

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2009

rEVOLUTION

Exceeding expectations

Someone recently remarked that they couldn't imagine my body running. I could see their point. My figure eschews the angular lines of an elite sports person. Yet, I do consider myself an athlete and now a runner.

Still their words made me wonder. Was the term "runner" reserved for those who look the part? Or could that name be claimed by any body that puts tread to ground at a faster-than-walking pace?

Turns out that many runners do conform to our idealized image thanks in part to genetic disposition and even more to the hours and years spent in the practice of the sport. But there are also many who run competitively and never develop lean limbs and/or lanky bodies. These are athletes with self-proclaimed monikers like: Slow Fat Triathlete, Willie Makit, Thunder Thighs, Over the Hill and Wobbly Man.

Their success stories have made me realize that it is our mental standards that need overhauling and not our shapes. Our bodies can move well despite their size or geometry. It is our concepts that have calcified and need to be broken open to be more inclusive. It is time to cultivate belief in the average body as well as the ideal. It is indeed time to believe any body can run, even our own.



Running form = running efficiency

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

As my running strides begin to accumulate in the thousands per outing, I have begun to meditate on the longevity of my joints and cartilage. Believe me, these flexible connections are in no immediate danger. However, with a hoped for forty to fifty years of jogging path before me, I want to be certain my body goes the distance.

My cogitations led me to the idea of developing a green running stride, one that literally left the lightest possible footprint upon the earth. A light tread would mean a supported load, diminished stress on the frame, increased endurance and less chance of repetitive use injury. I investigated running styles thinking they would hold the key to running green. But styles vary as widely as the biomechanical workings of our bodies and no one style can claim to be efficient - or even advisable - for all runners.

My sought after prescriptive for running green came from an American Medical Association study that claims posture determines efficiency in running and that increased efficiency means running faster, expending less energy and reducing the risk of injury. Their posture advice can be used with any running style and starts from the top down.

Eyes/Head: Eyes should be set on the horizon or 50 feet ahead of where you are to keep the head upright and forward. Relax your jaw and face muscles and avoid the temptation, even on hills, to lower your head. Though it might feel natural, looking down or bending forward wastes energy by throwing off your form.

Shoulders: Shoulders lead the runner's way and should be kept low and loose. If fatigue makes your shoulders creep up to ear level, consciously relax them down your back and shake them to release tension. Throughout your stride shoulders should remain level and not dip from side to side.

Arms: Arms are part of your running powerhouse as their swing helps drive leg stride. Try to keep a 90-degree bend in your elbows throughout a forward and back swing that rises and falls between chest and waist levels. Try to avoid pumping your arms across your body as it wastes energy by increasing muscle tension and detracting from your leg stride.

Hands: Hands control tension in your upper body. Keeping your hands in a soft, unclenched fist with the thumb upwards will bring the most beneficial relaxation to muscles from the neck through the torso while running.

Torso: The torso follows the head and shoulders in aligning upright and straight forward for optimal lung capacity and stride length. Slouching is a huge energy drain for runners and should be guarded against, especially as your body tires.

Hips: Hips are your center of gravity and the rotational connection between your upper and lower body. Hips should be level front to back and side to side as you run. To keep your hips level throughout your stride, imagine them as bowl filled with water that you don't want to spill.

Legs/Stride: A fluid leg stride is the most efficient for endurance running and is accomplished with a slight lift of the knee followed by a rapid leg turnover and a short stride. For your best stride length, the feet should land directly under your body with your knees slightly flexed ready to bend naturally on touch down.

Ankles/Feet: Your feet should make contact with the ground lightly between the heel and the midfoot before quickly rolling forward with the ankle flexed to end your stride by pushing or springing off the ground from your toes.

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 2009

Staying in the race: Keep focus on your goal

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Turning a resolution into a habit takes time. Often it is difficult to last out the process. Luckily, there are strategies to help us all go the distance.

Phone a friend: Regis is right, sometimes we need help to get to the next level. Feel like skipping your workout? Dial a friend who will urge you to go, drag you kicking and screaming or maybe even put on their workout togs and join you.

Forgive, forget and fast-forward: Despite Herculean efforts, we all fall short of our goals now and then. But rather than piling on the guilt, or scoops of Chucky Monkey, absolve yourself. Stop the mental self-flagellation and think instead of how to make up the miss or simply fast-forward to your next workout.

Redecorate: Just as new paint can brighten a room, inspiring quotes and images can brighten your attitude. Decorate your space in ways that remind you of your goals and encourage you to reach them. As postings lose their punch, add new ones or change their arrangement to revive your spirits.

Short-term goals and long term goals: Motivation is hunger bugger. To keep it around, you must feed it three squares plus snacks. Snacks are the little short-term goals that sustain motivation while you work up to the more filling meals of long-term achievements.

Hit the mute button: Learn to quiet the mental voices that underestimate what you can do. If you can get them to pipe down long enough to try something new, you might prove them all wrong.

Make a date: Three Dog Night sang it true, one is the loneliest number. Though you may be comfortable letting yourself down, it is harder to stand up a date. When you exercise with a friend – or a rival – you are likely to work out longer and harder and enjoy it more. The buddy system is a cure for the loneliest workout.

A crème brûlée a day: Okay, food rewards aren't optimal, but they sure are effective. The real point is to include a little indulgence every exercise day. Take an extra long shower. Trim your nails. Drive the scenic route. Grant yourself a few moments reward for your dedication.

Matter over mind: Brains are powerful excuse machines. In under a second, one brain can manufacture a myriad reasons for not moving. Don't let your grey matter

stop you. Let your mind invent the wildest stories of why you shouldn't begin, while your body heads to the gym or takes that first stride. Soon enough the excuses will ebb and your neurons will get with the program.



rEVOLUTIONary Piper Lindell runs in last year's Tango Adventure Race

More than one measurement: It took time to become sedentary. Excellent mobility won't return overnight. To assure that you consistently witness the gains of motion, measure your progress on every scale imaginable. If pounds plateau, how about inches, distance, flexibility, endurance, muscle mass or cheerfulness?

Find the time: Not able to carve out a chunk of time for yourself? Why not try multi-tasking your exercise. Run instead of walk Fido. Return that cup of sugar doing walking squats. Leave the car at home and ride a bike to the store.

Consider the consequences: Make a list of how activity improves your life and a list of how sitting still negatively impacts your existence. When you're running low on inspiration, read your lists. You're bound to find at least one reason to hang in there.

Get in a rut: Folks with a fitness schedule tend to stick to it longer and more consistently than those with no plan. So put spontaneity on the shelf long enough to plan your routine. Being specific about exercise regimens can also give you a leg up on standing pat.

Sing the body electric: Recognize and savor every positive step on your journey. Celebrate the new muscle definition in your forearm. Revel in the sweetness of drawing breath rather than panting. Rejoice in the gained ease of bending down to tie your shoes. Don't miss the moment scanning distant horizons. Come alive to the wonder of where you are now.

