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc

FACTFILE

Name: Marco Olmo
Athletic ability: ★★★★★
Best achievement: Consecutive victories at the UTMB, aged 58 and 59
Maverick factor: ★★★★★

COMING NEXT ISSUE

The queen of barefoot running – Zola Budd

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TESTING TIMES

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Hardly a week goes by without some mention of doping in elite sport. But the focus on the top echelons of competition could be hiding a growing problem further down the chain. **George Bull** investigates whether amateur sport has a drug problem too

The latest doping scandal, broken by the BBC's *Panorama* documentary *Catch Me If You Can*, in which reporter Mark Daly investigated apparent allegations against athletics stars Alan Wells, Galen Rupp, and coach Alberto Salazar, seems set to run and run. But if there was anything more surprising than the allegations themselves, it was how easy the documentary suggested it was to obtain and take performance-enhancing drugs, while remaining undetected.

Using a technique known as microdosing, Daly showed it was possible to use enough erythropoietin (EPO) to affect his performance, but remain undetected in a biological passport test. It begs the question: if it is that easy, what's stopping other amateurs doing the same?

Not much, is the suggestion from Union Cycliste International's report for the Independent Commission for Reform. The report, which came out in March this year, stated the UCI's belief that "doping in amateur cycling is becoming endemic" and that this was confirmed by "riders, professionals, managers and anti-doping personnel." It suggested that doping was increasing in both under 23 riders and over 40s masters racing. There have been a number of cases – Dan Staite, a British amateur cyclist in his late 30s, was banned for using EPO in 2010 – but it seems a far cry from finding yourself lining up next to a doper at your weekend league race.

Michele Verroken, founder of consultancy Sporting Integrity and formerly Director of Ethics and Anti-Doping at UK Sport, thinks there's every possibility that you could be. "They could be members of a club where consent for testing is in place, but they are able to access substances across the internet or at their local gym, and may well be doing so thinking that no one's going to test them at that level."

Verroken, who was at the forefront of establishing Britain's anti-doping policy for 18 years, says that the basis for any anti-doping programme should be a combination of competition testing and out of competition testing, where athletes are signed up to what's known as the 'whereabouts programme'. This means they have to give testing officials notice of how to find them for random testing. Naturally, the majority of athletes signed up for this programme are elites, so the likelihood of an amateur being tested in competition is slim; the likelihood of being tested out of competition is even slimmer.

COMPETITIVE EDGE

With no prize money at stake, though, and limited opportunities for sponsorship deals, what would drive someone to cheat at that level? Verroken says it doesn't have to be any more complicated than competitiveness. "In amateur sport people can be just as competitive. I don't think that it changes whether they're an elite amateur, an elite professional, or an amateur."

Take cycling, she says, where first you're part of a cycling club, then you start posting times, you start upgrading your equipment, start moving up groups because this group is going »

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"IN AMATEUR SPORT PEOPLE CAN BE JUST AS COMPETITIVE"

to do this distance or this number of hill climbs. Or even the wearable tech revolution, with gadgets counting your steps and urging you to share your data on a social network somewhere. "It just all starts to have an inbuilt competitiveness."

INNOCENT MISTAKE

But while some may go out looking for an unfair advantage, other amateurs might not even know they're doping. For example, at a professional level, an athlete could be required to seek what's known as a Therapeutic Use Exemption for medicines such as asthma inhalers. But the amateur suffering from the same condition may not even know that their inhaler, depending on the type it is, contains a prohibited substance.

As far as Verroken's concerned, yes, amateur sport could have a drug problem, but it comes down to intent. "Is somebody intending to use a medication in order to enhance their performance? At amateur, recreational level sport, there is that opportunity," she says. "Significantly, though, at an amateur level there is less likely to be either a year-round drug testing programme or a programme that's focused on competitions." As a result, the savvy amateur doper could have plenty of time between competitions to use drugs and then simply stop taking them in time to avoid detection.

Stopping dopers is about first focusing resources on those sports where it's most likely, says Verroken: "Rugby would be one of those, possibly football, certainly athletics, weightlifting, perhaps to a certain extent tennis and definitely swimming, where the use of certain substances at an early age would lead to an advantage." Then get into those sports early, but not just with a deterrent. Rather, it's about athletes understanding they don't need drugs if they put themselves – their health, and the reputation of their sport and their families – first. "There's a lot you can do without having an oppressive testing regime." MR

DOES MORE MONEY MEAN MORE DOPING?

One contender for the fastest growing amateur sport has got to be ultrarunning. Figures compiled by *Ultrarunning Magazine* in the US last year show that over the past decade the number of events has more than doubled, and there are now more than 1,200 races.

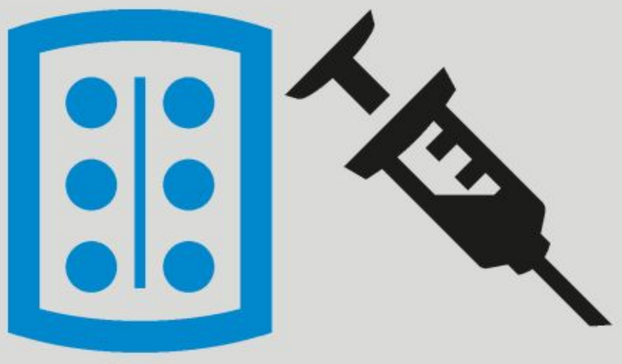
With more runners, sponsors and prize money entering the sport than ever before, is it just a matter of time before ultrarunning has its own spate of doping scandals?

Elite ultrarunner and Grand Slam of Ultrarunning record holder, Ian Sharman, doesn't necessarily think so – at least not on the trails. "I think there's definitely a cultural difference between the cyclists and the triathletes, and the runners. But also between the road-based people and the trail-based people. Trails do tend to be more about runners who love what they're doing and, ultimately, if you don't love running you're going to find it very difficult to do a 100-mile race through the mountains."

There are also a myriad of factors that doping just wouldn't help with in ultrarunning, says Sharman: from tactics for handling nutrition and the weather, to running at night. "The longer and more extreme the race is then the less the physical side – that one % that doping can influence – will matter."

While he says he would be surprised if any of those he knows among the elite ultrarunners were doping, it would be foolish to assume there's no one doping in ultrarunning, and people have been caught. The two biggest prize-money races on the ultrarunning circuit are South Africa's Comrades Marathon and Two Oceans Marathon. The top 10 runners can win money, so all have to take a drug test after the race. In 2012, Comrades winner Ludwick Mamabolo tested positive for a banned substance but was later cleared, while Two Oceans winner Natalia Volgina was stripped of her title in 2013 after being found guilty of using anabolic steroids.

"Clearly, it is happening where there's the incentive," he says, "but that's also on the roads, rather than the trails. I think in my sport, everyone wants everyone else to do well. I'm sure that will change over time as more money comes into the sport, but even if you had mega bucks in ultrarunning, I don't see it ever becoming as it is in professional cycling."



Under the microscope: while reports suggest doping has trickled down to the amateur level in cycling, it doesn't yet appear to be a problem in recreational running.

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BLADES OF GLORY

David Smyth takes a closer look at running blades and finds it's the athlete, not the technology, that makes the real difference

When the Paralympics earned their highest profile ever in London in 2012, running blades became unlikely objects of desire, perhaps even more so because the majority of us would never own one. Yes, you need a severe physical disability to need a blade, but they look so cool, don't they? The products made by leading manufacturers Össur, Ottobock and Freedom Innovations are X-Men weapons of speed rather than clunky approximations of the real thing.

Richard Whitehead saw firsthand the upswing in public attitudes, from mild pity to intense admiration, after he won the T42 200m at the Games and set a new world record of 24.38 seconds. Born without lower legs or knees, he went on to run from John O'Groats to Land's End in 2013. "The perceptions of what a disabled person can and can't do have gone from zero to hero," he says.

He runs like Pete Townshend plays the guitar: by circumduction, windmilling his straight legs in circles from the hips. This made him stand out in the 200m, where he was the only one starting upright in the T42 class of single above-the-knee amputees – every other athlete was in the traditional sprinter's crouch. He was slower off the blocks, before taking off on the straight to beat the others by a considerable distance. He's keen to stress, though, that it isn't the blades that made him the best – his two to their one. "It's athletic ability. Otherwise everybody would be running marathons and breaking world records." He ran his first marathon, in 5hrs 19mins in 2004, on exactly the same kind of blade as his fastest, 2hrs 42mins in 2009. The difference was his training, not the technology. The type he uses are available to anyone off the shelf. Although he goes direct to the manufacturer for his rather than the NHS, and gets through a set every six months or so, they're not like Formula 1 cars.

Richard Hirons, clinical specialist at Icelandic prosthetics company Össur – the company that makes the Cheetah blades used by Whitehead, British 2012 T44 100m gold medallist Jonnie Peacock and Oscar Pistorius – agrees that it isn't the blades that make a great runner. "We can take the credit for the technology but the ability is absolutely paramount," he says. "Without the athletes they're just passive devices, not dissimilar to running shoes."

Nor do they, as some might imagine, give an advantageous kangaroo-like bounce to amputee runners.

They are carbon fibre springs, comprised of more than 80 layers of carbon, with normal trainer soles on the bottom, but they can't return more energy than is put in. The geometry of the curve and the thickness of the blade corresponds to the intended use – so if you're a sprinter you'll have a stiffer blade than you'd need for running a marathon, as up to five times your body weight could be going through it." »

Photography thinkstockphotos.co.uk

You get what you give: blades return the same amount of energy put in

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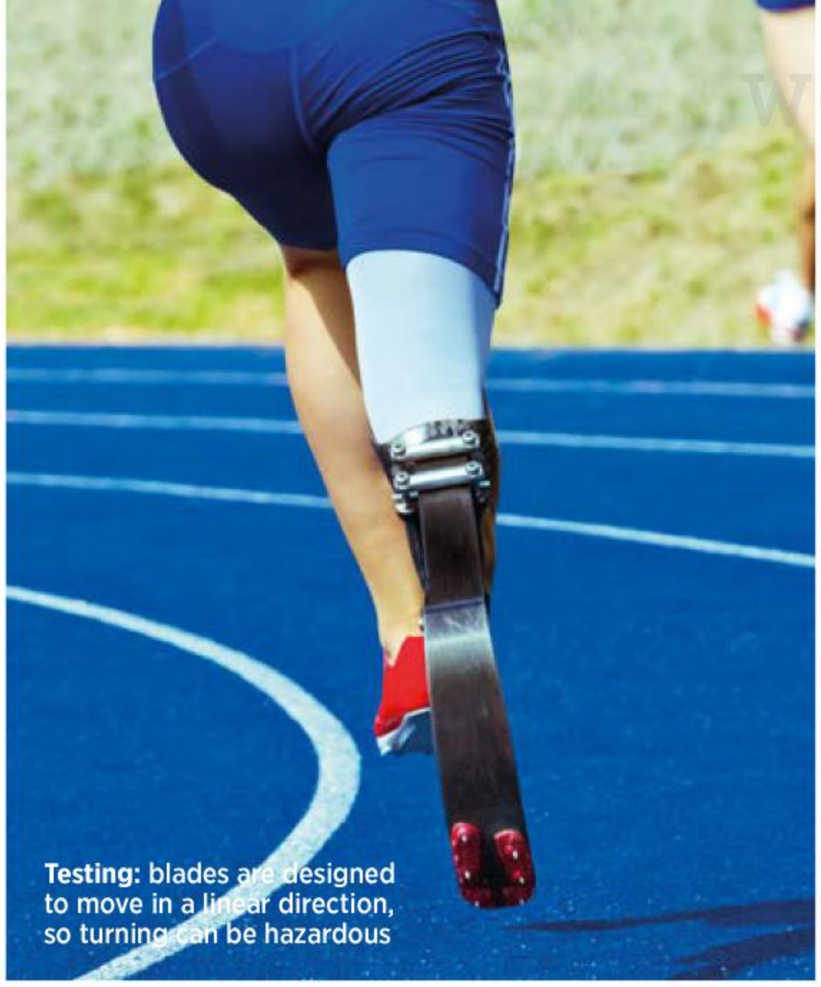


Testing: blades are designed to move in a linear direction, so turning can be hazardous

Stride length can be an issue. Pistorius famously slammed Alan Fonteles Cardoso Oliveira for beating him in the T44 200m at the 2012 Paralympics, as the latter's blades were longer. Oliveira's blades were legal for Paralympic events, whereas Pistorius's had to be a little shorter for the IAAF to allow him to compete against able-bodied athletes in the Olympics.

