

BECOMING A "NEW RUNNER" - SPRING, 2004

The expression "new runner" doesn't mean someone who is new to the sport at McQuaid, like a transfer student or a new freshman. It means that one of our returning runners, by really working at it from the end of one x-c season until the following August, becomes so much better that he is, in effect, a "new" runner. Not merely improved, but remarkably improved.

Almost all of McQuaid's ten Sectional championships (last one in '93) were due to the "new" runners who became the key men on those teams. Almost all of our "almost" seasons can be traced to the absence or shortage of "new" men. (Often, not having that one extra "new" guy made all the difference.)

Becoming a "new" runner is simple but not easy. You go out and run a lot of miles. How can that make you a "new" runner? Well, it gives you a "new" running system, that's how. The number of oxygen-bearing corpuscles in your blood increases, and you are able to take in more of that precious stuff. Your muscles thus have access to more fuel, and they can operate more efficiently. When you show up at our first practice in August with your "new" system, the repeats and stress work that you do for a good part of your training will develop the heart's ability to distribute that oxygen and the muscles' ability to use it. While all that is going on inside you, people will be looking at you running and think "Man, has he improved!"

Is there a "Magic Number" of miles? No. We use 500 because it seems to work, but some of our runners over the years have gone as high as 700 or 800. (Jeff Clark, our last Section Five champ in '95, hit 754. Our all-time best was by Mike Das, whose 987 miles as a junior in 1980 made him the big difference in our knocking off a very good Fairport team that was intact from winning the previous year.)

This "new runner" notion is one that applies to cross-country much more than to track, and it's one that has no parallel in any other sport. That's because distance running is the most primitive of all sports. IT IS ALL YOU. No equipment or skills to master, no techniques to refine, no teammates to jell with. IT IS ALL YOU.

Being a "new runner" doesn't necessarily mean becoming a star. It might mean only that a 21:00 man at Cobbs Hill becomes a 19:00, or a 19:30 becomes an 18:00. That's worth doing. What we're looking for, though, are the guys who are in the high 17's or low 18's for 5k to break down into the 16's. That's where teams win races. We want guys who bring a new self-image to their running, because they know that they're ready to be part of a winning team. The benefits of all those miles are probably more psychological than physical, but that's what distance running is all about, isn't it?

Heading into the spring of 2004 we have a lot of young, talented runners at McQuaid. Right now, though, you're one or more notches below the level that can contend for a sectional championship this fall unless you really go to work between now and our first practice on August 23rd. The runners who are going to make a difference need to come back dramatically improved. That won't happen without your commitment to a goal and to the hard work needed to achieve that goal. This year, you are the best group of young runners since the original "New Wave" junior high team of '89, which eventually produced three straight Sectional wins ('91, '92, '93) and a State Championship ('92). How many of you will be back in August as "New Runners"?

You can't really appreciate how improved you can be until you go for it and make it happen. That's where 500 miles and becoming a "new runner" comes in. Don't underestimate what you and your team can accomplish. Eight months from now, we'll know who our "new runners" are. You can be one of them.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR SUMMER RUNNING