One change at a time: In our era of instant gratification, it is difficult to avoid taking on too much. Don't try to change every aspect in your pursuit of health immediately. Too much change too quickly can cause overload. Enjoy the ride and the satisfaction of taking your time.

Snowflake: Every crystalline hexagon is unique and beautiful and so are we. Don't compare yourself to others wishing for more or less. Our genes and experiences shape our bodies. Realize your own potential and don't discourage yourself by unfavorable and unfair comparison.

Live for today: Instead of focusing on the months and years of exercise to come, think only of today...as in, "Today, I will run for 30 minutes." How easy! You can do pretty much anything for 30 minutes. Take care of today every day and let the years take care of themselves.

Dream the I'm possible dream: Bid adieu to those ne'er do well contractions can't and won't. Say adios to that undermining adverb never. Think positively and say hello and welcome to any dream, no matter how large, and know it is within your reach.

rEVOLUTION

Witness to the evolution

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Two weeks ago I had three full minutes of running when nothing in my body hurt and nothing in my mind complained. All I sensed during that 180 seconds was the beauty of the night and the thrill of running without apprehension. The experience transported me back to a time when I ran around the yard giggling at the discovery of a speed beyond walk.

Three minutes might not sound like much, but it was a milestone for me. I sensed it was a turning point from fear and loathing of every stride to a bouncy resilience and

hopefulness. Still, I wondered if it was a fluke.

Then last week I ran a full mile without stopping. Hardly a miracle for anyone who runs, but for me it was the moon and the stars. Running a mile made me realize that running is really just walking at a faster pace. I write that as a joke, but also sincerely. Before completing that mile, there was this huge mental block between myself and sustained running that made the task seem superhuman. Now it just seems a natural evolution in the process of becoming a runner.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2009

Hitting the mean streets

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Pavement is hard; the sofa is not. That's my training mantra. Most new runners overdo, pushing their bodies too far too quickly. It's like climbing Everest, if you don't stop every few thousand feet to acclimate, your body will mutiny. Joints not accustomed to the pounding and muscles new to use will nag you 24/7. They'll say things like, "You can't do this. You were crazy to try. You're too far gone to start now." These voices will be telling lies. Your body will do the work and feel better for the exertion; it just needs time to acclimate to the demand. Hum "Gonna Fly Now" and punch the air as you trot, but keep in mind that not even Rocky did it overnight...despite what the movie montage may have led you to believe.

If you have no experience choosing a training routine, your first dash should be to cyberspace. Once there, peruse running regimens developed by experts at sites like www.coolrunning.com. Cool Running has my favorite "The Couch-to-5K Running Plan" as well as

others like "The Marathon" and "Speedwork for Competitive Runners." If you want to run it, they have a program for it. Sticking to proven plans is great for beginners like me, but as you become comfortable with training options you may want to mix and match to suit your running skills and goals.

Another great resource is www.mapmyrun.com. Pick your path on virtual maps and the site will calculate the distance of treks from Warren to Kathmandu. Before signing off, why not indulge yourself by searching the web for an exotic locale that hosts a race that could become one of your long-term training goals? Thinking of an Iron(wo)man in Aruba will likely take some of the darkness and chill out of a February run.

Speaking of darkness, it is running hazard. Tranquil, exciting and even romantic as twilight may be, trip obstacles lurk in the shadows and lack of light can render you invisible. Run during daylight hours if possible. But if the night-side is more your style, add a blinker and a

headlamp or flashlight to your equipment. Wear reflective apparel, shoes and a running vest whether rain, shine or "gloom of night." Run facing oncoming traffic. Cars should make room for you, but don't assume they can or will. Always be mentally prepared for a quick detour out of traffic in case it becomes necessary. Regardless of how fast you are, you won't win the war of physics against mass, velocity and shiny metal fenders. Testing this principle may cause an abrupt interruption in your training that could postpone Aruba indefinitely.

No matter how hardcore you may be, sometimes ice and Arctic temperatures make running out-of-doors a risky proposition. Look for workout alternatives when the weather becomes abominable. After business hours the "Big Blue" parking garage downtown is a great respite from icy sidewalks, the Warren Mall has plenty of level real estate to survey and the YMCA treadmills are both climate controlled and low-impact. So take it slow and take it safe, but definitely take the journey.

rEVOLUTION

78 women take first strides toward their goals

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

If you were downtown last Tuesday evening your eyes did not deceive you. That night the usually quiet sidewalks of Warren were filled with bustling individuals. Last Tuesday 78 women took to the city streets as members of Warren County's first-ever running *rEVOLUTION*!

Laughter, information, encouragement and swag flowed as women in every phase of life took their first strides together toward personal locomotion goals. It was awesome and exhilarating to be involved. Hearing the stories of why this step was essential at this moment in individual women's lives was humbling and inspiring. My hat is doffed and my heart is warmed.

It was incredible being with such a positive group. In fact, I completely forgot I was jogging...out-of-doors! I forgot that my feet were slapping pavement and that it was below freezing. The pain that had been my constant companion on previous solo running attempts was replaced by interest in others, silly jokes and supportive cheers. I finished the first *rEVOLUTION* workout restored rather than depleted in body and mind. To put it simply, it was a very good night.

If you missed the first meeting, don't despair. There is more where that came from. In fact, there are nine more evenings of our group running sessions for any woman interested in joining the *rEVOLUTION*. Just show up at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at First Lutheran Church in downtown Warren with your running shoes and a vision for how your life could be. We'll get there together.



The first meeting of the running revolution begins

MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2009

PEOPLE
IN THE
NEWS

Harrelson weds
love in Maui

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Woody Harrelson and his longtime love have officially wed.

A spokeswoman for Harrelson said the 47-year-old actor married his girlfriend of 20 years, Laura Louie, in Maui on Sunday.

The spokeswoman, Ina Treciokas, added that the ceremony was attended by family and friends.

Harrelson and Louie have three daughters. Harrelson's recent screen credits include "No Country for Old Men," "Semi-Pro" and "Seven Pounds."



DMX pleads guilty

PHOENIX (AP) — DMX has reached a plea deal on multiple drug possession, theft and animal cruelty charges.

The rapper (real name: Earl Simmons) pleaded guilty on Tuesday to one misdemeanor count of animal cruelty, one felony count of theft, and one count each of felony possession of marijuana and a narcotic drug.

DMX, who appeared in handcuffs and wearing a black-and-white striped prison uniform, is expected to receive a minimum 90-day jail sentence as well as probation under terms of a plea agreement, according to the Maricopa County attorney's office. He will remain in the county jail until his sentencing and won't be given credit for time served.

A Maricopa County Superior Court commissioner has set a sentencing hearing for Jan. 30.

Additional charges will be dismissed then.