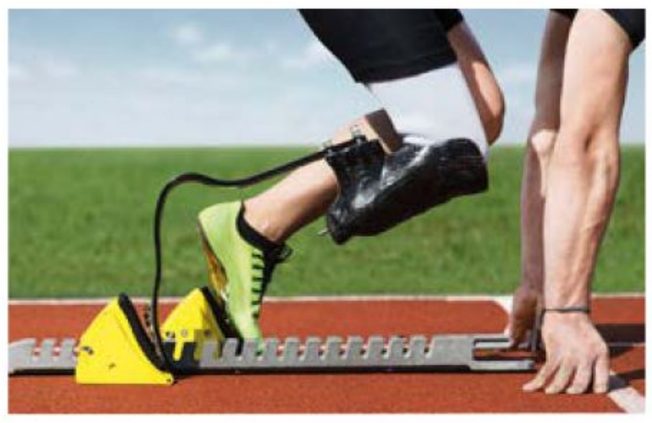
But the disadvantages still far outweigh any positives. "For a below-the-knee one-sided amputee, to do the same thing [as an able-bodied runner] you'd use about 50% more energy," points out Hirons. "For a bilateral above-knee, it's 200%."

"My cardiovascular system is working much harder. Blood flow is going around my body a lot quicker, so my heart has to work a lot harder," says Whitehead.
It's also no advantage for the blades to be lighter than a normal leg, as they have no dedicated muscles to move them.

Injury-wise, of course Whitehead avoids the Achilles tendon problems that can plague runners, and unlike the rest of us, if he has a problem with his foot he can simply replace it. But he can have trouble with his lower back and hips because of his running style. Also, falling over can be a huge problem. Without feeling in his feet, if he hits a stone in the road his brain doesn't hear about it fast enough for him to instinctively put his arms out and protect himself – smash.

Kelly Bruno, who has competed for the USA paratriathlon team, struggles the most with downhill running. "When you don't have that heel strike it's harder to brake, so there are a lot of stresses put on the hips and knee," she says.

Corners can be troublesome too when you don't have ankles. Whitehead prefers the long straights of the Chicago Marathon to the winding streets of London. "Carbon fibre works well in a linear direction, but if you twist it, it can shatter," says Mitchell Phillips, of StrideUK, who assisted Whitehead on his Land's End run.



Design-wise, the blade has changed relatively little since the American inventor Van Phillips started his Flex-Foot company in 1984. Chris Moon has seen more important changes at the top end than the bottom, where silicon gel now allows for a much more comfortable fit.

Moon, a former officer in the British Army, was blown up by a landmine in Mozambique while working for a charity in 1995 – it literally cost him an arm and a leg. Over 20 years, he's seen improvements in comfort, and is running a mile three minutes faster now, at 53, than he did as a 33-year-old. "I used to have to stop and pour the blood out of my socket. Now there's none of that," he says. He ran the Marathon des Sables just two years after sustaining his injuries. "It was extra tough then because I was still recovering.
I think it would just be a good laugh now."

For Whitehead, he will stick with the same C-shaped blade he's been using since 2004 as he prepares for the Anniversary Games in London, the International Paralympic Committee World Championships in Qatar in October, then Rio 2016 and the World Championships in London 2017.

"WHITEHEAD RUNS LIKE PETE TOWNSHEND PLAYS THE GUITAR: WINDMILLING HIS STRAIGHT LEGS IN CIRCLES FROM THE HIP"

He wants to continue to show what's possible for disabled athletes for as long as possible. And as with any runner, getting the right footwear is only the first step – it's what comes next that reveals the true champions. MR

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ULTRA UNPREPARED

With a strong sense of impending agony, *MR*'s **Isaac Williams**, an amateur runner with just one half-marathon under his belt, set off to see how many miles he could cover in 12 hours

A bridge too far: Isaac's run took him into unkown territory

Photography Rick Pearson

An Eton mess: the pain mounted as Isaac headed west through Eton

"Must be a Kenyan," I think to myself, as a woman at least 30 years my senior storms past at what must be a Bolt-like 9min/mile pace.

I'm 24 miles in to a 12-hour 'run' – run being a questionably speedy term – and I'm about to enter a world of pain.

The seeds of this ridiculous challenge were sewn about a month ago with an innocent, off-the-cuff remark during a conversation about feature ideas ("How about we see how far the amateur runner can get in a day?"), which received an unexpected vote of confidence.

Having never run further than 13.1 miles, I had just committed to potentially tripling that distance. Yippee.

Four weeks later, I find myself at the entrance to Gunnersbury Park, west London, equipped with my never-before-used hydration pack, bursting at the seams with kit for every peril that the Thames Towpath can throw at me (phone charger, flares, pepper spray, etc) and deeply regretting the preparatory saucepan of pasta I ate the night before.

For the first couple of hours, I adopt a pre-planned tactic of jogging for 25 minutes and walking for five, which sees me breeze past the idyllic, wooded sections by Richmond, Twickenham and Teddington and on to the decidedly less appealing stretch through Kingston. I say less appealing, because not only is it something of a concrete jungle, but in the space of 10 metres I almost step on a dismembered rat and an enormous rotting fish. I decide to up the pace slightly.

By the time I plod in to Walton-on-Thames, three hours and 15 miles in, it's already the longest I've ever run and, unfortunately, it's starting to feel that way. My hamstrings are tight and my feet are already showing signs of blistering. Happily, a wee in a far-too-public bush and a soggy sausage roll perk me right up.

I've arranged to meet the editor, Rick, at Staines station at midday – 25.5 miles in. As I hit the 20-mile mark by Laleham, I'm surprised to find that I may actually be there on time. Cause for celebration: a lavish 15-minute walking break and an unpeeled kiwi. This is the life.

Two hours on, my comparatively sunny pre-Staines outlook is no more. Rick and I have somehow gone off course – difficult to do, you'd think, when following a river – and find ourselves doing five minutes of shuffling, followed by five minutes of walking, along the B376. "I've prepared myself for an afternoon of walking," he reassures me. The trouble is, even that is becoming a struggle.

The following three-hour period is characterised by the odd peak and bottomless troughs. From the elation (and that is not too strong a word) of a refreshing dip in the Thames at the picture-perfect stretch just outside of Windsor, to the ridiculous amount of effort it takes to do a mere minute's worth of snail-paced jogging, I experience every emotion under »

SUMMARY OF SUFFERING

Distance covered: 46 miles
Most painful body part: Hamstrings
Best moment: Reaching the 40-mile mark
Worst moment: 5-mile stretch from Water Oakley to Maidenhead
Feelings at the finish: Relief, pride, paralysis

"THE SEEDS OF THIS RIDICULOUS CHALLENGE WERE SEWN ABOUT A MONTH AGO WITH AN OFF-THE-CUFF REMARK DURING A FEATURES MEETING"

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One giant leap: Isaac ran three times further than he'd ever run before

the sun (which is continuing to churn out 28 degrees of unbearable heat).

By 4.30pm, around 39 miles in, I am a broken man. The one-minute intervals have long since been abandoned and this is now very much a walk. Ordinarily, I can run three miles in less than 20 minutes. Now, it's a struggle to do one mile in that time. With each step, though, I am a little bit closer to my predicted finish: the ultrarunning mecca that is Maidenhead train station.

And then, finally, after two of the most painful hours of my life, the most beautiful sign I've ever seen, glistening on the side of the A4, looms into view: 'MAIDENHEAD'. One final mile and the best 'sprint finish' I can muster bring the journey to end. After 12 hours, 46 miles, picturesque surroundings and some debilitating pain, I can finally sit down and reflect on a very long day's work.

Despite the near-immobility, I've proved that the ability to go ultra isn't the reserve of the super-fit or the iron-willed. It wasn't pretty, and it sure as hell wasn't fast, but in the space of a day I achieved something I never thought possible. And, believe it or not, I enjoyed most of it. There's surely no better way to see the world, or, indeed, get to know yourself. The good news is that with enough time, Compeed and acceptance that basic movement might be out of the question for a while, anyone can do it.

KIT CHECK

Osprey Rev 6 Backpack
1.5L water bladder and jiggle-free comfort

Odlo Crono 2-in-1 Running Shirt
Fast-drying and extremely lightweight

inov-8 Race Ultra Twin Short
Useful zip pocket and zero chafing

Adidas Supernova Sequence Boost
Tried and tested faithfuls didn't let me down

THAMES PATH 100

Follow in Isaac's footsteps by taking on the 100-miler from Richmond to Oxford. The flat course along the banks of the River Thames offers runners the rarest opportunity of a hill-free ultra and the chance to run through some of the most idyllic countryside England has to offer.

Date: 30 April 2016
Entry: £130
centurionrunning.com

NUTRITION

Chicken and avocado sandwiches x 2
Peanut butter and jam sandwiches x 2
Sausage rolls x 4
Lucozade x 2
Satsumas x 3
Kiwis x 2
Banana x 1
Sweet potato chips
Salted cashew nuts
Malt loaf
Energy gels (unused)
Cake (unused)
Chocolate bar (melted)

The real deal: Isaac favoured wholefoods over gels

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SUMMIT TO BRAGG ABOUT

Britain's Jez Bragg recently claimed the record for the Ramsay Round – an iconic mountain circuit in the Scottish Highlands. *MR* caught up with him to hear how it was done

This boy cairn: Bragg bags another peak

© Olly Stephenson

Words Rick Pearson

© Cameron Burt

Crew done it: breaking the record was a team effort

© Gemma Bragg

Some records stand for a week; others last for a couple of years. Then there's Adrian Belton's record for the Ramsay Round – an iconic route involving the summiting of 24 Scottish munros in 24 hours – that has lasted for more than a quarter of a century. Jez Bragg was just eight years old when Belton completed his record-breaking round in 1989, finishing in a time of 18hrs 23mins. But last weekend Bragg claimed the record on his first attempt, finishing in a time of 18hrs 12mins.

"I'd had my eyes on the record for some time," he tells *MR*. "I knew about the records for the various British rounds, like the Bob Graham and Paddy Buckley, but there's something particularly appealing about running in the Scottish Highlands. It's something I've been planning since last August."

Bragg's preparation involved five trips up to Scotland to familiarise himself with the route, in addition to countless hours spent studying maps. "You have to know the course like the back of your hand," he says. "I knew there'd be no time on the day to be studying maps or getting out my compass."

SUPPORTING CAST

To help him on the day, Bragg assembled a support crew, including local runners who'd pace him along certain legs of the route. However, the inclement weather meant they had to twice postpone the attempt. "It's all very weather-dependent. You really want a cool breeze and a high cloud base so you can see the summits."

On Friday 12 June, conditions were perfect and Bragg was ready to give it a shot. "I knew from the training runs how tough a record this was to beat – that's why it has stood for 26 years – so I created a schedule that was only just inside the course record."

Early on Bragg found himself a full 20 minutes up on Belton's record, only to see this evaporate during the middle third of the course. "It was finely balanced, to say the least. It was very stressful – magical, but stressful. I had to have a word with myself towards the end just to keep pushing on."

Alongside all the clock-watching, Bragg managed to soak up some of the route's spectacular scenery. "The summit of Ben Nevis at 4.30am in the morning was something special. The moon and the sun were in the sky at the same time and there was still thick snow on the summit as it had been a cold spring."

His abiding memory, however, will be returning to the Glen Nevis Youth Hostel, where the route starts and finishes, knowing that he'd broken Belton's long-standing record by nine minutes.

"I HAD MY EYES ON THE RECORD FOR SOME TIME"

In a mark of great sportsmanship, Belton was quick to congratulate Bragg. "He dropped me a line to say well done. He said he was really pleased someone had shown it was possible to go that quickly. It was a lovely touch."

