



Best Runs

Joe Henderson

West Coast Editor, Runner's World Magazine Editor, Running Commentary
Newsletter



Human Kinetics

title: Best Runs
author: Henderson, Joe.
publisher: Human Kinetics
isbn10 | asin: 0880118962
print isbn13: 9780880118965
ebook isbn13: 9780585238401
language: English
subject Running--Training, Running races.
publication date: 1999
lcc: GV1061.5.H45 1999eb
ddc: 796.42
subject: Running--Training, Running races.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Henderson, Joe, 1943-

Best runs / Joe Henderson.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-88011-896-2 (paperback)

1. RunningTraining. 2. Running races. I. Title.

GV1061.5.H45 1999

796.42dc21

98-7281

CIP

ISBN: 0-88011-896-2 Copyright © 1999 by Joe Henderson

All rights reserved. Except for use in a review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, not known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying, and recording, and in any information storage and retrieval system, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

Acquisitions Editor: Martin Barnard; Developmental Editor: Julie Rhoda; Assistant Editors: Sandra Merz Bott and Cassandra Mitchell; Copyeditor: Stephen Moore; Proofreader: Myla Smith; Indexer: Craig Brown; Graphic Designer: Robert Reuther; Graphic Artist: Tara Welsch; Photo Editor: Boyd LaFoon; Cover Designer: Jack Davis; Photographer (cover): New England Stock/Gregg Adams; Photographer (interior): Photos on pages 20, 27, 108, 119, 136, 164, and 173 © Human Kinetics/Tom Roberts; Printer: Versa Press

Human Kinetics books are available at special discounts for bulk purchase. Special editions or book excerpts can also be created to specification. For details, contact the Special Sales Manager at Human Kinetics.

Printed in the United States of America 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Human Kinetics Web site: CS:WebLink><http://www.humankinetics.com/>

United States: Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 5076, Champaign, IL 61825-5076
1-800-747-4457 e-mail: humank@hkusa.com

Canada: Human Kinetics, 475 Devonshire Road Unit 100, Windsor, ON N8Y 2L5 1-800-465-7301 (in Canada only) e-mail: humank@hkcanada.com

Europe: Human Kinetics, P.O. Box IW14, Leeds LS16 6TR, United Kingdom

(44) 1132 781708 e-mail: humank@hkeurope.com

Australia: Human Kinetics, 57A Price Avenue, Lower Mitcham, South Australia 5062 (088) 277 1555 e-mail: humank@hkaustralia.com

New Zealand: Human Kinetics, P.O. Box 105-231, Auckland 1 (09) 523 3462 e-mail: humank@hknewz.com

*To Browning Ross,
who led me into longer running and published
my first writing*

CONTENTS

Foreword	ix
Acknowledgments	xi
Introduction: Best Words	xiii
Part I	1
Best Ways	
1	3
Picking the Best Bets	
Fifty Is Nifty	
Time Trials	
Weird Ideas That Work	
Best Answers	
2	13
Training by the Numbers	
Start With Cooper	
Twice as Nice	
Balancing Act	
Far, Fast, Fresh	
3	23
Learning How to Walk	
Walk Talk	
Walk Wars	
Stopping and Drinking	
Walking Lessons	
4	33

Running Out of Time

Shouting Softly

Honest Efforts

Timeless Racing

Time Out

5

41

Listening to the Heart

Checking Your Pulse

Your Own Best Beat

Extra Efforts

Three-Part Harmony

6	51
Finding Shoes That Fit	
Shoe Safety	
Least of All Shoes	
Bigfoot Sightings	
Testing Technology	
7	61
Dealing With Downtime	
Painful Experience	
Happy Legs	
Sleeping Sickness	
Finish Lines	
8	69
Heeding the Early warnings	
Getting to the Heart	
Life Savings	
Pressure's Off	
On the Level	
9	77
Cutting From the Diet	
Fun Foods	
Sweet and Low	
Shaking the Salt	
Down but Not Out	
10	85
Adding to the Diet	

Think to Drink	
Lean on Protein	
Mineral Riches	
Carbo Reloading	
Part II	93
Best Days	
11	95
Counting Up the Races	
Fast Eddy	
Race to Train	
Racing Counts	
Racing States	
12	103
Rerunning the Best Races	
Races to Remember	
Distant Replays	
One That Got Away	
A Love That Lasts	
13	113
Worrying About the Race	
The Fear Factor	
Relaxing Pace	
Kids Who Care	
Passing Interests	

14	123
Racing the Short Distances	
My First Mile	
High-Level Mile	
Five Alive	
George's Distance	
15	131
Training Longer and Shorter	
Magic Moments	
Fly Now, Pay Later	
No Train, No Gain	
Prepay and Repay	
16	139
Racing the Long Distances	
Filling the Great Gap	
Pacing the Marathon	
Dream On	
Ultimate Ultras	
17	149
Racing at Its Simplest	
Small Talk	
In Praise of Small	
Y'All Come	
Slow Henry	
18	159
Winning Without Beating Anyone	