As part of the plea agreement, DMX cannot own any animals, possess firearms and must attend an animal offender treatment program. If he violates probation, he could be sentenced to more than 10 years in prison.

A call to his public defender was not returned.

Author Westlake
dead at 75

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Westlake, a prolific

US

rEVOLUTION-ize

Group forms to help with fitness goals

By CHARLES
EURYDICE GRAY
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I am not a runner. The thought of my feet rapidly slapping pavement makes non-mediated tooth extraction seem pleasant by comparison. This is not a new discovery. I have never been a runner. My past is strewn with failed attempts. When I was small, my brother literally ran circles around my fastest sprint. On the high school track team, the coach instantly identified my skills as lying in the non-running field events. At college, every semester would end with me doubled over with dry heaves, shin splits and aching knees after the ROTC one-mile race.

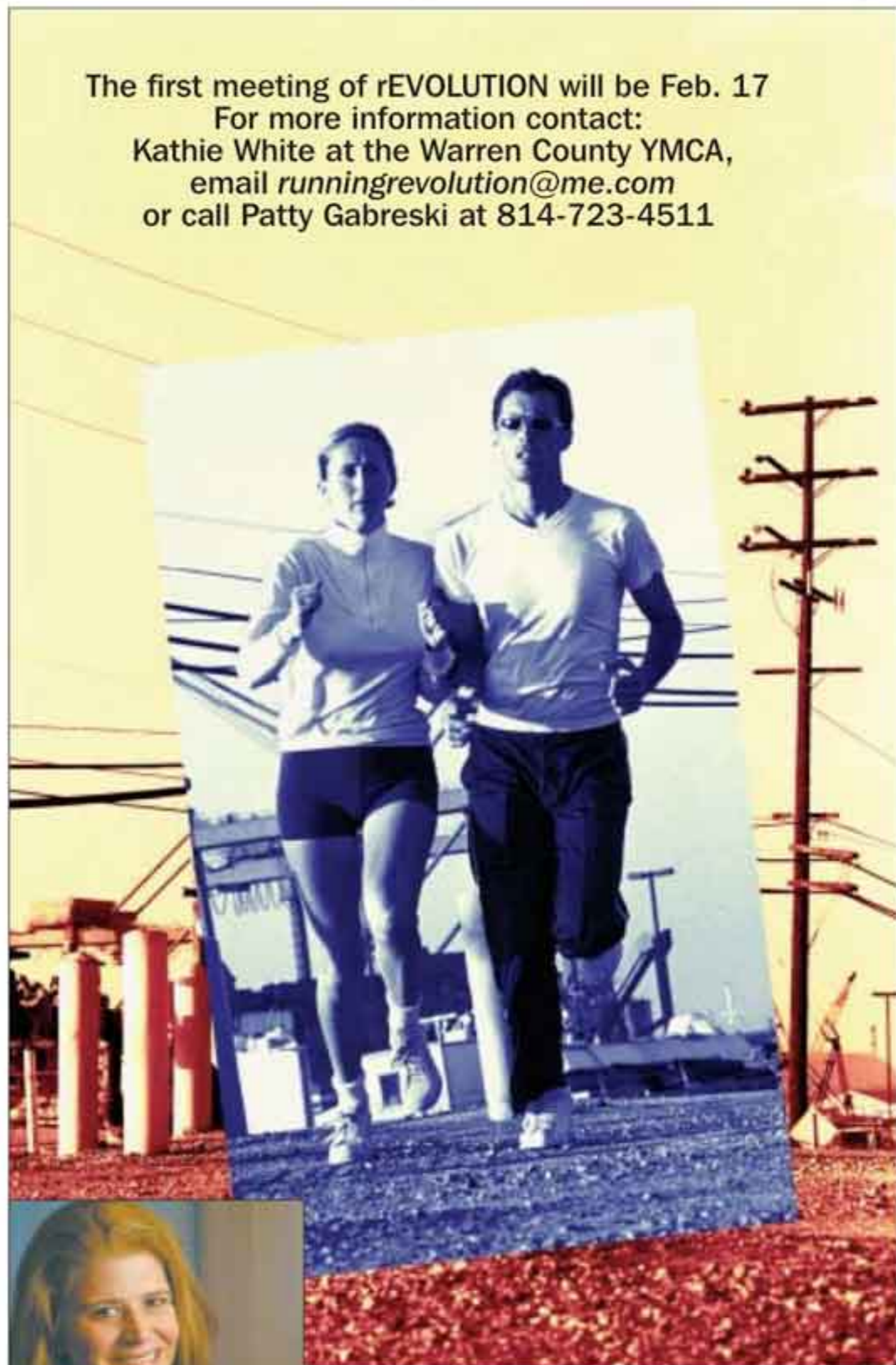
So why am I contemplating running now ... 20 years and 30 pounds later? I guess I have always been a little envious of runners. Their lithe bodies bounding like antelope, confident in their next footfall. That millisecond of floating they must feel at the top of each stride. Some even jog smiling, as if they are deriding pleasure from the activity. I'll admit it. I have been jealous. Now and then I have even begrudged runners their fitness. But those days are over. In this season of resolutions and new beginnings, I am wiping the slate clean of defeats and stumbles to discover my inner athlete.

Yes, 2009 is the year that I learn to run!

I know you're thinking, "She's had one too many eggnog." I certainly have. But that doesn't change the fact that I am going to do it. My goal of running is real. Though it is a goal I would never attempt alone.

I've found a group of women ready and willing to help. Not only to help me, but help anyone wanting to move from sedentary to strong. They've formed a group called running rEVOLUTION for women with any locomotion goal.

The first meeting of rEVOLUTION will be Feb. 17
For more information contact:
Kathie White at the Warren County YMCA,
email runningrevolution@me.com
or call Patty Gabreski at 814-723-4511



Charles Eurydice Gray

Whether your dream is jog/walking a pain-free mile or shaving seconds off your fastest marathon time, they will be there to help you make it happen and cheer your success.

They say things like, "running should never hurt" and "most people who don't succeed at running go at it too hard. They've never

seen any of us with our running revolution tee shirts and pink buffs huffing it out along the roads or trails of Warren County. I hope you'll give a honk, a wave or shout some encouraging words. For more information on how to join the running rEVOLUTION: pick up a flyer at the YMCA, talk personally with Kathie White at the YMCA, email runningrevolution@me.com or call Patty Gabreski at 814-723-4511. See you at our first meeting. Let the revolution begin!

been taught how to train, what to wear or even how to be safe." Their words are very appealing — and I believe them with all the zeal of a newly converted Scrooge. I believe them so deeply that I decided to join them.

Our first meeting of the running rEVOLUTION will be February 17, so there is plenty of time to look deep inside and see if there is a dream walker, jogger or even runner inside you just waiting for this chance. Running rEVOLUTION will meet once a week for 10 weeks leading up to the May High Five run. Each week's hour and a half meeting will be chocked full of running tips, stretching instruction, gear advice, personalized running plans, road work and plenty of laughter and camaraderie with women working to reach their fitness goals.