So, has he got his eye on any other long-standing British distance records? Billy Bland's famously fast Bob Graham Round, perhaps? "I'd be lying if I said I hadn't started thinking about other records," he says. "Though I would say Billy's Bob Graham Round is so fast, it's almost difficult to comprehend!" But then, they said that about Belton's Ramsay Round. And look what happened there. MR

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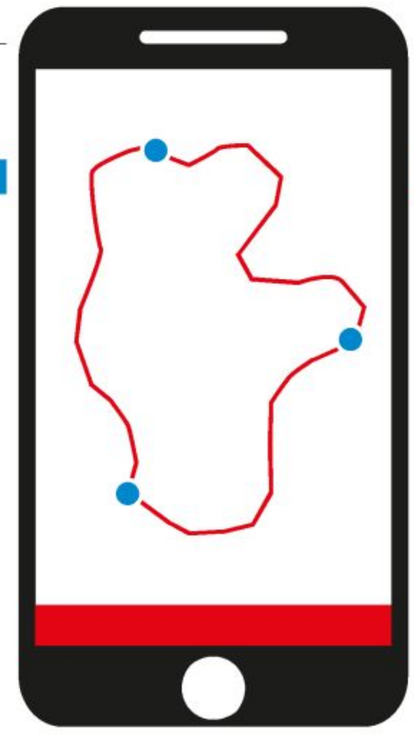
LOCAL KNOWLEDGE



New in town? That's no excuse not to go for a run around the city streets. Strava Local, an online guide to the best routes in your area, keeps your away-from-home running on track

We're all too comfortable, we runners. We stick to the same trails, the same parks and the same streets. What we need is an incentive to get us running outside of our comfort zones.

A new online service called Strava Local may just be that incentive. Launched this summer by the running website Strava, it bills itself as "a TripAdvisor-type service that recommends running and cycling routes in 12 major cities across the world".

Here's how it works: using data from around 38 million running and cycling routes already uploaded onto Strava from 12 cities worldwide, it suggests the best and most popular routes to run or cycle, and the most interesting stopping points along the way. "Data-generated, athlete-curated," is how Strava describes it.

The 12 cities currently featured are Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Denver, Melbourne, Milan, New York, Paris, San Francisco, Sao Paulo, Sydney and our very own London. For London alone, more than 10 million routes were analysed.

This could well revolutionise the way we go running when we're away from home. While plenty of runners head out of town on business or on holiday with their trainers in their suitcase, once they arrive at their destination, finding a decent running route in an unfamiliar city is tricky. This is where Strava Local works so well. Since it amalgamates routes suggested by locals, it guarantees those posted on the website are both popular and interesting.

I decided to test it out for myself. Guided by Simon Klima, Strava's UK country manager, I followed one of the London routes suggested. Instead of somewhere near my home in southwest London, I put myself firmly out of my comfort zone and chose an unfamiliar route the other side of town. In my case this was Hampstead Heath, in north London.

It had been a fair few years since I'd set foot in this park, so the online route map proved indispensable. It guided me on a 3.6-mile circuit of the heath, on a mixture of tarmac, gravel and dirt paths, through woods, around ponds and across grassy sections. There was a good mix of flat, incline and decline, plus two great tourist spots – Kenwood House and Parliament Hill. The latter offers one of the best and most famous views in London.

Some of the runs on Strava Local offer runners convenient café stops (for pre-run caffeine or post-run fuel) and memorable photo spots. There's a variety of road and trail runs, flat and hilly runs. The London section features 10 runs in all, from the River Thames, the royal parks, Regent's Park and Battersea Park in the centre, to Richmond Park in the southwest, Victoria Park in the east, and Hampstead Heath in the north. Strava has hired "local influencers" in each city to ensure there's a good cross-section of long, short, flat, hilly, urban and suburban routes, spread out all over each city. A quick perusal of the website bears this out. One of London's routes, for example, is a 12.4-mile "Escape the city" schlep along the Thames Path. Denver has several mountain runs for hard-core altitude runners. San Francisco has a 6.2-mile run out and back over the Golden Gate Bridge. There's Paris's Eiffel Tower loop, a 1,000-step hill run in Melbourne, New York City's Central Park loop, a six-mile park run near Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport ("for anyone with a really long layover"), and a five-mile beach run in Barcelona. Quite a mix.

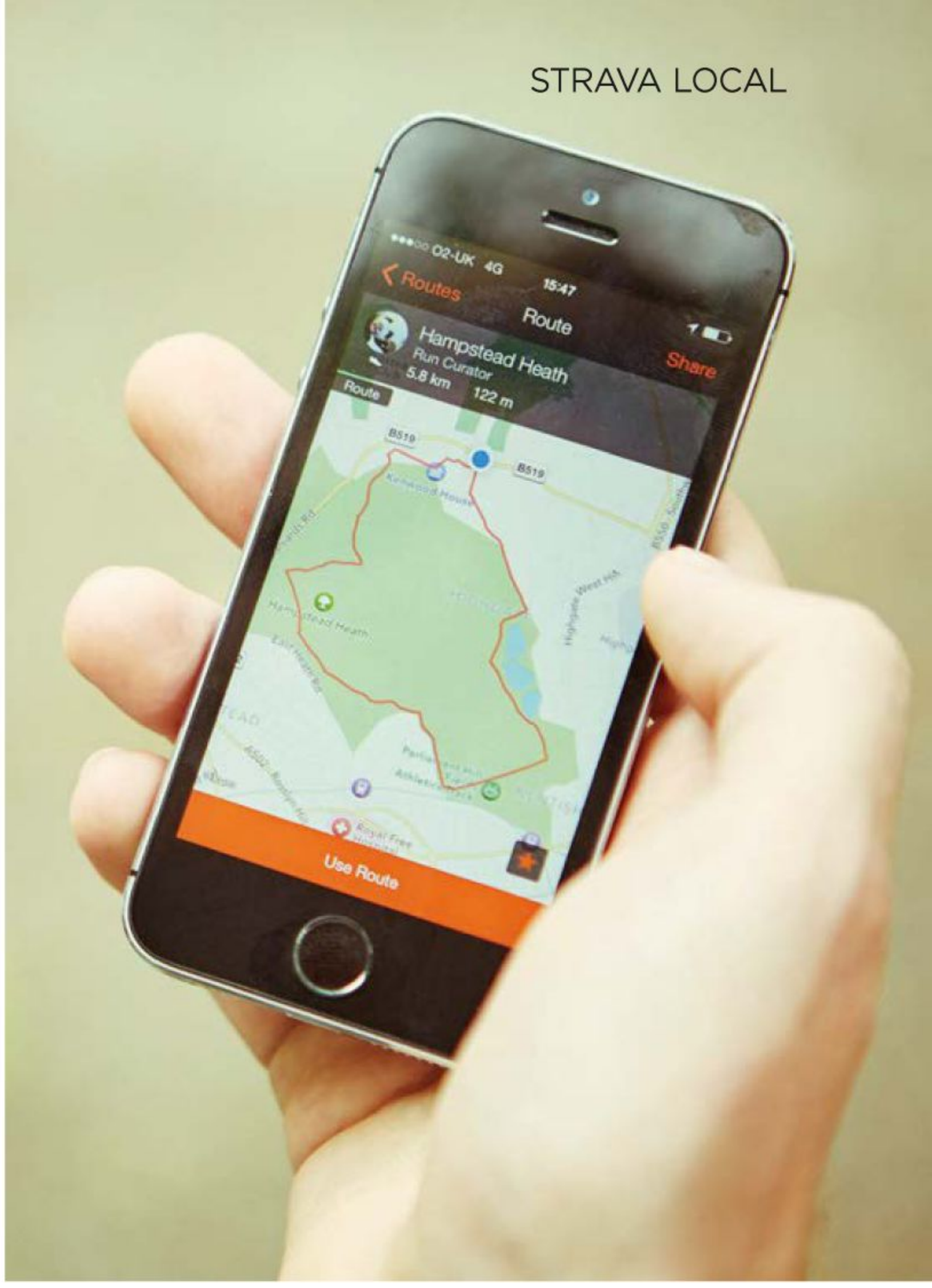
At the end of my Hampstead Heath run, Klima explained how an unprecedented number of running routes in London and across the UK have been uploaded to the main Strava website. "The UK is a massive hotbed for Strava", he said. "There's a big growth in running. Strava provides the camaraderie you get from a running club but in digital form. I see it being for people who want to be part of a running community. With Strava they can easily commune with other runners outside of the traditional run club meet-ups."

One criticism of Strava Local is that only 12 cities are featured. To be truly useful, it needs to include more routes in more cities. Klima says he and his colleagues are on the case. Rumours are that the next UK city to be added will be Manchester.

strava.com/local

"THIS COULD WELL REVOLUTIONISE THE WAY WE GO RUNNING WHEN WE'RE AWAY FROM HOME"

Words Dominic Bliss
Photography Duncan Elliott / Strava



Town planning: Dominic tests out Strava Local around London's Hampstead Heath

STRAVA RUNNERS HAVE BEEN BUSY

WORLDWIDE

- **Total distance run:** 225 million K
- **Total number of runs**: 27.3 million K
- **Most active day:** 1.3 million K
- **Total elevation gain:** 2.6 billion metres

UK

- **Total distance run in 2014:** 44,178,000K
- **Average distance of each run:** 8.5K (male); 7K (female)
- **Average elevation of each run:** 89m (male); 63m (female)
- **Average time of each run:** 46mins (male); 45mins (female)
- **Average pace of each run:** 5mins 24secs per K (male); 6mins 25secs per K (female)
- **Average total distance run in 2014:** 152K (male); 120K (female)
- **Average total elevation run in 2014:** 1,582m (male); 1,052m (female)
- **Average total time run in 2014:** 13h 55mins (male); 12h 46mins (female)
- **Most popular day of running in 2014:** Sunday 7 September
- **Most active county:** London
- **Fastest county per run:** Aberdeenshire
- **Hilliest county per run:** Gwynedd

Photography Jordi Saragossa

MASTER THE TRAIL MINDSET

WITH PROJECT TRAIL SET TO BEGIN NEXT MONTH, ITS COACH, **ROBBIE BRITTON**, DISCUSSES WHY OFF-ROAD RUNNING REQUIRES A DIFFERENT PHYSICAL AND MENTAL APPROACH

They say if you can get addicted to something as 'boring' as running, you shouldn't try anything exciting like sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. But I say that running is exciting – particularly the kind offered by Project Trail.

You might think that a fast road runner can simply slip on a pair of trail shoes and magically become the next Joss Naylor. In reality, it's rarely that simple. Many's the time you see quick roadies tackle the trail and suddenly become like Bambi on ice – long, thin legs sliding all over the place.

"MANY QUICK ROADIES TACKLE THE TRAIL AND SUDDENLY BECOME LIKE BAMBI ON ICE"

Getting your body ready for the different stresses of trail running is a brilliant thing as it will make you a stronger runner across all terrains, building up leg and core muscles that will prevent injury, increase strength and prolong your running career. The softer, varied terrain will not only recruit more muscles; it will also force you to use your muscles in different ways, causing less damage than the repetitive pounding of feet on concrete.

Nigh on every top road runner looks the same: long legs, low body fat and the upper-body of a five-year-old child. Now I'm not saying that I'm particularly blessed with Stallone-style guns, but trail runners come in a variety of shapes and sizes, especially at the ultra distance. Strength plays such a big part in the hills and the mountains that being light is not always the best way to go.

Part of my training for the UTMB this year involves regular strength and conditioning work with Charley Radcliffe, someone who specialises in mountain athletics and has had me swinging kettlebells, squatting and sprinting around a car park in Chamonix and I'm already feeling the benefits!

NEW PERSPECTIVE

Off-road running doesn't just reward a different physique; it also rewards a different mindset. If you're a fan of hitting exact splits every mile, you may be a little disappointed to see that bog at mile two, but if you embrace the challenges of the trail you can use this to your advantage.

Rather than thinking about how hard each step is, trying to keep a set pace for the next 400m and hitting tarmac again and again, your brain will be working overtime to process all the information ahead of you: where are tree roots? Will that rock move? Is that badger going to charge at me? If constantly trying to avoid smashing your face in sounds like a stressful activity, it actually keeps you occupied while your body is at its limits – a pleasant distraction from the monotony of the asphalt. "Easier on the mind will translate to easier on the legs" is how top UK trail ultrarunner Paul Navesey puts it.

