The Little Black Book of Prevention & Recovery

Elite Runners Share Their Proven Injury Prevention and Recovery Strategies

STRENGTH RUNNING
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Thank you for signing up to receive this ebook!

I worked with professional runners from the road, trail, track, and obstacle course to make this possible for you. I hope you enjoy it.

Here you’ll find the favorite prevention and recovery strategies from some of the best runners in the country (and the world).

As you read through each entry, be sure to ask yourself:

*What is repeated over and over?* (that means the strategy is widely accepted and more helpful)

*How can I implement these ideas into my own training?*

*What mindsets are best used to prevent injuries?*

I’ve long been bullish on aggressive injury prevention measures. After all, pain-free health allows you to run higher mileage, miss less running, and be more consistent.

And consistency is the secret sauce to successful running!

Focus on prevention and you’ll reap the rewards for years to come.

Run strong,

- Jason.

http://strengthrunning.com
Amelia Boone: The World’s Most Dominant Obstacle Course Racer

To prevent injury, I find there are two key parts: mobility and stability. Often athletes focus too much on one, and not enough on the other. A few things I do to address both parts:

Dedicate 10 minutes each night before you go to bed to mobilize a particular body part. It doesn’t need to be the same one (and shouldn’t always be the same!), but focus on moving your tissues and loosening up before you go to bed.

For runners, single leg strength is everything – I work on single leg stability at least twice a week in the form of lunges, single leg squats, balance work with slant boards, Bosu balls, and other unstable surfaces.

If you’ve injured a particular body part (i.e., muscle strain), focus on loosening the tissues around it – not the injured tissue itself. For example, if you’ve pulled a hamstring, foam roll the calves, quads, glutes, etc. Those are the tissues that will compensate for the injury and lead to compensatory patterns. And often, the place of pain isn’t the source of the problem.

If you are desk bound like I am, do what you can to stay moving as much as possible. Take a lap around the office at least twice an hour. On conference calls, I like to sit in the bottom of a squat or hold a plank. Keep a golf ball at your desk and roll out the bottom of your feet during the day. The little movements add up.

Go barefoot as much as possible in everyday life – builds foot strength, lets your toes breathe!

Take complete rest days – “active recovery” is all the rage right now, but I’m a firm believer in just letting the body be completely static once in a while. We can tend to take our “active recovery” too far!
About Amelia

Amelia Boone is a force of nature. She’s not only a full-time attorney for Apple, but the most dominant female obstacle course athlete in history.

But she’s not just the best (if not THE best) female OCR athlete – she usually beats 99% of men in every race she enters.

A small taste of her racing performances include:

- 30+ victories (and 50+ podium finishes)
- 2013 Spartan Race World Champion
- 2012 Spartan Race World Championship 2nd place overall (only 8 minutes behind the male winner)
- 2012, 2014, and 2015 World’s Toughest Mudder Champion
- 3x finisher of the Death Race

Connect with Amelia:

Follow her on [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).

[Amelia’s Website](#).
David Roche: 2x National Trail Running Champion

To have a long-term running career sustaining lots of miles, you need to be a champion eater.

I didn't learn that tip in a book, but at a dinner table. In 2015, my wife and I were on the US Long Distance Mountain Running Team. The race went up to the saddle of the Matterhorn – in other words, it involved almost all uphill. I assumed that meant it was best to be skinny and light--after all, cyclist climbers usually have the body measurements of a praying mantis.

Then, I saw what happened at the dinner table. Some of the best mountain runners in the world ate and ate as if the big event was the Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest, rather than an uphill race. One woman in particular packed olive oil in her carry-on just so she could have ready access. She got a plate of pasta, and glugged it out until what seemed like half the bottle was on the spaghetti.

Since then, I have done informal studies with the professional runners I coach. Without fail, the healthiest ones – the runners that win national championships year after year – eat plenty, always.

The mechanism at work is energy availability. Running burns lots of calories, and life burns lots too. Runners need to make sure they are never at a deficit when accounting for all of those demands on energy. A deficit for even one day during heavy training can increase injury risk. A longer-term deficit can have even more disastrous consequences on hormones.

Moreover, erring on the side of a surplus energy availability is helpful in spurring adaptations to heavy training, and it allows a runner to sustain harder work over time. Of course, runners can have success going the other way for a brief period. But the stories of talents lost to negative energy availability are too many to count.

So my main stay-healthy tip is to always eat enough. For a runner concerned about energy availability during hard training, no food is bad
food. Scale your calorie intake to training levels (if you are running 15 miles per week, don't eat like you are running 150), but never forget that your body needs fuel to stay healthy.