By way of apology to the guys who can't join this specific running rEVOLUTION and incentive to anyone not able to attend, I will keep you posted with work out routines, advice on body fuel and compelling stories of the women who run starting this February. I will also keep you up-to-date on my own progress and discoveries as I strive to put the run into my running shoes. If you

MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2009

Rethinking sports drink drinking

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Sprinting the final steps of your 30-minute run, you fantasize about pouring a chilly sports drink down your throat and over your perspiring face. But recreating that iconic advertising image while bathed in the triumphant light of the open refrigerator door might not be the best idea. First off, that stuff is a sticky mess to clean. Second, your body likely doesn't need all the electrolytes and carbohydrates packed into that bottle.

When you exercise, you convert water, electrolytes and calories into movement. The more you move, the more you burn. But if you have ever watched the slow rise of calories expended while exercising, you know just how stingy the body can be in shedding its reserves. In fact, sports nutritionists widely agree that sports drinks are appropriate training table fare only after 90 minutes of hard, sweat-producing exercise. If you are posting such mega workout or racing durations, you can still replenish your body with water and electrolyte-rich foods or choose more user-friendly sports concoctions.

The electrolytes that most sports supplements and drinks target are potassium, sodium and chloride. Potassium is essential for normal cell function, heartbeat regulation and proper muscle performance. Excellent potassium replacing foods include yogurt, orange or pineapple juice, raisins, bananas, apricots, figs, wheat germ, soy beans, nuts and skin-on potatoes.

Sodium helps regulate the balance of fluids in the body. The average American diet is jam-packed with sodium, thus it is likely the last electrolyte you'll need to sweat. Some naturally sodium-rich foods are celery, cheese, spinach, milk, olives, chickpeas, beets and bananas.

Chloride aids in the absorption of potassium, preserves the acid-base balance of our bodies, and increases the blood's capacity to carry and eventually eliminate carbon dioxide from body tissues. Yogurt, skin-on apples, celery, tomatoes, olives, beets, cheese and eggs are all chloride-crammed edibles.

Though lacking the bright colors and hard body promotion of sports drinks, water is still the undefeated champ of hydration

for the average workout. Water aids in digestion, nutrient transportation, waste product elimination, temperature regulation and joint and tissue lubrication. Suggested water consumption levels for 45-minute to hour-long athletic endeavors are 16 ounces within two hours prior, 12 to 16 ounces during and 16 ounces within 30 minutes after exertion.

For longer workout sessions, aim for 12 to 16 ounces of water and 200 to 250 complex carbohydrate calories per hour. If your workout demands calories as well as hydration, be kind to your tummy. Look for sports drinks, gels and bars - in combination with good old-fashioned water - whose complex carbohydrates come from glucose polymers, maltodextrin and sucrose and steer clear of harder-to-digest fructose, corn syrup, proteins and artificial sweeteners. Powdered sports drinks of complex carbohydrates are also kind to your wallet and allow you more mixology control. After finishing a longer workout, remember consuming 250 to 400 carbohydrate and protein calories as well as 16 ounces of



Autumn Taylor of Warren Chiropractic Care Center presents a hydration primer to running rEVOLUTION members. Special thanks to Autumn and to sports coach Doug Bush of Endurance Factor for providing the informational fuel for this article.

water within 30 minutes of exercise will aid your body in recovery and help maintain your energy.

Still - like prodding a reluctant vegetable eater - it is sometimes difficult to swallow enough of the colorless, tasteless hydrating powerhouse. If you are

in this camp, try zipping up your drink with citrus or cucumber juice or sweetening your water with stevia. A sweet tropical herb cousin of the sunflower, stevia contains no calories, is sold as a supplement and has a negligible effect on blood glucose.

rEVOLUTION A little help from my friends

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Until very recently, running was the White Whale to my Captain Ahab. Yes, running was that vast, sub-aquatic monster of my consciousness that stole functionality from my lower limbs and left me obsessed with dispatching the beast.

Since learning how to run with the women of the running rEVOLUTION, I have begun to feel sorry for Ahab. Now I see his problem. Ahab didn't have pals to help him turn his gimp into a measured stride.

As for me, I know that every Tuesday evening I will have my best run of the week because I'll be jogging with my posse, my co-conspirators, my support sisters and friends.

Each week I look forward to the physical test, and even more so the excited stories of woman after woman who credit running as a group with helping them achieve personal milestones.

It is true that every challenge is an opportunity. I think the challenge to become runners - or better runners - has taught each of us something. For myself, I've learned that the demonic leviathan of my nightmares was really a gentle mammal coaxing me to the water's edge. I've also learned that you can go places together that you could never reach alone.

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2009



These running rEVOLUTIONaries are ready to race

Leaving race day anxiety in the dust

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Knots in the stomach, restlessness, sudden fascination with meteorology and gear, it is all too clear...race day is growing near. Soon the morning light will find me anxiously queuing for the High Five starting gun.

Just typing that last sentence made my heartbeat quicken, "Breathe, breathe." Racing anxiety is the worst! I am not in contention for the coveted winners' mugs. Still my stomach flutters and adrenaline surges at the thought of competition.

The secret to dealing with race anxiety - I am told - lies in the mind. To overcome your fears you must use brainpower to visualize a positive outcome, put the lid on negative self-talk and arm yourself with an arsenal of can-do wisdom.

Banishing anxiety starts well before the race. Envision your run from "take your marks" to finish line, run the route, dream of the day, do whatever it takes to visualize yourself doing well. Then choose tiered race goals. Your first level goal should be the very best run you can imagine. The second level is a fall back goal in case small things go wrong. The third and final level should be

what you can live with in a worst-case race. Being prepared for setbacks can make them less deflating.

On race day, get up early enough to eat, digest and prepare without the pressure of being late. Don't try anything new. Eat the food that empowers you and wear the clothes proven not to bind. Get to the race site with plenty of time to register, catch the vibe and warm up so your body understands what will be required. Introvert or extrovert, honor what your mind craves pre-race. Plug into the crowd and offer encouragement or plug into your iPod and court serenity.

During the race there are myriad strategies for ensuring your optimal performance. To my mind, each strategy is rooted in the fact that negative energy constricts. Negativity limits our vision, perception and optimism as surely as it constricts vessels, muscles and blood flow. Feel gratitude for the good fortune of being present, alive and strong then tell your negative thoughts to take a hike...because you are going for a run.

A great way to stay positive is to detach from the outcome of the race and simply enjoy the process. Practice the Taoist concept of wu wei (pronounced woo way) toward effortless action and move with rather than

against nature. Watch a wave of fatigue gather at the breakers and smile. You know it is headed your way, but you've met this foe before. Talk to the enemy. Tell the fatigue, the shin splints, the side stitch, "Thanks for stopping by, but I'm too busy to chat right now." Remember, challenges are there to teach us, so look for and love the lesson and be grateful for the trial that brought it.

