

Running tips

For those who do not know me I would like to introduce myself. I am a podiatrist in Akron at Northeast Ohio Medical Associates and have been in practice for 10 years. I have also been runner my entire life. Although my practice is surgical based involving reconstructive surgery of the foot and ankle, I have a passion for treating runners and do so in my practice. Over the past 5 years I have been involved in educating professionals on running injuries and have done studies on shoe gear. I have focused my treatment for runners based on their training patterns as opposed to shoe gear or orthotics, etc. In addition to treating runners, my wife, Julie, and I have been running marathons over the past 5 years. My first was in 1999 and I have since ran 9 marathons and numerous half marathons and shorter races. All of this has enabled me to become extensively involved on the running community and I have been featured in numerous fitness periodicals and books. I have also had the opportunity to lecture nationally on running injuries and shoe-gear. I was approached by Jessica Huth over a year ago to help create this program. Jessica Huth, Julie Campitelli, and Sharon Rodriguez have all worked extremely hard on organizing this and I am honored to give input on creating these running programs.

Below are some tips that I feel are crucial to introduce to the children participating in Cross Country. The programs that I have set, can, and probably will be modified based on each child's ability. I will send out emails each week on Sunday night to give tips and review each week's program. This will be a learning experience for all of us. If you have questions or concerns about the volume or intensity (especially once we see the kids run and assess their ability) please reach out to me at feet@me.com. I really would love feedback on how the kids are doing and to help modify the programs accordingly.

Practice Intent

Have fun!

These practices are designed to get the kids moving and have been designed according to ages. Running is one of the most difficult sports to "teach" because we still have many different philosophies as to what works and what doesn't work. In fact, two famous magazines - Runner's World and Running Times (they're actually sister publications) are each biased in their own views of presenting tips and recommendations for improving running. Each runner will respond differently to training techniques. What works well for some, may not work as well for others. Someone who is inherently fast may need more work on running longer distances and vice-versa. One theory that has been proven over time in varying degrees is volume. This can make you a better runner and improve your speed. While the goal of this program is not to instill speed into the minds of these children, we do need to remember the meet is a race and the faster you become, the faster you get to the finish line. Winning the race is not the goal we teach. Beating a previous time, crossing the finish line with a smile, and having fun is what we teach. Adhere to this and winning may happen. In running, some kids will not be as fast as others during a meet. It's no different in basketball or baseball. Some can train as hard as they want, but they may never be able to dunk a basketball. That doesn't mean they can't still play basketball and play it very well. The same holds true for running. The individualized goal is improvement.

The practices are going to be broken up into two types of practices a week. One day will be a workout that focuses on building speed, or learning interval training, and the other day will be a

day to work on continuous running. The practice programs you all will receive have Mondays set up as speed days, and Wednesday as continuous running days. These may be adjusted in terms of the games, intervals etc, but I would like to stick to the plan as created on the handout in terms of the "type" of workout on each day. We may also change them around meet schedules. My intent is to email all of the coaches Sunday night and review the plan as well as get feedback on how the kids are doing.

Mondays

Mondays workouts can be fun if you incorporate games for the kids. The goal is to get them running short fast bursts. I have provided some running games to try. The older kids may get excited about relays or competitions such as timing the 100m or 400m. Make it fun and get them running hard and short distances. The 5th and 6th graders should be able to run 400 and 800 repeats, with 2-4 minute rests respectively, and I would time them in the Mile as well.

Wednesdays

Wednesdays are all about continuous running. The point is to get the kids moving for 20-30 minutes without stopping. They need to learn how to pace themselves and run slow enough to the point where they are not stopping. A common philosophy or principal we all use in running the conversational pace. When running at conversational pace, you should be able to talk to your running partner and carry on a full conversation without getting short of breath or losing your ability to talk. The 1st and 2nd grade kids should be able to build up to a mile continuous and depending on overall fitness some of them may actually run longer. This should take them anywhere from 10-14 minutes. As the ages increase, the times and distance should get longer with the 5th and 6th graders running 25-30 minutes continuously. Again, if they are fit they may be able to run longer or farther depending on time etc. so use your judgement.

Injury

Despite what many believe about running shoes and arch supports, they really don't play a huge role in injuries. Training patterns play more of a role. If you go out and run as hard as you can everyday you'll probably get injured. Our bodies improve by being stressed and rested. In running we refer to a concept called *periodization* where we increase our running over several weeks (typically 3), then back off with less running over a weeks time to allow the body to recover and become stronger. By following these principles we can avoid injury and become stronger runners. The training programs you all have received are based upon this principal.

Usually when a runner develops what is commonly referred to as shin splints, it's a result of overtraining and not from flat feet as most may think. As a podiatrist and running injury specialist, I see people in my practice daily who are injured from running too hard and not from flat feet or wearing the "wrong shoes". I have also treated people around the world via my blog www.drnicksrunningblog.com with these same principals. So many runners blame their feet or shoes, when it's their approach to training that usually is the fault of the injury. With that being said, if someone is complaining of an overuse injury, they may be running too hard. Ask about other sports, or how much they are running outside of cross-country practice first before looking to blame the shoes. The may not be an issue for the younger kids, but the older kids involved in other sports or who are super competitive maybe pushing themselves too hard.