I'll be honest: you won't find me stopping to smell the flowers, eat berries and pen a sonnet to nature during a race. In training, however, I often find myself staring in awe at some of the scenery around me. And you don't have to travel too far to find some great off-road routes; there are trails all over the UK in a huge, crisscrossed network. Check online, dust off your maps or just go out and explore. The spirit of adventure lives within all of us. While going off the beaten track may slow down your data for Strava, the rewards for the mind and body make it worthwhile.

You'll become fitter, stronger and happier, simply by jumping in a few puddles or flying down a single track in the woods. So, if you're not already planning your next trail adventure, what are you waiting for?

Robbie Britton is a Team GB 24hr runner and Profeet ambassador. He will be the dedicated coach of Project Trail.

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FROM MEN'S Running

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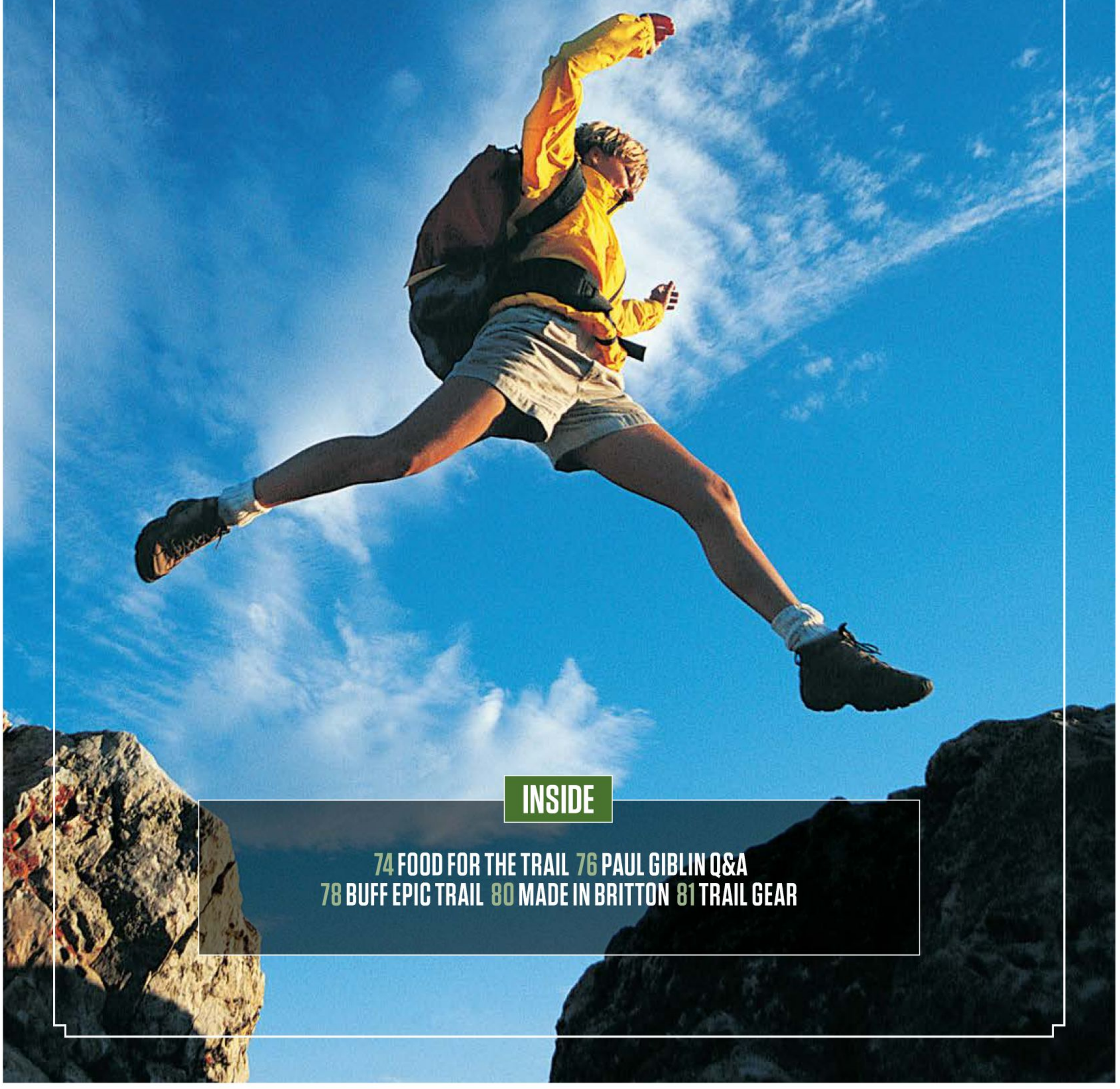
SEPTEMBER

TRAIL ZONE



INSIDE

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FASTER CHEF

What's the best fuel to power your running? **Ceri Rees** speaks with the top trail runners to hear their contrasting views on the finest mid-race nutrition

Photography Thinkstockphotos.co.uk

EXPERT ADVICE

Ceri Rees is an ex-international athlete and trail running expert. He is the founder of Wild Running, offering trail running and mountaineering experiences for all abilities.

Performance nutrition is the new religion in endurance sports such as trail running, with more and more runners experimenting with 'catch all' products that advocate precise quantities of fuel to be taken at regular intervals. Consequently, energy and hydration gels now form an essential part of most runners' tool kits.

But they don't suit everyone and the further along the distance spectrum, the less the experts seem to agree. At the sharp end of the sport, many athletes are experimenting, searching for a bespoke formula that works for them. Many are asking 'if' and 'when' they should take on sugary carbs and isotonic gels.

Some product performance manufacturers, such as SiS, advocate taking up to three 22g isotonic gels an hour, in order to top up on carbs before or during a race. The theory is that isotonic gels can be broken down more quickly and the energy quickly delivered to where you need it. Their gels contain maltodextrin, a carb mix that is supposed to maintain fluid balance and therefore osmotic pressure within the blood stream. The net effect, therefore, is for the muscles to more rapidly absorb the solution.

However, Simon White, technical advisor for Lamberts Healthcare Ltd, suggests that taking a carb gel before a marathon may be a pointless exercise. "Marathon runners should only start taking carbohydrate solutions after an hour of exercise, because they don't want to be burning carbs straight away."

By contrast, the amount of calories available through intramuscular and liver fatty tissue can last for 120 hours. One interpretation of this is that non-saturated Omega-3 fatty foods, such as nut oils, are a more reliable pre-race energy source for longer races than pure carbohydrates.

GETTING FRUITY

One man who has turned his back on sugary carbs and gels is fruitarian and top US ultrarunner Mike Arnstein. Instead Mike relies on "real food", namely fruit and raw vegetables. He's sure his high fructose diet has helped him to become a better athlete.

"I couldn't get under 2hrs 45mins for the marathon until I changed my diet and started eating mainly fruit and raw vegetables," he says. "Then I began running regularly under 2hrs 30mins. Nobody asks where a race horse gets its protein from. The answer is they have everything they need from their available diet. Protein is the end result of amino acids being synthesised. Raw vegetables and fruit all contain these amino acids. I never get sick and I recover quicker too."

When he is racing, he likes to eat dates and bananas, and also consumes extra protein through coconut and flax seeds.

Top British ultrarunner Mark Perkins, who once ran almost 100 miles in 12 hours, also never uses gels in races. His everyday diet includes very little sugar, having worked hard to eliminate foods like cake, jam and ketchup – all of which are very high in the sweet stuff.

"I started on carbs and powders but when I graduated to 100-milers, I started being sick at around 70 miles. So I played around with a low-carb diet. I don't use gels while racing because my stomach doesn't like the sugar content."

Mark makes himself carb/protein snacks, which include sushi rice balls and sweet potato muffins with egg. He is not completely averse to sugar, however. When he starts to get an energy low towards the end of a race, he drinks coke.

At the other end of the spectrum, Anton Krupicka, a two-time winner of the Leadville 100, is a strong advocate of GU energy gels while racing and for very long training sessions. "Because they're gel and not solid food, they're much easier to eat while running, as opposed to real food, which typically requires chewing and is not packaged as conveniently.

"In training, I take one gel per hour during runs of four hours or longer – I eat nothing on runs of less than four hours. During racing, I take two gels per hour."

But even Kupricka admits his stomach can only digest so much of the sugary gels and, 10 hours in to an ultra, he prefers to balance things out with some starchy foods and even a little protein.

"I DON'T USE GELS WHILE RACING BECAUSE MY STOMACH DOES NOT DEAL WELL WITH THE SUGAR CONTENT"

Lamberts Sports performance team stresses that an essential ingredient for performance is hormesis, or the balance of physiological functions.

Performance, they claim, and daily personal requirements are inextricably linked. In other words, performance diet is very much about adapting your nutrition to the training you are doing, your daily stress levels and the environment you are in. Yet more food for thought. MR

worldmags.net

TRAIL Q & A PAUL GIBLIN

The three-time winner of the prestigious West Highland Way talks pace and plant-based diets with **Rick Pearson**

MR You're arguably most famous for your three successive victories at the West Highland Way. What is it about this race that you find so appealing?

PG The longer courses suit me. I'd rather run the 100-milers, and the WHW has just about everything in terms of terrain and surroundings. It's also in my backyard and it became a bit of an obsession. A couple of years before my first win, I made up my mind that I wanted to be part of its history by taking the course record and seeing my name on a trophy that has a number of my heroes on it.

MR Do you do a lot of speed work or is your training all about mileage?

PG Mileage is important for any long-distance runner, but it's not everything. Training volume, intensities and recovery are just as important, so my week will almost always contains some kind of speed sessions.

Too many people do all their training at the same pace, so they end up hitting a plateau. They often run too hard in all sessions and I suspect it's the cause of many common injuries and the popular term "overtraining".

"TOO MANY PEOPLE DO ALL THEIR TRAINING AT THE SAME PACE"

MR You follow a vegan diet. Do you think this gives you an advantage over your meat-eating opponents?

PG I think it does. Not everyone will agree but there's more to eating for performance than the basic mix of macronutrients (carbohydrate, protein and fat). For me, a wholefood, plant-based diet is a long-term health and performance choice unlike many of the nutrition fads that we see. And, let's face it, sport attracts almost as many food fads as the diet industry.

In short, I recover more quickly, I can train harder, I have more energy and have a much more varied, wholesome and rewarding diet. And, for the record, I have absolutely no issues with consuming enough protein, even without a six-egg omelette for breakfast.

MR When you're out on the trails, are you obsessing about times and pace, or do you take a more relaxed approach to training and racing?

PG I like to be on top of planning and monitoring my training. It's become a habit, and with writing a lot of plans for clients you have to live by what you're asking others to do too. That said, the pace isn't particularly important in all sessions.

Racing is different. Most races I'm totally dialled into pace and times. You need to have a plan if you're setting out to do something special.

MR What do you think trail running has over its road-based equivalent?

PG How long have you got? I think it has a greater sense of adventure, and that's important to me. It always feels more like a journey, whereas the road training often feels like you're just ticking off the miles. I love the wilderness and the solitude of trail running – there are entire days sometimes when you'll not see another soul; it's just you and the elements.

MR What do you think your greatest strength is as a runner?

PG I'm very committed. If I decide on something I want to achieve and I'm able to train for it properly, then I can get myself in the right shape physically and mentally. Last year was tough with work, and I wasn't able to prepare well for all races. This year is much better now that I'm a full-time athlete thanks to some sponsorship with Nathan in the UK and support from the US.

MR What's the best piece of advice you could give to anyone thinking about tackling an ultra?

PG Do it for the right reasons. Do it because you love running and you want to find out more about yourself. Don't just stick it on some bucket list because you've heard it's "the new marathon". And, if you make the decision to do it, then learn as much as you can – read, speak to people and listen to advice.

MR What's your attitude to footwear? Are you in favour of minimalist shoes or something more supportive?