As for the competition, sure, they came to this race to beat you. But open yourself up to the upside of their presence. Racing alongside a strong competitor will kick your performance up a notch. Competition pushes us more than we push ourselves and is a great speed drill. You can also build your skills by watching other runners. Besides, wouldn't winning a trophy from a hard-fought battle be more rewarding than walking away with a prize?

If this all sounds too philosophical, it is, but it works. Being in control of your mind is likely the most pivotal task of a race. If you can keep your thoughts positive through preparation, self-talks, mantras, focus changes and perspective shifts, you will run your best race, every race.

rEVOLUTION

Taking a chance

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

I am beginning to suspect faulty wiring in my frontal lobe. Sizzling circuitry in that region would explain my decision to abandon plans to run the 1.5-mile race at the High Five in favor of the 5-mile route. Then again, what is life if you know the outcome? I know I can run 1.5 miles without stopping, but can I run 5 miles without collapsing? The question mark makes all the difference. Its inherent mystery tantalizes me, begging for my answer.

I am not the only one experiencing this supersizing phenomenon. Walkers are pondering running, 1.5 milers are considering longer distances and 5 milers are beginning to think about marathons. Thus, when 99 running rEVOLUTIONaries cross the ten-week training session finish line tomorrow, it is only

the beginning. Many already have their sights set on challenges for the months and even years to come.

If you are looking for racing reasons to continue your training, there are many places to find races. The Internet abounds with sites that allow you search for runs of specific distances in your own backyard or around the globe. Some top picks include: www.active.com, www.runnersworld.com/cda/racefinder, www.erie-runnersclub.org, www.rootsrace.com and www.runhigh.com.

So choose your question mark, your secret desire to see what your body can do then match it with a challenge that lets you answer it. I'll see you at the starting line.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2009

Shopping for running shoes: Style vs. Substance

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

I was ecstatic when I realized that learning to run meant shoe shopping. I hate to prove the Carrie Bradshaw stereotype, but the prospect of acquiring a new pair of trainers made the burden of running in them seem worthwhile. No, neither Jimmy Choo nor Manolo Blahnik has launched an athletic line of essential footwear...yet. Still, from the sneaker ads I've seen, casual footwear has come a long way since Chuck Taylor All Stars.

A little research proved the ads more than hype. These days every serious athletic shoe is a specialized engineering marvel. Shoes are made for soccer, aerobics, tennis, golf, bicycling and anything else you can imagine - each designed to enhance an individual athlete's (or wannabe's) performance and safety...and do it with style.

As I browsed Spidermanesque goopy webbing, decoupled heels, blown rubber outsoles and silicone gel midsoles, I started to wonder which shoe was the right one for me. Instant gratification mode whining, I beat a hasty retreat from the brick and mortar marketplace to the virtual. Online, I could take all the time I needed to investigate my options.

I understood why "Shoe Finders" on runnersworld.com and runningshoes.com asked for my weight and arch height before recommending a shoe, but I was surprised when they asked for my gender. I mean, come on! A shoe is a shoe. I'm a size 9 in women's and a 7 in men's shoes. I've never been shy about crossing the gender line for more appealing sneaker styles or colors. Turns out that my metatarsal cross-dressing had been at my own peril. Women tend to have a greater angle from the hip to the foot. In the shoe trade, this is called the "Q angle," and now many running shoes are designed to accommodate and celebrate the difference.

Then the prognosticating "Shoe Finders" asked for one more intimate piece of information. They wanted to know if my foot strike was neutral, pronated or supinated. I wasn't in Kansas anymore. A quick Google search led me to understand that a neutral gait is what you want, but not what most people have. Most of us pronate (touch the ground on the outside of the heel and roll inward along the arch and big toe) or supinate (touch down slightly on the outside of the heel and roll along the outer edge of the foot). Those with low arches to flat feet tend to over pronate. Those with high arches tend to under pronate, or supinate. Clear as mud, right?

Guess wrong when picking your new pair of joggers and you're begging for muscle fatigue, running inefficiency and even injury. To make it easier, check out the wear pattern on your current shoes. Are they worn the most along the outer edge, inner edge or straight down the middle? If straight down the middle, congratulations!



You're one of the only about 25 percent of folks with a neutral strike. If tea leaf or tread reading isn't your forte, you can always ask a professional. Well-trained sales persons at running exclusive stores can analyze your stride, or ask your doctor for an assessment before slapping down the plastic.

Barring other variables, over pronators should look for motion control sneakers that provide support and firm midsoles. By the way, this is also the prescription for heavier runners. Those who supinate should purchase cushioned shoes for shock absorption that are flexible enough to encourage the foot to move during the stride. Neutral runners - as obvious as it may seem - should buy shoes rated as neutral that balance the extremes of control and cushion and don't alter their natural stride. Those with extreme over or under pronation should consider over-the-counter or prescription orthotics. Orthotics - also known as insoles, inserts or footbeds - correct musculoskeletal alignment, reduce pain, increase joint stability and allow for optimal functioning of muscles, tendons and bones. Many runners and walkers can benefit from orthotics, but that's a whole other story.

Once you've pegged your needs, it's time to stalk and subdue your quarry, also known as purchasing your new pair of running shoes. As a veteran shoe buyer, here is where I must summon all my strength. For this purchase I have promised myself to reject choices influenced by color combinations, design aesthetics or sale price. Yes, this time I will choose substance over style and my feet will thank me for it.

For the best success, enter the store prepared. Know what features are recommended for your stride, weight, gender, arch height, heel strike, running goals and environment. Be prepared to continue your search at another store if nothing feels right. Shop in the evening. Our feet generally reach daily maximum swell by 4 p.m., so shopping earlier could mean buying a too-small shoe. Get measured and try at least several brands in that size while wearing your running socks. Balance on one foot, run downhill, make certain the widest part of your foot lines up with the widest part of the shoe, be alert to minor pinching and seam rubs, don't be self-conscious about walking around for a while. Each of these strategies will quickly eliminate poor fitting shoes. The shoe should feel comfortably secure through the midfoot, like a hand cradling your foot in a band around the arch. And remember when it comes to sneaker fit your mother was right, the heels shouldn't slip and there should be about a thumb's width of room between your longest toe and the end of the toe box.

If all these functional demands take you down a path that disregards your personal taste or sense of style, remember this is a journey. You'll have many chances to try and buy new trainers. Perhaps your perfect shoe is on a design table right now. Since sneakers lose their shock absorption between 300 and 500 miles and have a longer life when alternated in use, there is always a good reason to keep shopping for the perfect shoe. Isn't that the fascination of shoe shopping after all?

running rEVOLUTION on the brink of starting...and she can't wait.



