

Keeping your young distance runners healthy

Martin Rudow, Editor/Publisher, *Northwest Runner* magazine

“The most common reason why distance runners achieve their goals is that they are able to stay healthy”

You are dealing with teenagers who think they are invincible — and for the most part they are. But the more driven and talented an athlete (especially in the realm of VO2 Max), the more likely they are to push themselves to and beyond the point of injury.

Your runners and the athletes on other sports teams also may look at sports like cross-country and track and think they are injury-free since there is minimal contact. **WRONG!** Distance athletics is very tough on the body for all ages, and unless you have one of those bullet-proof prodigies on your hands you will need to work to keep them healthy all through the season and hopefully healthiest of all when the conference, district, and state meets roll around.

You’ll learn a lot at other sessions in this clinic about how to prepare your young athletes. How to train them and motivate them. I hope to share some information about how to keep them healthy, how to get them started on the right track even when they still think they are invincible.

1. The right mental attitude

- a. Getting your runners, your parents, and yourself sensitive to the signs of real injuries.
- b. What is injury pain and what is training pain – especially in runners starting out.
- c. Staying positive even when dealing with injury prevention and treatment.

2. Why injuries occur — and don’t

- a. The right way to add mileage and speed.
- b. Biomechanics
- c. Rest

3. Rules of injury prevention

- a. Be aware of real danger spots – knees, ankles, etc.
- b. Gradually increase the amount of distance
- c. Introduce speedwork gradually
- d. Take time off when warranted.
- e. See a doctor if there is real question about continuing to train.
- f. Keep below the threshold of pain or irritation when returning from an injury.

4. How to safely increase the quality and quantity of workouts, including sharpening for the meaningful races.

5. Choosing the right equipment – namely, shoes

6. Warm up and warm-down. Overrated or necessary? Sample routines, dynamic and static.
7. Special considerations for female runners.
8. Nutrition – or, Lotsa Luck. How to get your runners to eat better for injury prevention and recovery (and for other reasons).
 - a. Diet
 - b. Liquids
 - c. Foods to seek, foods to avoid.
9. Treatment and active rest options
 - a. Icing
 - b. Deep water running
 - c. Return to running