PG Minimal, minimal, minimal. Like the diet, it's the long-term solution for sustained and efficient running. But it's not straightforward and it takes a long time to transition without injury and problems. I guess it's all about what you're hoping to get out of your running. If you're planning on running a long time and in longer races, then I'm a firm believer in reviewing your running style and perhaps thinking about some changes. But it's not for everyone, and it's not for every race. MR

Photography Thomas Humpage

Bound for glory: Paul Giblin is being tipped for big things

AN EPIC ADVENTURE

Located in the Spanish Pyrenees, the Buff Epic is a spectacular race. Just remember to pack some sun cream, says **Chris Kelk**

The frozen slice of watermelon thrust into my hands at the pit stop has my full attention. It's 30 degrees in the shade, and my pasty white legs are finally on the right side of the gruelling 1,000m hill climb. A little further on the landscape opens into a breezy view, and the sleepy Spanish town of Barruera is in sight 6K below. Bent double, I stand up and spy a finish line teeming with activity, an animated voice on the loudspeaker echoing across the gargantuan valley announcing the first finishers. This scorching heat is a far cry from the squelchy trails I have come to love back in Blighty, but is a more than welcome change. The only squelch here is the sound of my hydration pack being used to its full potential.

I am at the Buff Epic Run: a three-part trail event (105km, 42km, 21km) held deep in the Spanish Pyrenees' Aigeüstortes National Park. This is no ordinary race. The area's glacial granite and slate make for quad-wrenchingly steep and technical terrain, aptly in line with Buff's tagline that Flat is Boring. The Ultra alone accounts for four qualification points towards the Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc, the maximum an event can be worth, and certainly not a figure to be sneered at. With over 7,000m of accumulative vertical elevation, this is a trail event with a capital T.

As my calves take the brunt of the final hill on my short 21K race, I begin to contemplate whether flat is in fact boring. The question is short-lived: I am soon distracted by mesmerising layers of forest coating the valley walls below, and the razor-sharp granite peaks crowning the skyline, making for a truly epic Pyrenean landscape.

THE HEAT IS ON

Now in its second year and originally a single ultra event, this year saw the addition of the 42K and 21K races, catering for an extra 600 runners on top of the 111 ultra enthusiasts. Having battled thunderstorms in 2014, this year's soaring temperatures presented Buff with an altogether different challenge. Additional water stations were speedily erected on all of the trails at the eleventh hour, and the early cut-offs thankfully avoided.

The shorter races finished, many waited long into the night to watch the slow trickle of ultrarunners draw past the iconic church marking the finish line in their varying shades of exhaustion. First place in the men's category was taken by Sebas Sánchez (ESP), surprising the favourites with a nippy time of 13hrs 38mins 36secs. Núria Picas (ESP) hung onto her first place female title from last year, arriving a mere two hours later in staggeringly good form and in an overall sixth position with a time of 15hrs 49mins 38secs. Podium favourite and long-distance veteran Michael Wardian (USA) arrived in 17th place. "This might be the hardest race I have ever done," he said. "It's crazy technical. It's a great trail, with a terrific atmosphere, and the whole town has clearly got involved. For me it ticks all the boxes."

Out of 111 ultra runners, only 57 finished before the cut-off. Such is the natural selection of long-distance races, whether hot or cold. I shared my journey home with one particular Finnish runner who, failing to adapt his wardrobe to the heat, began the 105K event in a winter hat and parka. Unsurprisingly, he suffered severe heat stroke after 57K and withdrew. He assures me that two saline drips and a glass of wine later, he is back on top form and ready for the next challenge lined up in his calendar, and will be sure to return next year.

The Buff Epic Run is a terrific weekend event for both muggles and ultra athletes alike. The rugged geography of this area makes for challenging and stunning terrain, and will no doubt leave you grinning afterwards. Hopefully in the shade.

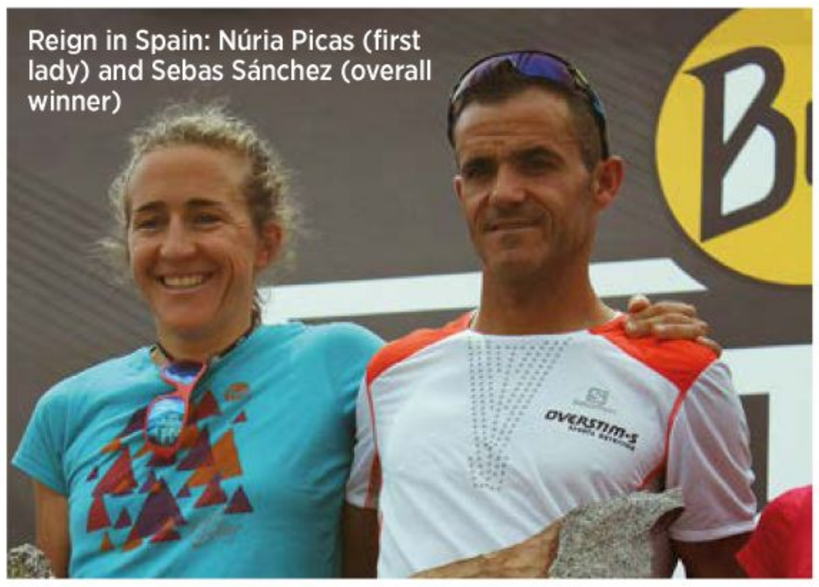
BUFF EPIC IN NUMBERS

Distances: 105K, 42K, 21K
Temperature: 30 degrees
Terrain:

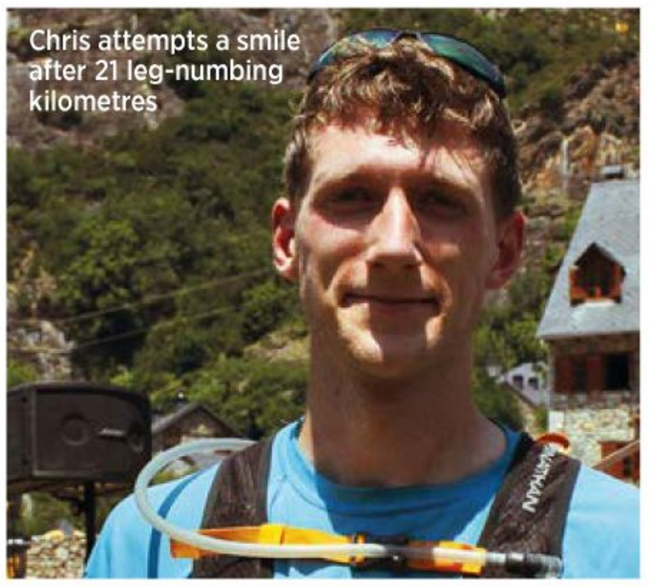
Verdict: ★★★★★★★★★★

The next edition of the Buff Epic Race will take place in 2016, with The Sky Running World Championships (ISF) in the Ultra Marathon®, SkyMarathon® and Vertical Kilometre® events, on the 22-24 July.
buffepicrun.com

"WITH OVER 7,000M OF ACCUMULATIVE VERTICAL ELEVATION, THIS IS A TRAIL EVENT WITH A CAPITAL T"


Reign in Spain: Núria Picas (first lady) and Sebas Sánchez (overall winner)

Michael Wardian's 17th-place finish is testament to the race's difficulty


Chris attempts a smile after 21 leg-numbing kilometres

Photography Chris Kelk

worldmags.net

MADE IN BRITTON

Team GB 24hr runner Robbie Britton guides you through all things ultra

Rein it in: think of your taper as reward for all the weeks of hard work

TAPER TIME!

The most important thing to do before a race is to make it to the startline feeling refreshed and ready to fly. Yet people forget this all too easily, turning up shattered or even injured.

Sounds simple, I know, but 'taperitis' can make people do some strange things. Here are my five nuggets of advice for tapering, to get those legs and that mind of yours in the best possible shape come race day.

1. A wise man once said: "Reduce volume and intensity, maintain frequency." For instance, if you've been training five times a week, ease down on the volume but keep up the frequency. That way, your body and mind are happy with the routine.

2. Too little is better than too much. Unlike cooking chicken, a little underdone is better than completely chargrilled. Many want to get as much training in as possible, but the time to do that is weeks before the race, not in the last fortnight.

3. Get a wee sharpener in. Normally on the Tuesday or Wednesday before a race, I'll be found on a track with the intention of working a little harder – something like 5 x 4 minutes at threshold pace. This can also be a real confidence-booster, as you feel the power of the taper working its magic.

4. Visualise. This isn't just a Jedi mind trick – it really helps. In the week before a race, start to imagine how you will feel on race day. Run through your startline thoughts and think about crossing that finish line.

5. Enjoy it. I've learned to love the taper, as I've earned a bit of rest after all the weeks of hard graft. You should too.

QUESTION TIME

"What trainers do you wear to run ultramarathons?"
Alan Kingston, via email

It depends on the terrain and the distance, but the longer the race the more I think about comfort. They should be shoes you've done your training in, not brand new ones from the race expo.

Having properly fitted shoes is extremely important as a little niggle can become a race-ending agony later on. I use the guys at Profeet to make sure that I have the right wheels on.

My current weapons of choice are the Adidas Boston for road and hard trail, Adizero XTs if it's wet and rocky, inov-8 X Talons if it's proper muddy, and some Hoka Huakas for recovery. I have more shoes than the missus...

Weapon of choice:
Adidas Boston

Illustration thinkstockphotos.co.uk

TRAIL GEAR

HIT THE TRAILS RUNNING WITH OUR SNEAK PEAK OF THE BEST NEW OFF-ROAD KIT

KALENJI Kiprace T-Shirt

Equarea Protect Technology is something we don't really understand, but it's supposed to minimise chafing and improve comfort and, in the form of the Kiprace tee, it seems to work. Running tops can boast all the technology in the world, but when it comes down to it, all you want is comfort and breathability. Kalenji's affordable option delivers on both fronts.

RRP: £23.99

decathlon.co.uk

Montrail UTMB Bajada

If you need a shoe for mountain running or technical trails, look no further than the Bajada. FluidFoam cushioning provides energy return and impact absorption, while aggressive outsole lugs ensure ample traction on the slippery stuff. Too much for your Sunday stroll, but perfect for the intrepid off-roader.

RRP: £72

montrail.com

Skins RW400 Compression Long Tight

Skins has established itself as a leader in compression sportswear. Its latest recovery tight, although pricey, is packed with the latest technology – including 400 'body touch points' to maximise comfort and minimise friction – with the aim of making your legs feel fresher, faster. We can certainly testify that they ease post-run soreness better than any other product, but there's no ignoring the hefty price tag.

RRP: £90

skins.net/uk

Inov-8 Terraclaw 220

An impressive blend of style and substance. The off-centre lacing system aligns with the foot's metatarsal to provide a secure and comfortable fit. Better still is the roomy toebox – something sorely lacking in the otherwise-excellent inov-8 X-Talon 190s. As with all the brand's trail shoes, the grip on the Terraclaw is outstanding. Its three-figure price tag, however, may put some people off.

RRP: £110

invo-8.com

Terra Nova Zephyros 1 Tent

Marketed as being 'perfect for price-conscious adventure racers,' it's difficult to find fault with what is a lightweight, compact and, most importantly, easy-to-assemble design. An interconnected flysheet and inner saves time and hassle, while the single Superflex alloy pole is easily put together and ensures the tent holds firm, whatever the weather.

RRP: £120

terra-nova.co.uk

Trixie Waist Band with Lead

Running with your pooch – or 'canicross', to use the technical term – is a growing sport. This lead system spreads the pull of the dog across the waist and its expandable nature dampens the effect of sudden tugs. It fits snugly and allows you to swing both arms, rather than holding a lead. Made with canicross, jogging and nordic walking in mind.

RRP: £24.99

trixie.de/en

TRAINING FOR A HALF OR FULL MARATHON?

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- Tips on building mileage
- Injury prevention
- Nutrition advice

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PIMP YOUR RUN

GEAR

TECH ■ LONG-SLEEVES ■ WATCHES ■ SHOES

TESTED RATED

ZONE DOME
runningunlimited.com

WHAT IS IT?
An iMax for the treadmill, essentially. A 5ft-wide curved screen, powered by tablet computer, that fits to the front of a treadmill and offers users a variety of "virtual runs".