Training stimuli happen on the trails, roads or track; training adaptations are earned at the dinner table.

**About David**

David is the 2016 Way Too Cool 50k winner, the 2012 and 2014 USA Trail 10k National Champion, the 2014 US Sub-Ultra Trail Runner of the Year, a member of the 2014 US Mountain Running Team and 2015 US Long Distance Mountain Team.

He is also a columnist for Trail Running magazine and a public interest attorney focusing on environmental issues. A HOKA HOKA sponsored athlete, David is also a running coach.

**Connect with David:**

Follow him on [Twitter](https://twitter.com).

[David’s Coaching Website](https://www跑了跑.com).
Dathan Ritzenhein: Olympian & 3x National Cross Country Champion

Injury is the hardest part of being a competitive runner. I am reminded of this each time I look at my 20-year-old Cannondale bike as it sits on the trainer in my basement. It has been a steady companion over the years but it brings back some bad memories!

Injury may be tough but it is also the best opportunity to not only test your willpower, but to improve the things which most runners neglect. Let’s face it, nobody falls in love with cross training, we do it because we love to run and it is the quickest avenue back to running fitness. Unfortunately, it can also make you even more susceptible to future injury if you bury yourself in aerobic cross training at the expense of increased time devoted to the strength and structure of your body.

After injury, the first inclination of most athletes is to bury themselves in long hours on the bike, in the pool or on some other piece of cardio equipment. While that will keep the weight off and maintain cardiovascular fitness, you lose flexibility, neglect the range of motion specific to running, lose the power required to run fast, and don’t load your skeletal system to maintain bone density. You are now able to be back running quickly, but a couple weeks down the road get ready for the next injury. Trust me, I know, been there and done that many times!

It’s easy to spend so much time cross training that you’re too tired physically and mentally to spend the time needed to rebuild the body with necessary strength training. Have a plan, just like running. Don’t just go to the gym and decide that day!

Start with having someone help you who has experience with coming back from injury. Whether it is a coach, training partner or therapist, this is important because it is a delicate balance between healing and building strength and fitness. They will be a sounding board because it is easy to let your emotions get the best of you which leads to mistakes.
Plan to spend 3-4 days per week focusing on strength training. You can do some easy cardio training those days too, but use it more as a warmup and cool down. Not only will this be good for your body’s structure but it will give your body the rest it needs to heal. If you do hard aerobic cross training every day, your body never gets the chance to recover and repair. It’s easy to over-train with cross training because it doesn’t beat your body up like running does so it’s easier to go hard every day until you’re fried.

This approach will keep you fresh enough to push hard on the other days and get the most out of hard cardio workouts. Make them count! This is a good balance between rest, strength and maintaining fitness.

About Dathan

Dathan Ritzenhein graduated high school with 6 National Championship titles and left the University of Colorado with four All-America titles, a national title at cross country, and the school record in the 10,000m.

As a professional runner, he has competed at the 2008, 2012, and 2016 Olympics and won the US Cross Country Championships three times.

Dathan also held the previous American Record in the 5,000m in 12:56.27 and has a personal best time of 2:07:47 for the marathon and 60:00 for the half marathon.

Connect with Dathan:

Follow him on Twitter or check out his sponsor Generation UCAN.
Kelly O’Mara: Professional Triathlete

When I made the conscious decision to commit myself to triathlon and improve my training, I did something very deliberately: I made sure I created time in my life to sleep and rest. And then I slept and rested. A lot.

It’s (relatively) easy to train hard. It’s also easy to know that you should sleep and recover. But it’s just as easy to let everything you know you should be doing fall by the wayside because you have to get up early to get the workout in, because you need to finish this one thing late at night, because you’re busy, busy, busy.

Stop being busy.

I know it’s not possible for everyone to have as flexible a schedule as they’d like to have. But it is possible to cut out the distractions, to create extra time in your life to do nothing. My husband likes to call himself my “elite athlete consultant,” and his main duty in that role is to tell me when I shouldn’t take on extra jobs or extra commitments.

Give yourself time to lay on the couch on weekend afternoons and nap or watch bad TV. If you want to sleep eight hours, then you need more than eight hours from when you get in bed to when you have to be out of bed. And if you want to sleep more than eight hours, then do that.

I like to have at least one day each week when I don’t need to set an alarm at all, so I can sleep as much I possibly need. Sometimes that means I don’t get out of bed until 10 a.m. People may make fun of it and you might feel like you’re being a bum, but they’ll stop making fun when you get faster.