BY CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

The running rEVOLUTION begins tomorrow. I'm excited and thrilled, but a small portion of my brain is cursing my big mouth and searching for a cheap flight to Bali. Likely I'm not alone in my cold feet. Especially considering that we will be running out-of-doors in the middle of February. I mean if you're looking for a reason to bow out, that's enough right there. Add to that my innate fear of running on hard surfaces, running out-of-doors and repeating my past jogging failures and you've got a recipe for one chicken on the lamb.

But before I pack my bags, I remind myself that joining the running rEVOLUTION isn't as stress inducing as taking on a mortgage in Indonesia or learning to speak Bahasa. The running rEVOLUTION is just ten meetings filled with advice and encouragement. Ten opportunities to meet and run with women who have similar interests and goals. Ten Tuesdays that could improve my perception of myself and my abilities...permanently.

When you think of it that way, what's a little cold weather, fear of the unknown or even physical challenge? So until tomorrow, I'm just going to tune out those negative, self-defeating voices and promise myself I'll be there. Showing up is usually the hardest part of the battle. It is true what they say about the people who show up being the ones who get what they want. Besides, once there, I'll be among others whose energy and enthusiasm will overwhelm our trepidation and put us on a path to personal empowerment. Our chosen path will be one of jogging and running, trodden with friends old and new.

So, if your New Year's resolutions are flagging, you're looking for running camaraderie, or you have fitness goals you want support to achieve, I hope to see you at First Lutheran Church at 5:30 p.m. tomorrow to kick off this running rEVOLUTION. Set aside your excuses, make the investment in yourself and show up. I think we'll all be glad we did.

MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2009

Running has changed my knotty ways

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Naturally adventure-prone, I've always found that directions dampen my enthusiasm for a journey. But when I decided to head down the path toward runnerdom, my outlook did an about face. My intuitive method having failed me, it was high time to listen to those who had succeeded.

My first sojourn into the land of instruction started small...very small. Despite Dressy Bessy's best efforts, I have forever been the girl who lags behind, bent over retying flailing laces. I could never be a confident runner if I didn't conquer my ineffectual shoe tying habits. Sure a double knot would do the trick and may yet be my go-to knot for races. But have you ever tried to untie one of those suckers? Besides, the bulky, unappealing double knot is like wearing a sandwich board that reads, "I never learned to tie my laces."

So decades later, I sat back down with Dressy Bessy AND her instructions. Turns out I had been tying a "granny" knot my entire life. The granny is a bad knot for shoes as it loosens from movement; unlike the "reef" or "square" knot that tightens with your tread. Not only is the reef

more reliable, it is elegant...perched perfectly perpendicular to the laces.

Flush with pride, I wondered if lacing up had evolved in the years since Bessy hit the scene. I wandered the Web and found the "lan" knot, named after its knot-obsessed inventor Ian Fieggen. The lan - though a little harder to pick up than the reef - is perfectly symmetrical and adds lifespan to your laces. The lan is easily understood when seen, but difficult to explain. Check out the video tutorial at www.fieggen.com/shoelace/index.htm if you are determined to try this at home.

Not confined to knots, Fieggen is the Willy Wonka of laces, inventing insane and wondrous interweavings with just over three feet of string. Fieggen's website ties together color-coded diagrams, how-to videos and written instructions for lacing and tying to get specific outcomes. Fieggen offers tying tips for sportspeople, children and the elderly. For runners he advocates soft, flat laces that minimize pressure points as well as numerous lacing strategies that can keep you heels snug, reduce the pain of plantar fasciitis, decrease pressure on the upper

foot and relieve hot spots. Fieggen even sells a lacing handbook that comes with eyelets and laces for practice...an obvious homage to Bessy's pioneering work in the field.

If Fieggen's site modernized this granny, then a search for "lacing systems" rocketed her light years into the future. It turns out that some lace-up shoes are entirely knot-free. Integral or retrofit, lacing systems feature strong laces that weave through raised eyelets and feed into locking spring closures which pinch rather than tie the strands together. Some systems come equipped with dials so you can crank laces to your desired tautness. Think sleep number for your feet.

Though awed by the sheer coolness of lacing systems, I am held fast by the knot for now. I want to master my new tying skills and honor traditionalists like Bessy and Ian before experimenting with no-tie options. Years down the road, you may find me dialing in my laces or winding the perfect lan knot, and although I may then be a grey-haired woman on the jogging path, I will never again be a granny.



Shoes with the tell-tale "granny" knot twist



The perfect perpendicular "reef" knot

rEVOLUTION

This runner in need of course modification

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Hitting the pavement on the first Tuesday of the running rEVOLUTION was great. Waking up stiff and sore on Wednesday morning was not. Two Advil later, I sat down gingerly to figure out what I had done wrong to make my ankles, knees and hips complain.

I opened my running journal and recorded the workout. A brisk walk followed by run/walk intervals capped off by some stretches. I had run relaxed with the minimum of superfluous movement. I even lightened my tread to minimize impact on my joints. Still, the wear was palpable. I had to do more to lessen the burden on my

body while it ramped up meet to the running challenge.

Online articles suggested a short jog to warm up the body before a run. Since the just jog alone had made me tender, I had to find another option. My first thought was stretching before my workout. However, the articles advised full stretching be done after exercise to reap the greatest benefits and to lessen the possibility of injury. Then it hit me. I could ride a bike or jog on an elliptical trainer to get the aerobic warm up suggested without jarring my joints prior to my next run.

Then I came across a phrase that I'm considering for my first tattoo, "post-exercise stretching will reduce

muscle soreness." There it was, simple and true. I had to admit I cut short my stretching when I began thinking about all the things I had yet to accomplish that evening. But in the words of Edgar's raven, "Nevermore!"

My second and third running excursions of the week adhered to new rules...a 15-minute no-impact warm up before my run and a mandatory 20-minute stretch following. You're right; baby steps like these won't have me winning races anytime soon. But they will keep me moving in the right direction and eventually demote the Advil bottle to inessential status somewhere behind the spice jars.

MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2009

No such thing as bad running weather, only bad clothes

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

I was jogging along for the sixth day in a row watching my breath freeze in the air when it hit me. Perhaps I had become Bill Murray in the movie *Groundhog Day*, doomed to awaken every day in a small Pennsylvania town where it is perpetually a frigid February 2nd. Just then a dog barked precisely as it had each day previous. I shivered and picked up the pace. Despite Punxsutawney Phil's promise, I was beginning to believe there was no way this winter was ever going to end.

Frozen in time or just plain frozen, one thing was clear. I needed to dress more appropriately for conditions while running. Fearing temperatures in the teens, I had dressed too heavily and was severely regretting my cotton socks that - now wet through - were rapidly stealing warmth from my toes. The weather might never change, but I had to. I ran directly to the store.