1. IF YOU'RE JUST BEGINNING, START VERY CONSERVATIVELY AND BUILD UP GRADUALLY. FOR THE FIRST 10 DAYS, PERHAPS ONLY 25-30 MILES. BY AUGUST, YOU'LL HAVE BUILT UP TO 55-60 FOR 10 DAYS. ONCE WE START PRACTICE ON AUG. , YOU CAN FIGURE ON 8-10 MILES PER DAY. SO DON'T RUSH RIGHT OUT AND START RUNNING 5 A DAY. YOU'LL GET SORE, GIMPY, AND DISCOURAGED.
2. YOU DON'T NEED TO STRETCH A GREAT DEAL BEFORE BEGINNING AN O.D. JUST SOME TRUNK-TWISTERS, TOE-TOUCHERS, AND WING STRETCHERS; THEN USE THE FIRST MILE OF YOUR RUN TO COMPLETE THE WARM-UP PROCESS. WHERE YOU DO NEED TO STRETCH IS AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED. GO THROUGH A FULL ROUND THEN -- IT WILL MAKE YOU LESS STIFF THE NEXT DAY. NOTE: THIS IS NOT THE CASE WHEN YOU'RE DOING FASTER RUNNING LIKE INTERVALS OR DISTANCE REPEATS. THEN YOU NEED A THOROUGH WARM-UP TO PREPARE YOUR MUSCLES FOR THE STRESS OF SPEED. WHETHER YOUR RUNNING IS FAST OR SLOW, THOUGH, STRETCHING AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED WILL HELP KEEP YOU LOOSE NOT ONLY THE NEXT DAY BUT ALSO IN A LONG-RANGE SENSE. WHY? BECAUSE A WARM MUSCLE WILL STRETCH BETTER THAN A COLD ONE.
3. ON DAYS WHEN YOU'RE FEELING TIRED AND YOU'D JUST AS SOON NOT RUN AT ALL, TRY TO GET OUT FOR 15-25 MINUTES ANYWAY. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, YOU'LL FIND THAT IT PEP'S YOU UP, AND IT'S GOOD PRACTICE FOR THE WILL POWER YOU NEED NOT ONLY TO RUN REGULARLY BUT ALSO TO COMPETE WELL. WHEN YOU COME RIGHT DOWN TO IT, WILL POWER IS WHAT DISTANCE RUNNING IS ALL ABOUT.
4. I CAN'T RECOMMEND STRONGLY ENOUGH THE MERITS OF DOING YOUR RUNNING FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. I KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT IT'S TOUGH TO DRAG YOURSELF OUT OF THE SACK. BUT WHEN YOU'RE OUT & RUNNING YOU'LL FEEL GREAT. WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED YOU'LL FEEL THAT YOU'RE SET FOR THE REST OF THE DAY. PLUS, IN TERMS OF HEAT AND HUMIDITY THE MORNING IS FAR AND AWAY THE BEST TIME TO RUN. TO HELP YOURSELF RUN IN THE MORNING, TRY THIS: PUT YOUR BASIC RUNNING GEAR (JOCK, SHORTS, SHIRT) IN YOUR ROOM BEFORE YOU SACK OUT FOR THE NIGHT, AND JUST AUTOMATICALLY PUT THEM ON WHEN YOU GET UP. I FIND THAT NOT HAVING THEM HANDY MAKES IT EASY TO PUT MY "OTHER" CLOTHES ON, WHICH MEANS THAT I HAVE TO CHANGE TO GO RUNNING.
5. IF YOU CAN POSSIBLY AVOID IT, NEVER RUN IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY. IT CAN BE A SELF-DEFEATING, ENERGY-SAPPING CHORE THAT WILL LEAVE YOU WITH NO TASTE FOR RUNNING THE NEXT DAY. TWILIGHT IS THE NEXT BEST TIME TO MORNING. IF YOU NEED TO RUN AT NIGHT, AVOID DARK ROADS AND STREETS. THE RISK OF INJURY OR ACCIDENT IS TOO HIGH.
6. KEEP A LOG OF YOUR RUNNING. IT HELPS GIVE IT SOME STRUCTURE AND MAKES YOU THINK MORE ABOUT IT. ALSO, IT'S THE MOST EFFICIENT WAY TO KEEP TRACK OF YOUR MILEAGE. AND IT ENABLES YOU TO SEE HOW MUCH YOU'RE IMPROVING IN YOUR TIMES OVER COURSES THAT YOU RUN REGULARLY. IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A COMPUTER AT HOME OR AT SCHOOL, PUT IN A WORD-PROCESSING PROGRAM AND START YOUR OWN RUNNING DIARY. YOU CAN GET A WHOLE YEAR'S RUNNING ON A SINGLE DISK.
7. GOOD SHOES ARE A MUST. CHECK WITH THE SHOE STORES TO FIND OUT WHAT STYLES THEY'RE CLOSING OUT. YOU CAN ALMOST ALWAYS GET A GOOD SHOE WITHOUT PAYING A BUNDLE. DALBERTH'S (ON GENESEE ST. ACROSS THE RIVER FROM U. OF R.) ALMOST ALWAYS HAS CLOSE-OUTS AND A GOOD STOCK OF POPULAR SHOES.