My training partners know I won’t work out on weekends before 9 a.m. (especially in the winter, when it’s cold). They know I’m lazy. But they also know I’ve gotten a lot faster while being lazier than ever.
About Kelly

Kelly O’Mara is a reporter, primarily covering endurance sports, the Olympics, and triathlon for publications like Outside, espnW, Bicycling Magazine, Competitor Magazine, Yahoo! Travel, VICE Sports, and many others.

She was an elite triathlete after college, took a few years off, and will be racing as a professional triathlete again in 2017. She also has multiple years of cross country and track experience as well as being an open water swimming coach.

Connect with Kelly:

Follow her on Twitter.

Visit her running website or her professional site.
Ian Sharman: 3x Winner of the Leadville Trail 100

Flexibility in running schedules makes all the difference so adjustments are needed on a regular basis to fit around varying work/life schedules and how a runner’s body responds to training sessions. As a general rule, see a physical therapist or similar expert for any remotely serious injury or when a more minor injury isn’t clearly fading within about a week.

**Exercises**

I advise a simple routine of dynamic stretches every day, even if you don’t run that day, to improve general strength, flexibility and stability. That includes leg swings, lunges and squats. Even when brushing your teeth balance on one leg to improve core strength and stability. The combination of these and regular foam rolling really help to reduce potential injuries and therefore improve your running. If there are specific injuries or issues then see a sports’ medicine specialist.

**Foam rolling**

A large proportion of non-traumatic running injuries stem from muscle tightness leading to restricted biomechanics and alterations in running gait. Therefore, I advise foam rolling (which is more effective than a massage stick because you can utilize more body weight to apply pressure to the muscles) every day.

Imbalances of just a fraction of an inch in how each foot lands can lead to injuries – often the area that hurts isn’t the real problem. Getting those muscle tissues and the fascia loosened up and able to move freely definitely prevents some easily avoidable injuries.

Roll every angle of every muscle in the legs, glutes and hips (basically all the areas that feel tight or sore from running, plus areas that may feel fine but are still getting tighter). A roller that’s hard rather than soft will work more effectively.
**Massages**

I advise getting a sports massage every 1-4 weeks, depending on the training work-load and history of injuries in the past, for the same reasons as above. Sometimes we might not be thorough enough with the foam roller and it’s better to let an expert have a look.

I’ve lost count of the amount of times I’ve thought my leg muscles were nice and loose, but a masseur still finds knots and tightness – again helping prevent possible injury. Yes, there’s a cost involved, but how much does injury cost in terms of missed races, not to mention your general happiness or physical therapy costs?

**Sleep**

Sleep is vital, but we often deprioritize it. When we’re asleep our body is healing to benefit from the key adaptations from the training we’ve put it through. It’s probably not realistic to get the optimum number of hours every night (which typically means at least seven hours). Also, straight after a race it’s vital to get more rest than usual. The more quality sleep you can get, the faster your body can heal.

**Recovery runs**

Every run should have a purpose and that’s generally either a long run, speed, hill work, or a recovery run. Recovery runs should be done at a very slow pace, but still focusing on maintaining good form. This is the speed you’ll likely be going at towards the end of an ultra anyway.

As the name suggests, recovery runs also help your legs recover from harder efforts, flushing out the muscles and increasing blood flow to the muscles that have been broken down on harder or longer runs. This helps to get the required nutrients to the muscles to rebuild and adapt optimally. Recovery runs are really important.

**Recovery time after races**
There’s no rush to run again after each event, especially a big ultramarathon. All that rushing back into training does is increase the chance of injury.

Take at least a week completely off running, then start walking and hiking. Ultimately the most important thing to remember here is that your body may take different amounts of time to recover from one race to another and that someone else’s recovery time is probably not the same as yours.

Your body will give you clear signals as you restart running after a race and it’s important to realize that feeling bad on a run is a sign to back off rather than step things up.

**About Ian**

Ian has run around 200 ultras and marathons in every type of weather and on all terrains. He's won around 50 multi-day races, road marathons, trail ultras and adventure races with experience of running in many mountain ranges, including the Himalayas, Andes, Rockies and European Alps.

He also holds the fastest time in a trail 100-mile race in the US (12h44m), the record for the Grand Slam of Ultrarunning (69h49m), has won the USATF 100-mile trail championship twice and is the 2013, 2015 and 2016 Leadville Trail 100 Champion. Ultra Running Magazine has voted him as high as 2nd in its annual Ultra Runner of the Year rankings.

**Connect with Ian:**

Follow him on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [Facebook](#).

Visit his [website](#).
Devon Yanko: 100km National Champion

I have been running for just over 13 years and during that time, I have suffered from only 2 major injuries that took me out for a few weeks (4 weeks & 10 weeks respectively). Yes, I have durable genes, that can sustain a high level of work on a wonky imperfect (down right weird) stride, but I also do focus my training on recovery as much on training.