Water breaks. These should not be breaks. They can drink water, but we are not resting for water. If we have done some intervals and you have a walk break its ok to drink then, but try

not to encourage resting to drink water. The idea is during the twenty minutes to thirty minutes of running, the kids need to stay moving. No one will become sick if they don't drink!! It's important to teach the kids that water is needed all week long at home and during school. Discourage drinking soft drinks at home as well as sports drinks like Gatorade. Gatorade is fine to replenish fluids after a practice or meet, but not with dinner or lunch. Please do not think I am telling you to not allow the kids to drink. That's not what I am saying. Water, as somehow become the universal "response" for humans when we feel sick or are tired. I'm sure you have all heard the phrase, "Get them some water!!". Many patients in my office who are about to faint always ask for a glass of water. It's really not going to help anything! Keep the kids hydrated, but remember, we are trying to keep them running continuously for a given period of time. Don't let them persuade you for a break by using water as an excuse!!

Have fun!!

Cramps. Sometimes cramps are from breathing improper. Have kids take a deep breath and hold in or tell them to see how much air they can out in their stomach. It's actually going into their lungs but it stretches the diaphragm and ab muscles that are cramping. LeBron James was cramping during the NBA finals, as well as many other players, and we are now starting to look at activity as more of a cause for this than dehydration. Sure these athletes sweat a lot, but they're hydrating constantly. Even marathon runners who end up with severe cramps in their thighs or calves will many times blame hydration although the weather was cool and they drank at every water stop. What happened? The muscles were not ready for the continuous activity and eventually went into spasm at the long distances of 20-22 miles. It's perfectly consistent with the training whiny think about it. Most programs have runners going 18 miles in the training periods and rarely do we see runners cramp before 20 miles. So, bottom line, if someone is complaining of a cramp, it's probably not water!!! Slow them down, and have them do the breathing trick before giving water.

Have Fun!!!

Slow. Remember we are teaching these kids to run continuously. If they go out too fast they'll drop off and not have fun. Running should be fun.

Walk breaks. It's ok to walk. In fact, many people, have obtained personal records in marathons by taking walk breaks. There are programs out there specifically designed for run-walking. It's all about moving. Walking is fine. Sitting is not! (Well, use your judgement!!)

Clothing

Clothing can be important. If it is hot, then lightweight polyester or Dri-Fit type of material works much better than cotton. Make sure the kids realize this. If it's cold, then use judgment on what to wear. Probably a t-shirt will be best, but if it gets a bit colder they may need a long sleeve shirt or lightweight jacket. Too much can be bad as once they start running they'll overheat. Have a parent on standby with their jacket for before and after the event. I have heard many newbies to running tell me when they ran their first 5k in the winter, they were wearing too many jackets and shirts and were overheated after 10 minutes of running! Typically in 20-13 degree weather I wear nothing more than a tight thicker long sleeve shirt with a lightweight shell jacket. You would be surprised at how warm and comfortable you stay.

Shoes. I touched on this briefly before. As a podiatrist, you'll be surprised to hear that I don't focus much on shoe gear. Soft, comfortable, and flexible is what I recommend. Flat without a cushioned heel as well. Try to get them out of the basketball shoes or high tops. I'm fine with the inexpensive shoes from target. Many times they are actually great shoes and really affordable!!

Have Fun!!!

Running Form

Do not heel strike. Proper running form varies from one person to another but there are a few aspects that need to be focused on. The easiest way to explain this is by having someone jog in place. You will see they land on their forefoot or midfoot. Not the toes. Discourage the kids from being on their "tippy" toes. While they're jogging in place, have them lean forward to begin running. This will encourage a midfoot strike and get the center of gravity of the body landing over the foot, and not behind it as if one was heel striking. Short steps are a must. A longer stride does not mean you run faster. Short, faster steps, equals a faster runner. Stride length for the most part is irrelevant. When you hear someone say, "I can't keep up with them because they're legs are so long!!!" please realize this is not a true statement!. In fact the person with long legs actually has to work harder because they have more mass to move. Most elite marathon runners and those who hold the marathon records tend to be shorter runners.

Have Fun!!!

Hills

Running hills is a great way to build strength in runners. There are two philosophies to running hills. Running fast short burst, or running slow and for a long time. I would just focus on having the kids run up the hills and trying to get to the top. Have them learn to pace themselves going up and to run at a pace that gets them to the top of the hill. We can possibly find some hills at the park to have the kids run (there were excellent hills by the pavilion/playground area where we had the coaches meeting. I would not do hills more than once a week. They can be done as part of the speed workouts, or at the end of a wednesday practice which is an endurance day.

If you have't noticed I have emphasized the goal of having fun numerous times thorough this handout. Please make sure the kids are having fun. Running is fun. The moment it is not fun for the kids, they lose interest and see running as punishment. Once a person understands the principals of running and actually how rhythmic and relaxing it can become, then making it a sport is so much easier.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions and I will do my best to answer promptly. I will email everyone on Sundays and use the Team App as well.

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