8. BREAK IN A NEW PAIR OF SHOES GRADUALLY. WEAR THEM AROUND WHEN YOU AREN'T RUNNING. SOME BLISTERS OR RAW SPOTS MAY DEVELOP ANYWAY. IF THEY DO, DRAIN THE BLISTER ONLY IF NECESSARY, KEEP THE SKIN ON, AND USE TINCTURE OF BENZOIN (GET A 2-OZ. BOTTLE AT THE DRUG STORE) TO TOUGHEN UP THE AREA. WORKS VERY WELL ON RAW SPOTS, TOO. STINGS LIKE HELL SOMETIMES, BUT SEEMS TO DRAW OUT THE SORENESS. VASELINE OVER THE TROUBLE SPOTS WILL HELP, BOTH TO HEAD OFF BLISTERS AND TO PREVENT RECURRENCES.
9. TO FIGURE OUT YOUR MILEAGE, USE TIME AS A YARDSTICK. IF YOUR BASIC D.D. PACE IS 8 MIN. PER MILE, FIGURE YOU'VE RUN 5 MILES IN 40 MIN. EVERY SO OFTEN, CHECK YOUR PACE OUT ON A COURSE THAT YOU KNOW THE DISTANCE FOR. IF YOU FIND THAT YOUR PACE IS CLOSER TO, SAY, 7:30, THEN GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT FOR 5 1/4 MILES IN 40 MIN. OR 5 1/2 MI. IN 42 MIN. IT'S EASY TO SEE THAT YOU'RE BUILDING UP YOUR ENDURANCE WHEN YOU ADD 4 AND 5 MINUTES AT A CHUNK.
10. DON'T FEEL COMPELLED TO RUN LONGER EVERY TIME OUT. MIX YOUR RUNS SO THAT ONE DAY YOU'LL GO FOR 45 MINUTES AT AN EASY PACE AND THE NEXT DAY YOU'LL GO 25 MIN. AT A FASTER PACE. TRY FOR ONE LONG RUN OF 60-75 MINUTES EVERY WEEK.
11. VARY YOUR COURSES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BOTH IN AREA AND IN TYPE OF TERRAIN. REMEMBER: 30 MINUTES OF HILL RUNNING WILL PRODUCE AS MUCH CARDIO-VASCULAR TRAINING AS 60 MINUTES OF FLAT.
12. HILL RUNNING IS ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR DEVELOPING MENTAL TOUGHNESS. A TEAM WITH 7 GUYS WHO AREN'T AFRAID OF HILLS IS A TOUGH TEAM TO BEAT. GET INTO THE HABIT OF USING GOOD FORM ON EVERY HILL YOU RUN: GOOD ARMS, FORWARD LEAN, WORK THE LAST 25 YARDS WITH ARMS IN OVER-DRIVE AND RUN AWAY FROM THE TOP. IT'S HARD, BUT YOU CAN DEVELOP A LOT OF CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ONTO A TOUGH COURSE IN COMPETITION.
13. WORK ON YOUR BREATHING. I FIND THAT, LEFT TO MY OWN DEVICES, I'LL DO 4-STRIDE BREATHING ALMOST ALL THE TIME. BUT IF I CONCENTRATE, I CAN GET INTO A 6-STRIDE RHYTHM AND HOLD IT FOR HUNDREDS OF YARDS AT A TIME. IT MAKES ME FEEL I'M RUNNING SMOOTHER AND FASTER, AND I PROBABLY AM. IT ALSO GIVES ME THE 4-STRIDE (AND THE OXYGEN RELIEF THAT GOES WITH IT) AS A RESOURCE TO FALL BACK ON WHEN I TIRE OR WHEN I HIT A HILL. IF YOU'LL GIVE THIS A TRY, I'M CONVINCED IT WILL HELP YOU KEEP YOUR FORM IN A STRESSFUL RACING SITUATION.
14. WORK ON YOUR UPPER-BODY STRENGTH IN TWO WAYS. FIRST, DO SLOW PUSH-UPS, STARTING WITH 10 AND WORKING UP TO 20, THEN TO 2 SETS OF 10, WORKING UP TO 2 SETS OF 20. SECOND, IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO WEIGHTS, EITHER AT HOME OR SCHOOL, LIFT FOR BOTH STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE. ON STRENGTH DAYS, USE 5 REPS OF A HEAVY WEIGHT, BUILDING UP TO 10 AND THEN ADDING WEIGHT AND GOING BACK TO 5 REPS. ON ENDURANCE DAYS, USE 10 REPS OF A LIGHTER WEIGHT, BUILDING UP TO 15, THEN ADDING SETS OF 15 UP TO 3 SETS. IN BOTH CASES, DO THE WEIGHTS SLOW EACH WAY, TO BUILD UP BOTH PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STRENGTH. YOU DON'T NEED TO DO A LOT OF LIFTS. BENCH PRESS, SHOULDER PRESS BOTH WAYS, AND CURLS BOTH WAYS SHOULD DO IT. LET YOUR HILL RUNNING TAKE CARE OF THE LEG STRENGTH.
15. YOU'LL PROBABLY NEED THE OCCASIONAL SPUR OF RUNNING WITH SOMEBODY TO KEEP YOU AT IT. GET TOGETHER WITH SOMEONE OF ABOUT YOUR ABILITY ONCE EVERY COUPLE OF WEEKS. IT WILL BE A GOOD WAY TO BREAK OUT OF THE ROUTINE THAT MAKES RUNNING MONOTONOUS.

