**ENJOYING RUNNING**

**SYNOPSIS**

TALK BY DN TO ERCC ON FRIDAY 8TH MARCH 2024

This talk and presentation is called Enjoying Running. I have had such a brilliant time that I just want to pass on some essentials that I learned from the experience so far.

My running started in 1983 - 40 years ago. It has roots in 10 years of school sports including 2 years of athletics (200m and 400m) and in 25 years of squash while a student, marriage and children, in total 75 years of sport. I joined ERCC in 2010.

During the first three years of running my focus became marathons. My talk draws on my experience of marathons – 54 of them, mostly on the Continent and each on a different course. More than 400 shorter races supported this marathon regime.

In the process of condensing my data base into 24 slides I concluded that there are only six Basics. All other pieces of advice we are given are peripheral to these. The minors include carbo-loading, diet, sleep etc. Here are my six:

**Life Balance.**

You cannot enjoy running unless there is time to do it without fretting about your commitments to home life and work.

My running started as the children were leaving home. It scaled back for 3 years when I worked abroad every week and restarted when I went from full-time work to part-time.

**Strategy.**

It helps to enjoy running if you know why you are doing it. We all have a balance between being Competitive, seeking Wellness and enjoying social life. All balances are legitimate.

My main focus was competition, with myself and with others. This came out of the earlier sports experience and now out of the first five marathons – Maidstone for charity 4.09, then in sequence 3.31 Canterbury, 3.23 Frankfurt, 3.09 Rotterdam and 3.01 Reykjavik. I was hooked, especially on kilometre marathons, combined with being a tourist. “I want to be doing this when I am 70.” I created a running programme to make this possible – only two or three a year, shorter races in winter and summer etc. It worked. The last one was age 72.

**Hydration.**

Dehydration might be called the silent killer. Inadequate hydration leads to fuzzy feelings and loss of physical and mental ability, whether playing sport, running or just sitting in an office.

Forty years ago I discovered through running that I dehydrated rapidly. A system of drinking to offset this soon became part of my life. It contributed to the possibility of strong running at the end of a run. By contrast dehydrated runners “die” as time progresses.

**Training**

Good training works. The data is clear. Good training produces better running performance and a sense of generally better well-being. You’ll need to do both shorts (for breathing) and longs (for endurance), a mix of intervals, track, trail, hills, road etc. Exercises and gym also help. There are many published training programmes.

My training range was from 200m reps to 22 miles pre-race, plus exercises and gym.

My stats show very clearly that good training improves performance. It’s obvious. My toughest training programme (12 weeks) produced a delirious 3.07 in Amsterdam when I had just turned 50.

**Racing**

Enjoying racing requires some discipline. Entering a race puts you on the spot. For the first race you just want to finish. Afterwards you may think of finishing in a better time. The chances of feeling good about a race are improved if you get there early and have time for the range of decisions before the race even starts. Then at the “gun” you are relaxed.

All my marathons were on different courses, in 28 countries, including the two Berlins (before and after the Wall) and London (normal start and elite 0-70 start). Each time I had to work through the pre-race decisions. Whenever I got stuck someone helped me. The running community is a wonderful friendly thing.

**Pacing**

Even-pacing is the most efficient way to run. It also gives the best sense of wellbeing. By contrast starting quickly and fading leads to poor humour. Which will give the most enjoyment?!

I learned the benefits of even-pacing on the runners Tour coach going to the Rotterdam marathon (no.4). I became obsessed with it, and with negative splits. I learned to deliver them. Overtaking runners towards the end of marathons, and also in hundreds of races in Kent, became my trademark. Whatever the race, the weather, the hills etc I was running strongly at the end while others were fading. Get it right and it’s a great feeling!

A word about Relaxation. My all-time on-the-road PB in Reykjavik (3.01.22 No 5 age 46) took 8 minutes off my PB. My Reykjavik entry was submitted while we were on holiday there. It was just a “long run” before Berlin. The weather was perfect. On the way round I did not look at my watch. I was running free, relaxed - just a long run. I saw only the times at halfway and at the end. To my astonishment it was my first negative split.

This race left its mark: how to sustain this sense of freedom and joy. You can’t make it happen. You can only observe the parameters that make it more likely to arrive.

This synopsis summarises text from the presentation. For brevity it omits photos and graphs.

Finally, in compiling this talk/presentation from my records and memories it became clear that experiences arising in my long running/sports career had seeped into every-day life, especially pacing. Some of this would have happened anyway.

I thought I “did” running. Now I see better where running experiences have fed back into me.

All the best.

David Northcroft

14 March 2024