Winning Ways	
Where Are the Americans?	
Last Chance	
Last Supper	
Part III	167
Best Years	
19	169
Gaining Much From Little	
Short Story	
Once an Athlete	
Law of Averages	
Tough Enough	
20	179
Living Out the Legacy	
Days of Old	
Fathers' Days	
Aging Well	
Founding Father	
21	187
Reading, Writing, and Running	
News Freaks	
Testing Positive	
Great References	
Story of My Life	

22	197
Touring the Finest Places	
Places I Remember	
Road-Apple Run	
Little Giants	
Trail of Dreams	
23	205
Connecting With Other Runners	
Camp Follower	
Pros at Work	
Staying in Touch	
Giving Thanks	
24	215
Voicing a Few Complaints	
Little Irritants	
Who's Cheating Whom?	
Garbage Miles	
Rain on Our Parade	
25	225
Singing the Sport's Praises	
Changing Our World	
Let Running Be	
Sweet Nothings	
Forward Thinking	
Index	234
About the Author	238

FOREWORD

Joe Henderson and I have been running together for a long time, well over half of our lives. We first lined up together at the 1967 Boston Marathon, though we didn't know each other yet.

The following year I won at Boston, and Joe started writing his column for *Distance Running News* (the precursor to *Runner's World*). He was also at work on his first book, *Long Slow Distance*, in which he gave me a chance to tell my personal story. Unfortunately, I was so busy logging more than 100 miles per week that I missed Joe's deadline. Somehow he coped with my tardiness and figured out a way to fit my contribution into his book. Through this experience, I learned something about Joe that I've witnessed many times since. He's a man of great calmness and patience who will nevertheless stretch any boundaries to fit the latest information into his books.

Joe edited *Runner's World* through the 1970s, and he assigned me my first article for the magazine. This experience convinced me to give up my job as a schoolteacher and to take the plunge into the running business full-time. In a sense, Joe was my first boss. He then gave up editing to spend more time with his first love, writing. And he writes voluminously in a daily journal, in letters and e-mail messages by the dozens, in his magazine columns, newsletter, and in books such as this.

I now sit in the chair he once occupied as *Runner's World* editor, which you might say now makes me Joe's boss. But neither of us thinks of it that way. We are teammates and have been for a long time. I've been reading his writings for more than 30 years.

To my way of thinking, Joe's words and attitude have encouraged as many runners as the best-selling authors Jim Fixx (who featured Joe in his first book) and George Sheehan (whom Joe edited). I say "attitude" because Joe's books have two equally important parts. First, of course, he conveys the kind of information that runners need to know. Nobody knows more than Joe or writes about it more clearly. But information is just information. It's an easy-to-get commodity in this digital age. When I read Joe's

work in the early 1970s, it was his attitude that impressed me most and inspired me to more and better running. For me, the best part of his writing is the way he expresses his love of running and his understanding that running is a totally individualistic activity.

Joe will tell you how to run and even provide some reasons to run, but mainly he'll tell you to run for whatever reason moves you. And he'll affirm that your reasons, whatever they might be, are just as important as anyone else's. You don't have to be chasing an Olympic gold medal. Find your own meaning, and you'll find your own rewards.

As consistent as Joe's writing has been over the decades, it has also evolved. He has gone from young editor of *Runner's World* to our senior columnist, from fairly serious racer to relaxed older runner. He has aged yet has kept up with running. This book reflects his latest thinking. It includes some of his best writing yet. As you turn the pages, I'm sure you'll find yourself nodding in agreement, thinking, "Yes, that's just the way I feel, too."

At his desk, Joe is a writer and editor. In these pages, you'll find him also to be a friend and training partner. And you'll be glad to have him along with you on runs.

AMBY BURFOOT
EDITOR, RUNNER'S WORLD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Books credit only their authors on the cover and spine, but this writing wasn't an individual sport. The bylined writer's work could never have reached print without assists from many teammates.

This book was first the idea of Martin Barnard at Human Kinetics. He asked me to put together an all-new sequel to *Better Runs*, which HK had published in 1995. Julie Rhoda, Sandra Merz Bott, and Tara Welsch later took charge of polishing my manuscript into the form you see it now.

Behind each of the book's pieces stand sources of material and inspiration, which usually are named in the text. Most of the writing here began life as columns in my newsletter *Running Commentary* and in *Runner's World* magazine. Barbara Shaw and Janet Heinonen clean up the newsletter pieces each month before they go into print. Amby Burfoot provides monthly space to me in the magazine, and Cristina Negron selects and corrects the material to fill it. Readers then tell me what they like or not in this material, thereby voting on what qualifies for book consideration.

There couldn't have been a *Best Runs* without my teammates. I thank and credit you all.