- McQ
16. I'D ALSO RECOMMEND THE WEEKLY GRTC MEETS AT ~~THE~~, WHICH WILL BE STARTING IN MID-JUNE. THEY'LL GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO TRY VARIOUS DISTANCES IN A VERY LOW-KEY FUN ATMOSPHERE. TUESDAYS AT 6 PM. COME TO ONE AND SEE WHAT THEY'RE ALL ABOUT. *DITTO FOR COACH GLAVIN'S THURSDAY NIGHT SERIES AT McQUAID.*
17. DON'T COMPETE IN TOO MANY ROAD RACES THIS SUMMER. THREE OR FOUR AT MOST. AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT DOING "SPEED WORK." FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO TRY A FASTER WORKOUT, I'D SUGGEST 5 X 1 MILE AT 6-MINUTE PACE, OR 10 HALVES AT 2:45-3:00. THAT'S PLENTY FAST FOR NOW.
18. THOUGH THE BULK OF YOUR SUMMER RUNNING IS L.S.D. (LONG SLOW DISTANCE), THE WORD "SLOW" IS RELATIVE. FOR A BEGINNING RUNNER, A LOT OF MILES AT 8 1/2-9 MINUTE PACE WILL HELP THE CARDIO-VASCULAR SYSTEM APPRECIABLY. THE SAME PACE, THOUGH, WOULD HAVE VERY LITTLE EFFECT ON AN EXPERIENCED RUNNER. FOR A GOOD RUNNER, L.S.D. PACE COULD BE AS FAST AS 6 1/2-7 MINUTES.
19. A GOOD WAY TO CHECK ON HOW MUCH STRESS YOUR RUNNING IS PUTTING ON YOUR SYSTEM IS TO TAKE YOUR PULSE RATE RIGHT AFTER YOU'RE DONE. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 140 & 180 WOULD INDICATE GOOD TRAINING EFFECT. LOWER THAN 140 WOULD PROBABLY MEAN THAT YOU'RE GOING TOO SLOW OR TOO SHORT. TO COUNT YOUR PULSE, COUNT THE BEATS FOR 10 SECONDS AND MULTIPLY BY 6, OR FOR 20 SECONDS AND MULTIPLY BY 3. I FIND THE EASIEST PLACE TO TAKE MY PULSE IS RIGHT OVER THE HEART, BUT YOU MAY FIND THE NECK OR WRIST EASIER.
20. OUR FIRST PRACTICE IS ON TUESDAY, AUGUST ^{22ND} ~~24TH~~. EACH INDIVIDUAL WILL NEED 13 PRACTICES TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE FIRST MEET AT LIVERPOOL OR ~~ON~~ ^{9TH} SEPTEMBER ~~14TH~~.
21. OUR POLICY ON SUMMER CAMPS IS THIS: NO ONE SHOULD FEEL OBLIGED TO GO. IF YOU DO GO, ONE WEEK MAXIMUM. FOR MOST RUNNERS, CAMP IS A DEFINITE PLUS -- A GOOD PSYCH-UP, A LOT OF FUN, AND A GOOD SOCIAL EXPERIENCE. IF YOU GO, HAVE A GOOD TRAINING BASE FROM PREVIOUS WEEKS. NEVER GO TO CAMP AS A CRASH PROGRAM TO MAKE UP FOR A LAZY SUMMER. AND DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY AT CAMP AND OVERTRAIN YOURSELF RIGHT INTO AN INJURY.