Banning ankle socks and cotton en route, I grabbed crew socks that wick moisture away from your skin. These special fabrics are made from polyester, polypropylene or eco-friendly polylactic acid fiber and always tout their liquid abatement qualities. For really cold days, I added a pair of non-scratchy Merino wool socks. Wool actually holds onto heat when it is wet, is breathable and definitely cuts the chill.

Moving upward, I picked out a pair of running tights and a long-sleeved, high-collared shirt, both of 100% wicking materials. A sweat-drenched winter runner is a prime candidate for hypothermia. Since the wind would tear through these breezy textiles, I began to eye a techno-chic Gore-Tex running shell. Saddened by the high price of brand name high tech, I opted for a coated

nylon pant and jacket set with numerous zippers for venting. Though not as hecker swank as space-inspired fibrils, nylon will do the job, and coated nylon will add rain blocking to your running outfit arsenal. Just make certain your shell pieces are large enough to wear over tights, shirt and (my next purchase) a fleece vest to keep the core warm on arctic days.

Then it was time to accessorize with a wicking fleece beanie, headband and a pair of thin gloves. I've heard legends of versatile stretchy gloves with pullover, windproof mitts, but have not yet tracked them down in the retail jungle.

Shopping bags filled with my wet and voluminous arrival togs, it must be noted that winter running habits are a personal thing. Someone with an internal furnace set on high would likely burn up in the attire I find cozy. So when suiting up for your 1st or 91st February 2nd run, dress as you would for the weather, then simply take off a layer and leave it at home. Oh, and slip a few tissues in an outer pocket because, well...noses run along with feet in cold weather.

So rise and shine runners and don't forget your layers because it's cold out there today. It's cold out there every day. If you need some incentive to emerge from your snuggly covers and your dreams of spring, remember this: If we are stuck in a rut of glacial Groundhog Days, the calendar will only renew its march toward the vernal equinox when we - like Bill Murray - happily embrace our winter fate and use the endless chilly hours to better ourselves.

rEVOLUTION

No pain, no gain?

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

I thoroughly disagree with the adage: "No pain, No gain." Though less succinct and lacking the rhyming appeals of its four-syllable predecessor, I would advocate the phrase: "No transitory discomfort, No continuing challenge, No gain." I understand that getting into shape won't always be the most pleasant sensory experience on the planet. There will always be twinges and unpleasant sensations that are best to work through without complaint. In fact, carefully and thoroughly working tender muscles is one of the best ways to release stiffness and soreness. But pain - real pain - is a whole other magilla. Pain is a messenger, a harbinger, telling us things need to change or they may stop altogether.

I think of real pain not as an incentive to push forward, but an opportunity to play doctor. Just as rescue squads use cell phone towers to triangulate the location of a lost hiker calling for help, your pain is a distress cry that can be physically triangulated to locate its cause. But, if you lack the diagnostic chops of Gregory House, M.D. or fear doing more harm than good with at-home diagnosis, make an appointment with a licensed practitioner or sports medicine doc. Their mission is to ferret out causes and offer modifications that will dial you back from pain to momentary discomfort and continuing challenge.



CTI Physical Therapist Michelle Marion assists a running rEVOLUTIONary

MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009

Mother and daughter inspire other runners

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

Sports Halls of Fame are filled with dynasties...teams and individuals who continuously rose to the top of their chosen athletic contests to claim recognition and awards. However, the most inspiring dynasty I've encountered in my running odyssey is that of mother and daughter athletes, Sheri and Aubrey Greenland.

Though not as widely recognized as legends like the Steel Curtain, Muhammad Ali, Gretzky's Oilers or the entire Petty clan; Sheri and Aubrey's accomplishments are far more impressive and instructive to me for their longevity and love of sport.

A runner since sixth grade, mother Sheri has always found joy in running. A multi-sport athlete growing up, running has remained a constant source of enjoyment and serenity in Sheri's life. "You run in the morning and the sun is coming up and the birds are singing and you just get a good sweat. Nothing is better than to start your day like that," says Sheri. "It makes everything in the day seem so much easier. It breaks the stress and little things don't bother you."

"Running is fun. You get good exercise," adds 9-year-old Aubrey, whose first race was the 1.5-mile Cinco de Mayo run two years ago.

"She took off like a bolt," said Sheri about Aubrey's debut race. "She sprinted to the half-way point. They had a water table set up. She stopped to get water and told me, 'I finished first!' and I said, 'No, honey, we have to go back.'" Sheri ends the story and they both laugh before Aubrey pipes up in a jokingly exasperated tone, "I was only 7."

But these athletes' plans do not end with their current 20-minute tandem workout runs. "Someday I'd like to do a half-marathon," said Sheri, "but if I don't ever do it, it will be fine. I run because I like to do it, not to prove something to

myself." Though she has run races, Sheri admits that she doesn't yet enjoy racing. "I get so nervous I get sick. The first time I did a five-mile race, I was dry heaving half way through. I can run that distance. I did, I won. It's just race anxiety. I'm trying to enter more races to get over it."

"I think when I'm about two years older, I'll be able to run five miles," offers Aubrey. "And running helps me in soccer. We run up and down, up and down." Aubrey has had her share of sports success, scoring 8 out of 18 goals in her first soccer game and earning the Presidential Physical Fitness Award. "She does anything athletic," says Sheri. "I run the mile in two weeks at school," said Aubrey, "I have to do it in nine minutes for the Presidential patch."

But to my eyes the most striking success these maternal-line teammates have achieved is their easy rapport, their commitment to a life of sport and their hours spent striding forward side-by-side. Regardless of the number of tiered awards stands in their combined futures, Sheri and Aubrey's public accomplishments will always radiate from their shared history and an inter-generational passing of the torch of physical well-being.



Aubrey (left) and Sheri Greenland warm up before running

Time spent walking and jogging with Aubrey and Sheri has taught me that life is a marathon. You need to pursue a healthy regimen for the long haul. You need to wake up and revel in that "run in the morning" when "the sun is coming up and the birds are singing... Nothing better to start your day."



Sheri Greenland hits her running stride

rEVOLUTION

Running side effects

Can running reform a sweets junkie? I am a sugar addict whose quest for a continuous sugar high can be measured in decades. Can you blame me? Sugar makes a person feel optimistic and supercharged. Besides, I've failed so many times at squelching my addiction that I had thrown in the cookie, the chocolate and the pie.

But a funny thing happened on the way to finish line. Running has begun to make me feel optimistic and supercharged without sugar. Conversely, running with that sweet substance surging through my capillaries turns me into a dying battery. Eating processed sugar before a stride makes every step feel like slogging uphill in sand against a current, every breath seem oxygen-deprived and every goal seem far beyond my reach.

Though neither a brain surgeon nor a rocket scientist, it wasn't difficult to see the correlation...or to decide on a course of action. I had to get the sugar monkey off my back. I decided to allow myself just one dessert a week and see if it made any difference.