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?
Runners are said to stay 25% longer when using a Zone Dome than they do on a standard treadmill. Lost in their own little film, they don't realise how long they've been going for or how hard they're working. The speed of the on-screen film is also matched to the speed at which you're running, so you really do feel like you're running outside.

WHY IS IT GOOD?
Instead of craning your neck to watch Liverpool vs Stoke on the gym's TVs, you'll be transported to a variety of backdrops – from tropical beaches to city streets. That's got to be better, right?

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?
At present, Zone Dome's are only available at selected gyms around the country, so you'll need to be a member to use one.

OVERALL
As impressive as the Zone Dome undoubtedly is, it's hard to shake off the feeling that you could just go for a run outside. Still, if you are insistent on running on a treadmill, you might as well do it on a virtual beach in the Bahamas.

To read more about the Zone Dome, visit **tinyurl.com/oee8uat**

worldmags.net

ODLO CRONO 2-IN-1 SHIRT RRP: £55

If you're an indecisive runner, in need of a lightweight, highly breathable top then look no further. The long sleeves can simply be pulled on or off, like arm warmers, and the open-structured fabric is light as a feather. As far as running tops go, this is genuinely up there with the best of them; you'll struggle to find a more lightweight option and, as a bonus for the style-conscious, it looks quite good (as far as our fashion-blind eyes can tell, anyway). The price tag is substantial, but there's no doubt that it's a quality piece of kit.

odlo.com

SOAR MID-TEMPERATURE TOP RRP: £99

Specialising in stylishly understated apparel with a slightly retro feel, Soar is set to become the Rapha of running. This long-sleeve has all the Soar hallmarks: top-quality materials, practical features and discreet splashes of colour. Made with a highly wicking Italian fabric, the top is intended for general use in spring, autumn or high-intensity winter workouts. The bonded construction of the main seams adds durability and it's a joy to run in. It comes at a considerable price but, in this instance, you get what you pay for.

soarrunning.com

RONHILL TRAIL L/S ZIP TEE RRP: £40

The shirt has a convenient zip pocket on the right breast allowing storage of keys, iPods, energy gels and other essentials. A large front zip adds ventilation, while the elasticised sleeves stay in place even when rolled up. This makes the tee a suitable garment for both summer and winter wearing. The fabric is friction-free, resulting in no nipple rubbing, and boasts odour control. This allows you to be eco-friendly and wear several times before washing – essential if you go running every second day and forget to stick on the quick wash.

ronhill.com

MIZUNO DRYLITE COOLTOUCH LONG SLEEVE TEE RRP: £30

Refreshingly affordable, Mizuno's moisture-wicking top is perfect for long and steady training runs. It doesn't have any pockets, however, so you'll have to keep your keys in your shorts. DryLite CoolTouch technology transports heat away from the body, keeping you cooler, while Dynamotion fit is in place to ensure maximal freedom of movement. Just don't expect to be impressing anyone with its gaudy green design; nor should you use it as a top for speedy sessions, as it's heavier than other options.

mizuno.eu/gb

★ 8 ★
10

GARMIN EPIX RRP: £419.99

In terms of functionality, there's few better options. Featuring the navigation system of the Fenix 3, touch screen, colour maps and the wide range of features you'd expect from a Garmin product, plus a larger 1.4-inch screen, there's little this watch doesn't have. Apart from, somewhat surprisingly, a heart-rate monitor, which seems fairly inexcusable given the price tag. More positively, its multi-sport functionality, anything from swimming to mountain climbing, makes the Epix an unrivalled watch in terms of all-round outdoor pursuits.

garmin.com/en-GB

★ 9 ★
10

BEST OVERALL

TOMTOM RUNNER CARDIO RRP: £179.99

This watch combines the GPS capabilities of its predecessor and adds a wrist-based based heart-rate monitor. Without doubt, its simplicity is its best feature. Underneath the face of the watch, there is a four-way cursor on the strap where most of the input is done. Click on the right to activate the 'Run' feature; click down for 'Options', 'Profile' and other settings, such as pairing with an iPhone. All very simple. Overall, this is an impressive update on the previous model, the functionality is excellent and it's a smart-looking product.

tomtom.com/en_GB

★ 8 ★
10

SUUNTO AMBIT 3 RUN +HR RRP: £199 (£299 WITH HR BELT)

Suunto has often been seen as the GPS watch for serious off-roaders, partly because of its heritage in navigation and ascent tracking, but this streamline offering from the Finnish specialist ticks a lot of boxes for the everyday runner. Setting up the watch is quick and easy: attach it to a computer and simply follow the instructions. It provides all the usual features – speed, heart rate, distance, calories – plus a few new ones like recovery time after a session. It also has a route planner and navigation tools, so you need never get lost again.

suunto.com

★ 8 ★
10

BEST ON A BUDGET

SOLEUS DASH RRP: £40

Sometimes, simple is better. This smart-looking running watch from Soleus might not have GPS – and all the metrics that go with it – but that's no bad thing: you don't have to know how fast and far you're running every time you go out. That said, it packs a surprising amount of functionality into its £40 price-point: a 30-lap memory ensures you can keep track of your splits as you train, and store up to 10 run data files to track your progress. You can also push your training to the next level with the six interval timers. Simple but effective.

fitbrands.co.uk

worldmags.net

UPPER
The synthetic portion of the shoe that covers and fits to the foot, holding it onto the midsole.

HEEL COUNTER
Plastic or fibreboard piece in the heel that helps to keep the heel centre over the midsole. Watch out for heel tabs being too high as these can rub against the achilles.

MIDSOLE
Cushions the foot and plays a key role in controlling excess foot motion. The midsole is located between the upper and the outsole and is attached to both.

★ 8 ★
10

★ 7 ★
10

★ 8 ★
10

SALMING RACE, 185G
RRP: £95
As any good ice hockey fan will tell you, Börje Salming was a legendary Swedish defenceman for the Toronto Maple Leafs. Upon retiring, he swapped the hockey stick for running shoes – and this awesome racer is the result. Weighing in at just 185g, it's built for speed, with a roomy toebox and a responsive feel. In an update on last season's model, the outsole is now three times as durable. Suitable for anything up to a half-marathon, these are the best thing to come out of Sweden since crime dramas and ABBA. Gimme, gimme, gimme, indeed.
salmingrunning.com/en

NEWTON TRI RACER, 153G
RRP: £110
Weighing in at a barely-there 153g, the Tri Racer is in danger of floating away in a gust of wind. It's also zero-drop, making it a sound choice for forefoot strikers in favour of a barefoot feel. They fit like an attention-seeking glove, although those with wide feet may find the toe box a little on the cramped side – your tester experienced a bit of rubbing on the big toe after the first few runs. That being said, for a racing flat officially pitched as a 'running shoe ideal for sprint and international distance triathlons,' Newton's latest release largely delivers.
newtonrunning.co.uk

ASICS GEL-DS RACER 10, 193G
RRP: £90
The latest shoe in Asics' much-loved Gel-DS Racer line is an impressive combination of comfort and speed. The lightweight AHAR material on the outsole, coupled with the Solyte midsole construction, makes for an incredibly responsive ride – perfect for the footsure runner looking to speed things up. The upper is fairly stiff but fits snuggly, which adds to the shoe's responsiveness. Heel-strikers may be put off by what is not a particularly smooth transition, but those with an established mid/forefoot strike should seriously consider the Racer 10.
asics.co.uk

Words Isaac Williams / Rick Pearson

ON CLOUDRACER, 230G

RRP: £115

Since bursting onto the scene five years ago, On's ability to combine cushioning with responsiveness in lightweight trainers has created a mini revolution. The Cloudracer follows the same trend: with 18 'clouds' on the outsole providing protection upon landing, before compressing flat against the foot. The effect? Minimal impact upon landing, followed by a firm and controlled toe-off. An ultra-thin, skeletal upper is highly breathable and wraps around the foot for a comfortable fit. That being said, forefoot runners may appreciate a roomier toe box, as there's limited space for the toes to splay. Overall though, the speediest of On's latest releases is a refreshing combination of comfort and lightweight design, perfect for pain-free PBs.

on-running.com/en-gb

BEST OVERALL 8 10

RACING FLATS

Are you tired of being a long-distance plodder? Perhaps you simply want to mix up your training? Whatever the reason and whatever your distance, quick running should be a staple part of every runner's weekly schedule. With that in mind, we've listed seven lightweight, minimal racing options, designed with nothing but speed in mind. They're sure to see you crossing the line in record time.

TOE BOX

The forward tip of the upper of a shoe that provides space and protection for the toes.

OUTSOLE

The outer sole of a shoe. The outsole should provide traction and resistance to wear.

BEST ON A BUDGET 8 10

NEW BALANCE 1500V1, 201G

RRP: £80

An update on the highly regarded 1400v2, this shoe finds the sweet spot between speed and stability. Weighing in at just 201g, it feels fast and light, while the reduced drop – 6mm compared to the 1400v2's 9mm – makes you feel nice and close to the ground. Equally, there's still ample cushioning for a half-marathon or even marathon effort (Sebastien Kienle wore it on his way to winning the 2014 Ironman World Championship). It's a snug fit, however, so is probably best suited to runners with slightly narrower feet.

newbalance.co.uk

7 10

MIZUNO WAVE HITOGAMI 2, 200G

RRP: £85

Surprisingly cushioned for a lightweight shoe – that's the first thing that strikes you about Mizuno's Wave Hitogami 2. The second thing is how flat to the ground they feel for a 9mm drop. Stabilising, with enough room for the toes, these will keep you comfy at tempo pace on long runs or act as a great recovery shoe for more minimalist runners. The upper is perhaps the one area that lets it down; the rigid logo overlays feel basic and constricting. Nevertheless, this is a fast shoe that could help you to a PB over a half or full marathon.

mizuno.eu/gb

7 10

ADIDAS ADIZERO BOOST 2.0, 228G

RRP: £110

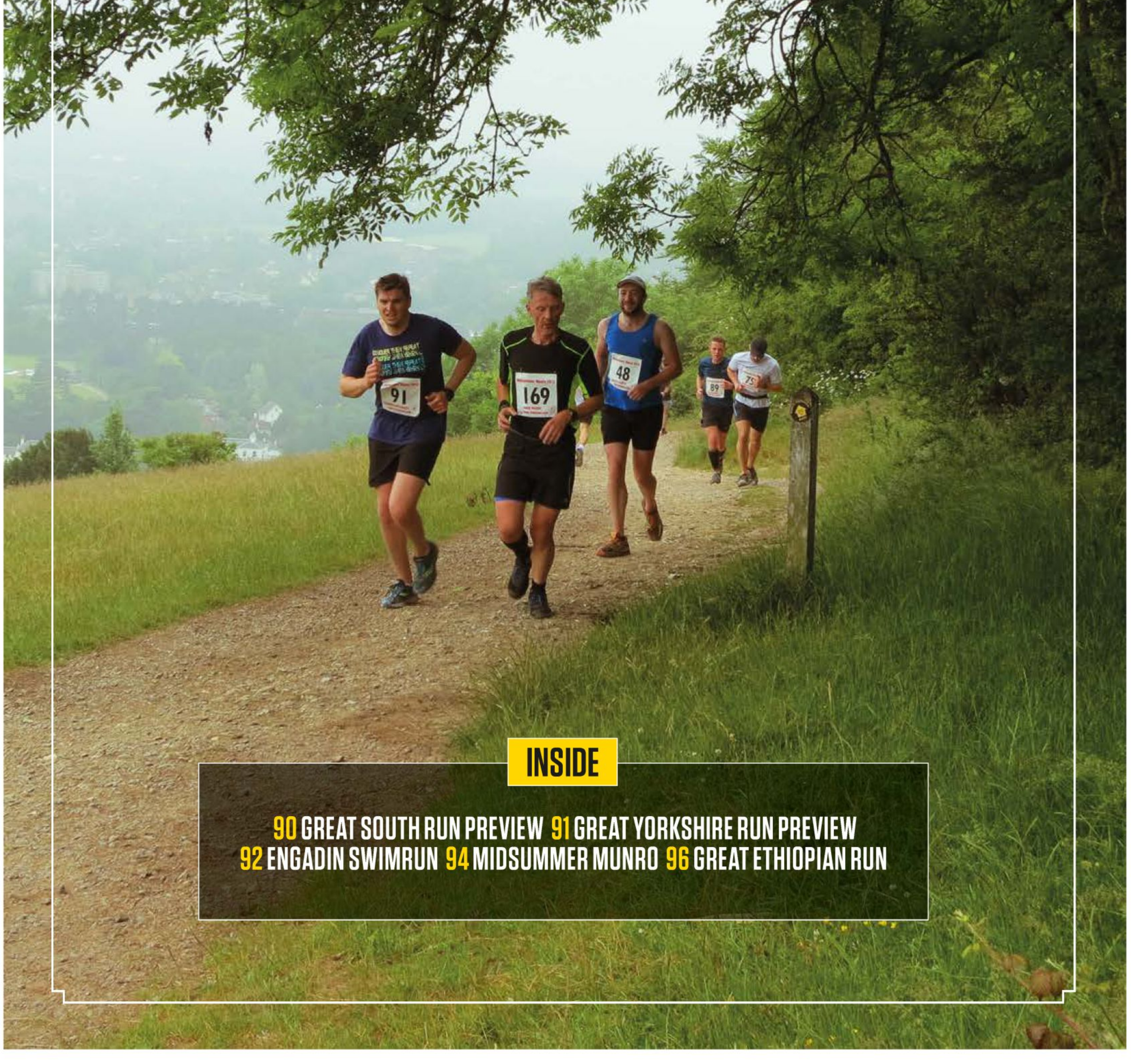
More cushioned than the average racer and with a drop more befitting of a neutral trainer, the second edition of the adizero is racing flat in name, rather than spirit. The boost midsole provides a firm yet bouncy ride, which is ideal for those with sensitive feet looking to up the pace. However, the hefty 10mm drop, with heavy cushioning in the heel, means that the speed-giving properties of the shoe are only fully realised when running with a forefoot strike; heel strikers may find a sinking sensation upon landing.