A NEW MILLENNIUM VIEW ON BECOMING A "NEW RUNNER"

The expression "new runner" doesn't mean someone who is new to the sport at McQuaid, like a transfer student or a new freshman. It means that one of our returning runners, by really working at it from the end of one x-c season until the following August, becomes so much better that he is, in effect, a "new" runner. Not merely improved, but remarkably improved.

Almost all of McQuaid's ten Sectional championships (last one in '93) were due to the "new" runners who became the key men on those teams. Almost all of our "almost" seasons can be traced to the absence or shortage of "new" men. (Often, not having that one extra "new" guy made all the difference.)

Becoming a "new" runner is simple but not easy. You go out and run a lot of miles. How can that make you a "new" runner? Well, it gives you a "new" running system, that's how. The number of oxygen-bearing corpuscles in your blood increases, and you are able to take in more of that precious stuff. Your muscles thus have access to more fuel, and they can operate more efficiently. When you show up at our first practice in August with your "new" system, the repeats and stress work that you do for a good part of your training will develop the heart's ability to distribute that oxygen and the muscles' ability to use it. While all that is going on inside you, people will be looking at you running and think "Man, has he improved!"

Any guarantees? No. There are many variables at work that may keep all those miles from reaping a harvest. Wrong body type, maybe. Not enough speed. Illness, maybe, or nagging injuries. Lack of mental toughness or competitive instinct. These are just some of the things that may frustrate you. (But it's equally true that the very act of running those miles can develop the psychological strength and physical durability that a runner needs to become a good racer. Think of the will power those daily miles require!)

Is there a "Magic Number" of miles? No. We use 500 because it seems to work, but some of our runners over the years have gone as high as 700 or 800. (Jeff Clark, our last Section Five champ in '95, hit 754, Our all-time best was by Mike Das, whose 987 miles as a junior in 1980 made him the big difference in our knocking off a very good Fairport team that was intact from winning the previous year.)

This "new runner" notion is one that applies to cross-country much more than to track, and it's one that has no parallel in any other sport. That's because distance running is the most primitive of all sports. It is all you. No equipment or skills to master, no techniques to refine, no teammates to jell with. It's all you.

Being a "new runner" doesn't necessarily mean becoming a star. It might mean only that a 21:00 man at Cobbs Hill becomes a 19:00, or a 19:30 becomes an 18:00. And that's worth doing. What we're looking for, though, to make our season are the guys who are in the high 17's or low 18's for 5k to break down into the 16's, where good teams win races. We want guys who bring a new self-image to their running, because they know that they're ready to be part of a winning team. The benefits of all those miles are probably more psychological than physical, but that's what distance running is all about, isn't it?

Heading into the summer of 2000, we have a lot of running talent at McQuaid, but it's at a level that won't contend for a sectional championship this fall unless our top people come back dramatically improved. That's where 500 miles and becoming a "new runner" comes in. Don't underestimate what you and your team can accomplish. Five months from now, we'll know who our "new runners" are. Will you be one of them?