INTRODUCTION: BEST WORDS

John Steinbeck, my first writing hero, said he wasn't ready to write a book until he could tell what it was about in one sentence. My requirement is even tighter. I can't start until my book's theme can fit into the few words of a title.

Just two words. Best Runs draw this book's starting line, and the content hinges on the first of them. *Best* needs some defining and explaining so I'll know how to fill the book and you'll know what to expect from it. My dictionary's first definition of that word is "excelling all others." But I'm now more fond of the second: "most productive of good or of advantage, utility or satisfaction."

Most runners start out by measuring their efforts against that first definition. The best runs are those ending with the same final three letters as best: farthest in distance and fastest in time, of course, but also the hardest effort, the toughest courses, and the harshest weather.

Establishing and exceeding personal bests is important to runners still in their improvement cycle. They need these *-est* mileposts as motivators and as rewards. But this is a limiting way of defining best. We can't always and forever take superlative runs.

Each new PR (personal record) makes the next one harder to set, and improvement seldom extends more than 10 years. Then what keeps the runner motivated and rewarded? Fortunately, there's that second definition of best. It doesn't rely on "excelling all others" but on being the most satisfying in less dramatic ways.

In the late 1970s I wrote a book titled *Run Farther, Run Faster*. I was in my mid-30s then and, without yet knowing it, had just set my last personal-best time a cheap one at a seldom-run event. My PR for longest distance ever covered in a race was also relatively new then. That book defined best in the way most runners did at the time. They judged it entirely by race results.

Now it's the late 1990s, and I'm in my mid-50s. If my youngest PR were my child, it would be old enough to take a legal drink. My running moves much slower than it did 20 years ago, and for lesser distances. But as these runs purr along quietly, they're in other ways the best they have ever been. What I lost in speed and length, I've gained many times over from learning that most runs can be "productive of good."

Best no longer means the ultimates that could only be found rarely. It has come to mean the favorites that I can visit anytime. If you're still looking for your ultimate runs, you might get some help here but will likely find more in other books. I fill this one with the second type of best runs, and with my favorite writings on this subject.

Best Runs resembles its Human Kinetics predecessor, *Better Runs*, in three ways: in format (combining more than 100 short essays), in source (all written originally as magazine and newsletter columns), and in name (with the two titles intentionally sounding similar). But *Best Runs* differs in three other ways: The material is all new (no piece appeared in the earlier book), it's more personal in tone (I intend for you to see yourself in the stories written about myself), and it's less about running farther and faster than about having the best possible running experiences.

Best Runs passed through editing as I celebrated my 40th anniversary as a runner. This book tells of ways to make running last longest, and that final -*est* word ultimately means the most. Times may slow, distances may shrink, old glories may fade. But the running itself goes on. I plan to run into the indefinite future and hope you'll go along with me. Some of our best days lie ahead.

JOE HENDERSON

PART I
BEST WAYS



© Jack Gescheidt

Chapter 1

Picking the Best Bets

Best is a slippery concept in running. The search for the best running systems is endless because what's best for one person doesn't necessarily transfer for another, and what's best for you today might not work later as your goals change.

Fifty is Nifty

You're never too old or too experienced to learn (or relearn) running tricks. I'll shower you with tips in this opening chapter, then we'll return later for longer looks at these lessons. We start with a personal review I conducted a few years ago. This wasn't just any day, but my birthday. It wasn't just any birthday either, but my 50th.

Talk about ominous beginnings to a new half-century. I woke up shortly after midnight with a cold taking a stranglehold on my throat. No run this day. A few hours later I flipped on my computer to start the day's writing and the screen stayed dark. The power had failed.

The morning-starting cup of hot tea went to work on my throat. A new power line to my office replaced the one that shorted out. I was ready to contemplate my half-century on this planet.

Turning 50 meant more than just reaching another calendar page. It was a milepost that caused me to look back at the last decade marker and to judge how far I'd traveled since then. You don't see this from one day to the next, or even from one year to another. Only a more distant view can bring the details of the journey into focus.

I was a better runner than on the last birthday that ended with a zero. Slower, yes, but only the watch signals any such decline. Otherwise I was better in health, better in energy, and better in overall fitness at 50 than at 40.

My running had slipped into a rut during my late 30s. The boundaries of my racing had shrunk to little more than 5Ks to 10Ks. I'd retired from miles and marathons. I ran the same short, slow, steady half-hours daily. And I mean every day, in streaks that lasted as long as five years without a rest.

At age 40 I always ran in the same pair of shoes. I never did anything but run. I neglected my upper body, inside and out. My diet was haphazard, and my weight, cholesterol, and blood pressure had crept up. My arms and stomach muscles had shriveled from lack of activity.

During my 40s the running became more varied and the fitness better balanced. I wasn't too old or too experienced to learn (or relearn) these tricks:

Big day. Replaced one of the week's all-easy runs with a