adidas.co.uk

worldmags.net

SEPTEMBER

RACE BOOK



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COAST TO VICTORY

The Great South Run celebrates its 25th anniversary in Portsmouth on Sunday 25 October – sign up now for a race you'll never forget!

Main: Finish in style: a relieved runner crosses the line
Insert: Comedian Hugh Dennis is all smiles at the finish

Known for its fast and flat route through the heart of Portsmouth, the Morrisons Great South Run will return on Sunday 25 October with up to 25,000 athletes, charity fundraisers and club runners taking on 10 miles.

Starting in Southsea in the UK's only island city, the course is steeped in history dating back to 1212 and features charity cheering points, boost zones and bands on the run.

It's the only run that allows you access to the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, an active naval base that houses the impressive *HMS Victory* and the Mary Rose Museum.

First staged in Southampton in 1990 with just 2,000 participants, the Great South Run moved to Portsmouth a year later and has grown into the world's leading 10-mile running event.

This year it celebrates 25 years in Portsmouth and Hugh Dennis is just one of the famous faces who will cross the finish line. The actor and comedian (*Mock the Week*, *Outnumbered*) is running for Alzheimer's Society and said: "The Morrisons Great South Run is a great course with a fantastic atmosphere and I am delighted to return to raise money for this deserving cause."

The course has been graced by world-class athletes such as Liz McColgan, Paula Radcliffe, Sonia O'Sullivan and Mo Farah, who won the men's race in 2009.

However, it's not just popular with runners, as it has unrivalled support from local residents and spectators, with thousands of people gathering in their gardens to show their support.

The weekend kicks off on Saturday 24 October with the Morrisons Junior & Mini Great South Run, for children aged between three and 15 years. Adults can run with their mini athletes over a distance of 1.5K, while the junior runners take on a longer 2.5K course.

Also on the Saturday is the Morrisons Great South Run 5K. Using the same finish line as Sunday's 10-mile event, the 5K gives you the opportunity to take on a shorter distance while still experiencing the big finish-line feeling.

The event is now a festival of sport in Portsmouth and Southsea, with nearly 30,000 people taking part in four events across two days.

To find out more about the Great South Run, please visit ***greatrun.org/south***.

FURTHER EVENT INFO

- **greatrun.org/south**
- **facebook.com/greatsouthrun**
- **@great_run**
- **#GreatSouthRun**

YORK THIS WAY

Sign up to Morrisons Great Yorkshire Run on Sunday 27 September for a race full of music, fun and famous faces

Main: the start of the 2014 event
Insert: Premier League ref Howard Webb

The Morrisons Great Yorkshire Run will return on Sunday 27 September, with thousands of people taking to the streets of Sheffield for the city centre 10K.

Runners, joggers and walkers will gather in the city for the ninth staging of the 10K run – all in aid of fitness, fundraising and fun.

Open to runners of all abilities aged 15 years and over, the race offers all finishers a t-shirt, medal, finisher's pack and chip timing.

Starting on Arundel Gate in the heart of the city, the route takes in Penistone Road and Hillsborough Stadium, home to Sheffield Wednesday. Lined with 'bands on the run' motivating runners every step of the way, the 10K finishes back at Arundel Gate where thousands of runners are greeted by huge crowds of family and friends.

Sheffield – the hometown of indie icons Pulp and Arctic Monkeys – lives up to its reputation as a hotbed of musical talent, as a partnership with Sensoria Festival sees an afternoon of live music and entertainment staged in the city centre Peace Gardens – the perfect way to relax after crossing the finish line. The addition of the live music has seen it grow into a great day out for the whole family, attracting thousands of people to the city every year.

A host of famous faces have taken on the event, including *Harry Potter* actor and Yorkshire lad Matthew Lewis, football referee Howard Webb and *Coronation Street* actress Paula Lane (Kylie Platt).

Young runners and budding sport stars can also get involved in the Morrisons Junior & Mini Great Yorkshire Run staged on the same day, with 1.5K and 2.5K distances available for kids aged three and over.

To enter the Morrisons Great Yorkshire Run, please visit ***greatrun.org/Yorkshire***.

FURTHER EVENT INFO

- greatrun.org/yorkshire
- facebook.com/greatyorkshirerun
- @great_run
- #GreatYorkshireRun

worldmags.net

WATER BOYS

The Engadin SwimRun is a 53K alpine adventure. **Isaac Williams** travels to the beautiful Swiss valley and discovers a sport taking the endurance-racing world by storm

SWIMRUN STATS

Total distance: 53.3K
Swimming distance: 5.8K
Elevation gain: 1,450m
Water temperature: 12-14 degrees
Winning team:
Lelle Moberg and Björn Englund
Winning time: 6:28:29

engadinswimrun.ch

Bottom right: Björn Englund and Lelle Moberg are first to finish, despite Moberg (right) fainting just over halfway

It's 8.30am. A throng of fellow journalists, photographers and I are gathered on the shore of a pristine alpine lake. For a fleeting moment, I wish I was among the athletes making their way through the near-freezing water towards us. Moments later, though, pained gasps and hypothermic shivers convince me that this is not for the faint-hearted or unprepared.

SwimRun is fast becoming something of a phenomenon. As co-founder Mats Stock told me: "After very humble beginnings, it has grown into a real sport. It's simple: all you need are running shoes and a wetsuit." In addition to this, most of the two-man teams opt for swimming paddles and some kind of float to minimise leg exertion in the water.

FOREIGN AFFAIR

To my surprise, the field is not confined to a few Scandinavian countries; the 180 teams are comprised of 21 nationalities. 10K in, though, it becomes immediately clear that this is a debut SwimRun event for many – while the leaders make a swift, effortless transition from land to water, the tail runners spend several precious minutes pulling on wetsuits, swim caps and buoyancy aids.

It's also clear that, despite the shimmering, crystal-clear allure of the lakes – of which there are six to contend with – water temperature is the toughest obstacle. Around the 30K mark, with the glaring heat of the midday sun and after a brutal 1,400m swim just outside the village of Champfer, it's a point that's reinforced with frightening clarity.

First out of the lake are the surprise Swiss duo of Igor Nastic and Jean Marc Cattori. Moments later, the Swedish pre-race favourites, Lelle Moberg and Björn Englund, clamber up the bank. Moberg, pale as a ghost, stumbles around briefly before collapsing in a heap. Five minutes later, with over 20K of bruising climbs and several swims to go, he's on his feet and trudging off into the distance. The casual indifference of the spectators goes some way to convincing me that this is not a freak occurrence.

From the lake, a steep climb through the wooded section of Ova Lej Nair leads the athletes to the resort town of St Moritz, before another gruelling swim.

By this point, the cheery pre-race optimism has been firmly replaced by expressions of regret and pain. As I wait by the penultimate lake, however, I'm astonished to see the Swedish team of Moberg and Englund – immobile 15K previously – take to the water first. Moberg's resurrection is testament to the calibre of athlete SwimRun attracts – I later discover that he stormed to victory in last year's SwimRun World Championship at ÖtillÖ (for which this race is a qualifier).

One final, mercifully flat running section sees the Swedes cross the finish in 6hrs 28mins 23secs. "That was the hardest race we've ever done," said Moberg.

"IT'S SIMPLE: ALL YOU NEED ARE RUNNING SHOES AND A WETSUIT"

Standing at the finish line, it's easy to see why this is a race – and, on a broader scale, a sport – that many endurance athletes are turning to. Free from the expensive, cycling-related hassle of triathlons, SwimRun's beauty is in its simplicity. However, while a wetsuit and trainers may be technically all you need, I'm sure the 33 teams who failed to finish would testify that endurance-racing experience is also a must.

Photography Jakob Edholm

worldmags.net

THE HARDEST HALF?

Trionium's Midsummer Munro boldly claims to be the UK's toughest 13.1-miler. But is it really that difficult? George Bull heads to Box Hill to find out

A Munro is any mountain in Scotland more than 3,000ft high – and bagging them has been a competitive pastime ever since the list known as Munros Tables was produced in 1891. But these days, you needn't go to the Highlands to bag yourself a Munro. Plucky runners, game for some Sunday morning purgatory, can find one much closer to home on a start line in leafy Surrey.

Well, sort of. Trionium Races' Midsummer Munro has the requisite 3,000ft of ascent and descent as its Scottish namesakes, but spread over a half marathon distance that takes you up and down (but mostly up) Box Hill. Clearly, it's not in Scotland – but there is a bagpiper and, after a couple of hills, you'll be lucky to remember your own name, let alone where you are.

So at 8am on a warm dewy morning, having sung 'God Save The Queen' and been cautioned by Trionium's enigmatic founder, Dr Rob, to "run the hills and hike the steps", 193 of us set out to bag a Munro. I decided to go out hard when, flying down the face of Box Hill in the first mile, I realised to my horror that we would be going straight back up again. By the top, it was clear I had no business being in third. Or fourth, or fifth. In sixth after three miles, I formed a more realistic goal: to not drop out of the top 10.

The Midsummer Munro is touted as the UK's "hardest half" and has built up a loyal following. The Munro – like all of Trionium's race stable, which include New Years Day's Knacker Cracker 10K, the UK Wife Carrying Race and the Picnic Marathon (two Midsummer Munros back-to-back) – attracts a hearty bunch of club and non-club runners alike. The general bonhomie and the fact that the course is, to quote one runner, "gratuitously difficult", conspire to create a Blitz spirit among participants who come to share in the suffering.