It has been nearly four weeks on this plan and I am reaping rewards beyond expectation. My mind is clear, my work focused, my anxiety minimal and my energy pegged in the upper range. The change has been nothing short of miraculous. So what new super power is waiting for any of us around the next bend in the jogging path? There's no way to be certain, but my fingers are crossed for flight. Or at the very least a better grasp of algebra. Hey, if I can truly beat my sweet nemesis anything is possible.

MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2009

Evaluation the key to advancement for runners

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

When I walked into Warren Chiropractic Care Center for a gait evaluation, I was pretty certain that my stride alignment was close to neutral. I had every reason for certitude. This winter I had studied my footfalls in the snow like a tracker, reading the depressions to gauge weight load and orientation. It looked fine to me. Still, I decided to check with an expert because it is pretty tough to walk normally and observe your feet at the same time.

Dr. David Brook began the evaluation by looking at the bottom of my shoes. New sneakers have tiny raised "nubs" along the entire outsole that wear down with use. Like a car tire that isn't rotated, contact with pavement creates patterns of wear that tell the tale of your tread. Look at any pair of shoes you've walked some miles in and - with or without nubs - you'll spy evidence of where your foot makes its heaviest contact in the worn away areas.

Next the socks came off and my feet were inspected for calluses. Though calluses can form from ill-fitting shoes and some diseases, most are created over time from the pressure and friction of movement. These types of calluses are like a roadmap charting our unique patterns of wear. Some good news for pedicure fans, I learned it is best to keep calluses shaved or pumiced to a minimum.

Then it was off to the catwalk.

Okay, so it was actually a carpeted hallway, but I strutted it like a pro as Dr. Brook and Chiropractic Assistant Allison Cummings scrutinized my stride from every angle. First came the question of orientation. Were my feet going straight or were they toeing in or out? "Definitely out on the left," said Allison. "Definitely out and lateral," said Dr. Brook. "She's landing on the outside - or the lateral part - of her heel. She really compensating."

Oh well, so much for my imagined neutral alignment.

"The left foot is different from the right foot. The right is more stable than the left foot," added Dr. Brook. "The other thing to watch is the toes. We want to see if she's toeing off or gliding."

The verdict of gliding was pronounced and the tone told me it wasn't the ideal. "The toes should be more like she's walking in sand and gripping," said Dr. Brook. "You are not toeing off. So your foot is not coming back far enough in your run. You haven't started running with your hips and upper back and your arms yet. You're kind of shuffling."

Next under the microscope, my Achilles tendons...the left was straight and the right bowed in a bit. On to my calves, the right of which has more muscle definition than the left. Then my arch heights were measured with and without compression. Finally, I stepped onto the foot scanner. Connected to

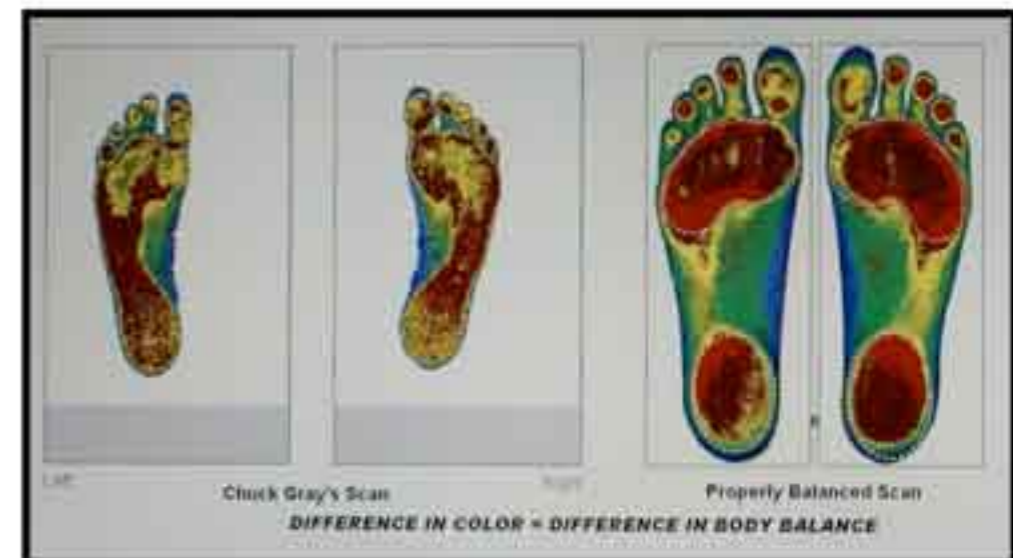
a computer, this machine scans your feet to determine where and how heavily your weight is distributed. The red of the color scan - areas bearing the most weight - confirmed the catwalk observations. I was walking and standing on the outside of my feet more than is proper for balance.

"We're looking at the end of the chain, the gait of your feet," explained Dr. Brook, "so we're looking at the effects more or less. Then we're going to try to compensate for those effects in some way, whether it is orthotics or exercise." His words reassured me that the aim of the evaluation was improvement not judgment. Sure, I belonged to the 75 percent of people who walk this earth without neutral alignment, but stretching specific muscles could help straighten me out, foot exercises could bring back tone and orthotics could address the entire alignment of my "wheels" from spine through hips, pelvis, legs, ankles and feet.

The evaluation process energized me to keep moving forward. Discovering my less than ideal present gait presented immediate and concrete goals for my further running development. My original aspirations to ideal alignment would never have been as instructive. As long as I had - in Dr. Brook's words - "no attachment to what is," I could use evaluation and advice to become better than I was before...better, stronger, faster.



Scanner measures weight distribution



Room for improvement from my foot scan (left) to a properly balanced set of feet.

rEVOLUTION

Learning to accept assistance

By CHARLES EURYDICE GRAY

I am a woman convinced that most obstacles can be overcome by determination and effort. So when I learned that my stride alignment wasn't "bang on" my first impulse was to barrel through it. Show me the exercises. Give me a routine. I'll fix it myself. There is truth in that approach. There are strengthening exercises and stretching that can alleviate - if not fix - many alignment problems. However, there is another truth too. Many alignment issues are biomechanical deficiencies that are best addressed by orthotics.

Known by many names - foot beds, insoles, spinal/pelvic stabilizers - orthotics impact everything from your feet up. Still harboring some incredulosity I checked with doctors, studies, running magazines and personal testimonials. Nearly every source

concurred that using custom-made or over-the-counter orthotics to correct alignment can help you avoid injuries and extend your glory days.

My favorite story was of a Kenyan runner who, after switching from grass to pavement training surfaces, suffered five stress fractures in his feet because he was certain all he needed to do was keep running until he adjusted to the harder surface. But a gait evaluation detected the real culprit, overpronation that put too much stress on his lower limbs. An orthotic fixed his biomechanical inefficiencies and he went on to train, race and win on pavement.

Keeping his story in mind, I will stretch and I will strengthen. But I will also accept that sometimes gumption and grit aren't enough. Sometimes you need a little proper support.