GET THE STRETCHER

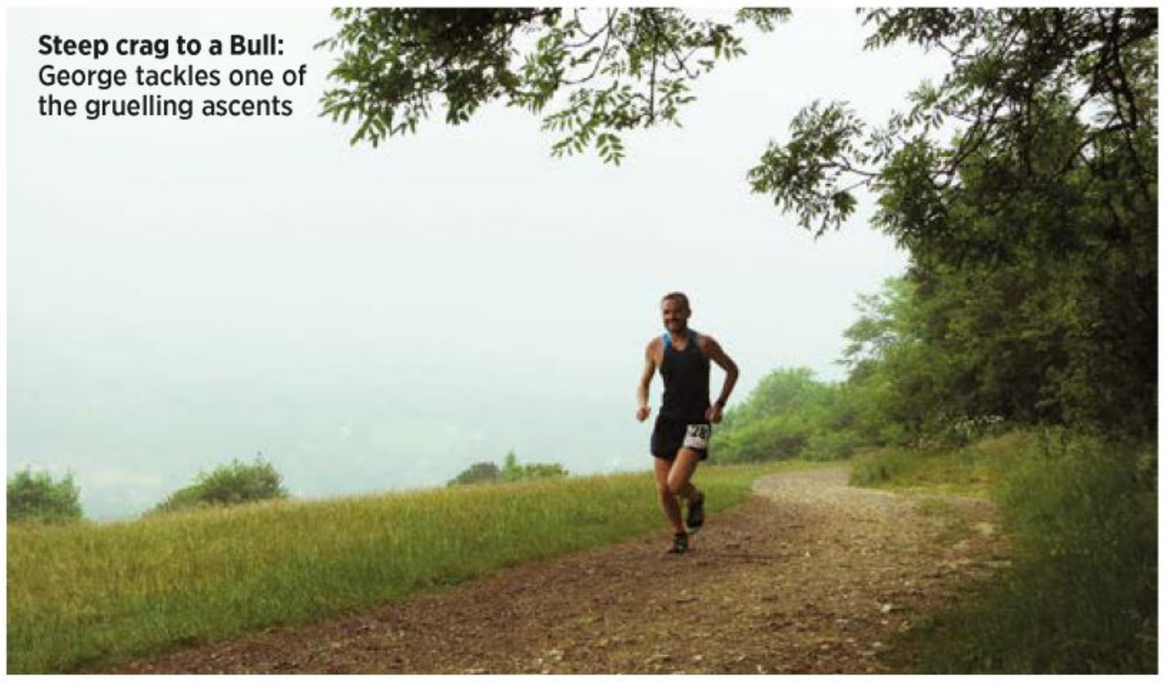
I grabbed a couple of Jelly Babies and Jaffa Cakes from the aid station and set about climbing another set of steps – my fifth ascent of Box Hill that morning. It felt like more. Continually dancing over stones, switching from uphill grunt to quad-pounding downhills, hadn't done

Photography Irene Infante

Champagne moment: Matt Munro (middle) stormed to victory

Sign of things to come: a runner crests the brow of Box Hill

Downward spiral: the descents offer no respite to burning quads



Steep crag to a Bull: George tackles one of the gruelling ascents

"PEOPLE SAY THAT THEIR LEGS ARE TRASHED FOR DAYS AFTER THE RACE"

much for my appetite, but my legs needed some sugar. We topped out after the steps, pushed on through the woods and came out onto a flat-ish grassy stretch. We were halfway. There were still five more ascents and my lungs were burning. Still, I had glorious views out over the valley and I was clinging on to eighth.

At the front of the race, the aptly named Matthew Munro was having a stellar debut. Reported to have only started running six months ago, the Herne Hill Harriers man led from start to finish, coming within some three minutes of the course record to win in 1hr 43mins 38secs.

While he was busy winning, mountain-rescue gear was being brought in to help a female runner who had badly sprained her ankle. She had to be strapped into a stretcher and lowered down the hill. The race is no stranger to injury: last year, someone ended up with 32 stitches.

So is the Midsummer Munro worthy of its reputation? There are certainly harder races in the UK. The Ben Nevis Race, which runs from the bottom to the top of Britain's highest peak with a height gain of 4,400 feet (1,340m) over 9.9 miles, is undoubtedly tougher. But then, as Dr Rob rightly points out, the Ben Nevis Race is not a half marathon.

"In the Midsummer Munro, you are generally going either steeply up or steeply down, with very little chance to get your breath back," he says. "Runners have also commented on the fact that the course includes 800 upwards and 800 downwards steps, all of them irregular and tough to find a rhythm on. They say that their legs are trashed for days after the race – I'll take that as a huge compliment!"

And so he should. I clung on to 10th place to finish in 1hr 58mins 6secs. I welcomed the finish line but felt strangely sad that it was over. The course demands something of you, every second that you're on it. I don't know if it's the hardest half in the UK, but I do know this: if there's a harder one out there, I don't want to run it!

MIDSUMMER MUNRO IN NUMBERS

Distance: 13.1 miles
Number of runners: 193

First man: Matthew Munro

First woman: Jillian Convey

Terrain: Very steep mud and rocky trail

Verdict: ★★★★★★★★★★

trionium.com

worldmags.net

GREAT ETHIOPIAN RUN

36,000 runners flock to Ethiopia's capital city, the vibrant Addis Ababa, for the largest running event in Africa

Sea of colour: the 10K attracts runners from across Africa

WHAT IS IT?

On paper, it's a rather unspectacular 10K route around the streets of Addis Ababa. The single-lap loop takes in a few notable tourist attractions, such as Shola Market and finishing on the expansive Jan Meda horse racing track. However, while there are far more breathtaking race routes out there, you'll struggle to find a more vibrant, passionate or well-attended event.

WHY SHOULD I DO IT?

An ordinary distance, transformed into an extraordinary spectacle. Described as "the most exciting race in the world," the International 10K is more carnival than running event, with participants soaking up the party atmosphere and subtropical climate. Last year, an astonishing 36,000 runners crossed the finish line. But the fun doesn't stop there, as celebrations continue well in to the night.

"THE GREAT ETHIOPIAN RACE TAKES AN ORDINARY DISTANCE AND TRANSFORMS IT INTO AN EXTRAORDINARY SPECTACLE"

HOW TOUGH IS IT?

At 2,500m above sea level, Addis Ababa is the highest capital city in the world. As a result, oxygen levels are low enough to make a 10K effort feel noticeably harder than a race on British soil. That being said, the event is less about getting a good time and more about reveling in the festivity.

WHERE IS IT?

Menelik II Hospital, Kebena, Addis Adaba, Ethiopia.

WHEN IS IT?

9am, 22 November 2015.

HOW DO I ENTER?

Online registration is now open via ethiopianrun.org. Simply select 'Great Ethiopian Run' and proceed to pay the £40 registration fee. Registration includes an official race t-shirt and an invitation to the post-race celebrations.

Words Isaac Williams
Photography Dan Vernon

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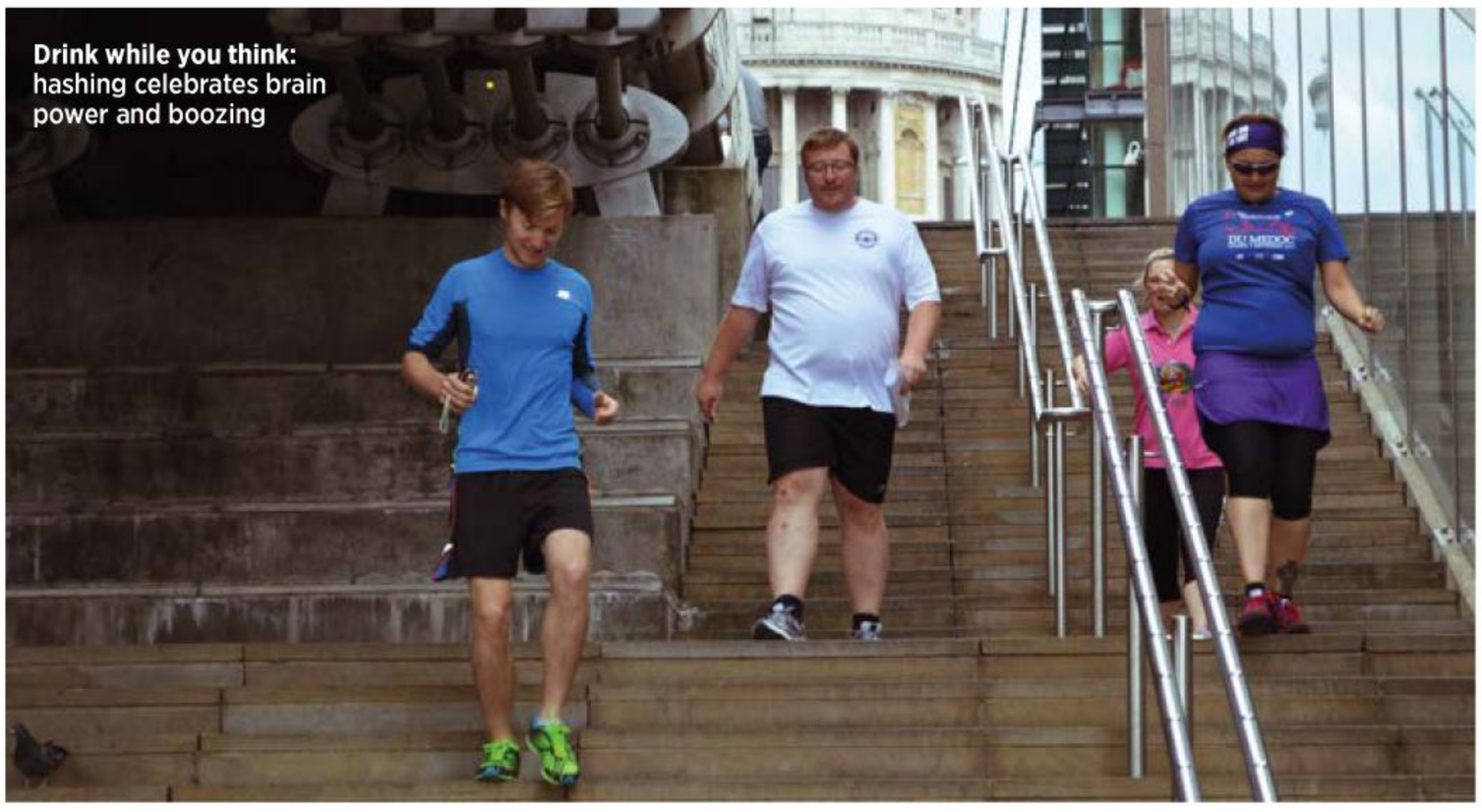
ON THE HASH

On! On! **Rick Pearson** gains an insight into the mysterious world of hashing – the lovechild of orienteering and competitive drinking



Drink while you think: hashing celebrates brain power and boozing

"There's drinking at the beginning, there's drinking in the middle and there's drinking at the end," says 'Fat Bastard', sipping on his ale. "And whatever you do, don't use the 'R' word."

The word in question is running – something that's regarded with some suspicion in the wacky world of hashing, where it's pints rather than PBs that count. I'm propping up the bar at The Cockpit, a spit-and-sawdust pub in Central London, to experience my first ever hash. My hosts, the London Hash House Harriers, are giving me a potted history of this eccentric pastime.

Hashing was invented by Ignatius "G" Gispert in Kuala Lumpur in 1938, just before the Second World War, and involves following a partially marked trail set out by a designated human 'hare'. FRBs (front-running bastards) will explore different routes and report back to the Fat Bastards of this world. So while different people will run different distances, they should all finish at roughly the same time. It's popular the world over – from the United States to Singapore – and there's now even a Facebook hash: you log in, you drink a beer, you log out.

Today, though, is special: it's the annual treasure hunt. The assembled throng – all with their own hashing pseudonyms – are divided into teams of four by 'Goldilocks', the day's designated hare, and given two sheets of A4 containing a list of cryptic clues.

Completing the treasure hunt is more of a mental workout than a physical one. Instructions to 'Follow Jesus' (head to the nearest church) and find out 'What peaks between Ludgate and the river' (St Paul's Cathedral) require both lateral thinking and a decent grasp of the local geography. Unfortunately, we get lost about halfway through and, it being at least 90 minutes since our last pint, head back to the pub to drown our sorrows.

Other teams have had a similar idea. Over a post-event pint, it becomes clear that, behind the boozy badinage, a lot of hashers are former runners. 'Chicken Legs', a North American in town on business, once ran the New York Marathon in less than three hours; 'Marxist' was a key member of Muswell Hill Runners, which has since become London Heathside.

"Hashing offers a way to keep active when you're no longer interested in being competitive," Marxist explains. I'll drink to that. MR

HASHING VOCAB

Photography Chi-Su

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