My favorite tactic throughout my career for staying healthy has been taking days off. Many runners cringe at the notion of days off but honestly, when I took every Monday off religiously, I never got injured except when I tripped on the trail and ended up in the ER. If you take a day off a week, you are allowing your body to absorb the work, get in a mini reset and you are actually better able to gauge where your body is with its adaptation and recovery.

During peak training, I sometimes will move it to 1 day off per 14 days, but I find that that is on the outside edge of what my body wants to do. I do active recovery on Mondays, sometimes cross train or strength train and get a massage. I try to set myself up for a week of training and get ready to have no missed runs or workouts. The day off doesn’t affect my ability to do the volume I need (over 100 miles/week) or the quality.

The secret to preventing injuries is doing things well in advance of even the threat of injury. Taking a day off a week or two will help prevent your body from injury and help you take you training to the next level.
About Devon

Devon has run more than 30 Marathon and 30 Ultras since 2006, with most being a win or course record. Other highlights:

- 3 time member of the USATF 100k National Team including 2009 Gold Medal winning team in Belgium
- 2007 RRCA Marathon National Champion
- 2010 50 mile road National Champion
- 2012 Olympic Trials marathoner (PR of 2:38:55)
- 2011 100k National Champion
- Set Fastest Known Time on the Grand Canyon R2R2R trail with Krissy Moehl in April 2011
- 3rd place at the Two Oceans Marathon (56k) and 5th in Comrades Marathon (89k, as well as first novice and first American)
- Ran the 3rd fastest trail 100 miler ever for a North American running 14:52 at the 2015 Javelina 100.

She is also the owner of [M. H. Bread and Butter](#) bakery with her husband.

Connect with Devon:

Follow her on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#).

Visit her [website](#).
Joseph Gray: World Mountain Running Champion

Since beginning my journey with running I have always noticed a few certain truths when it came to injuries. Injuries are inevitable when it comes to running, PERIOD. Part of the journey is learning how to run and eat properly to avoid injuries and continue doing what you love.

The key facet behind injury prevention is lifestyle. What I’ve come to find out is that diet is heavily indicative of nearly every runner who has been healthy long term in their careers. Some runners eat too little, some eat too much of the wrong things and some don’t eat the right foods for their bodies. Some athletes may even have 2 out of the 3 issues.

Earlier in my journey I worried about weight and when I looked back at that period of time I was very inconsistent. My training, hard workouts and races were all icky! I struggled frequently because I was concerned about weight as opposed to just making sure I was getting the right foods and fueling my body for the workload necessary to accomplish my goals. This was early in my career and of course many young athletes struggle with this issue believing that being skinny equals being fast. It is an easy concept to follow being that many of the medalists in major marathons across the globes are usually very lean athletes.

The one thing I realized was that I was not born with the same body as many of those athletes so my diet must match my body type and my workload.

Once I ate enough and didn’t focus on weight as much, my performances were much better and I stayed healthy without injuries. When you become overly concerned with weight loss another problem that occurs is the feeling of deprivation. When you feel deprived you undoubtedly cause your body to release stress hormones. These are not good for training or racing. One trick I’ve done my entire professional career is eat desserts that I desire based on completion of training as opposed to only allowing dessert rewards for performance based accomplishments. For example, completing
an interval session grants me access to the dessert lounge as opposed to being stressed and worried about say running a specific time to reward myself.

**About Joseph**

Joseph Gray is one of the best trail and mountain runners in the world. He was the 2016 World Mountain Running Championships winner and a 21-time national team member at various distances.

He is also the only African-American to be part of the US Mountain Running Team at any level and has been a national champion eleven times. Just recently he won the 2017 World Showshoe Championships by over a minute.

In 2016, Joseph won his second XTERRA Trail Run World Championships and currently holds the American Record at the Mount Washington Road Race. His performance while winning the 2016 Pikes Peak Ascent was the fastest time since 1995.

In 2016, he was chosen as the USA Track & Field Mountain Runner of the year.

**Connect with Joseph:**

Follow him on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [Facebook](#).
Andy Wacker: Trail National Champion

I’m pretty minimal when it comes to "the extra stuff" we all need to do in addition to running. The one exercise I believe in is a simple active stretch for the hamstrings. I usually do two variations.

One, laying on my back I'll lift my legs, one at a time, to ninety degrees, with straight knees.

Two, I'll lay on my back with one leg flat on the ground and the other at a ninety-degree angle to the ground.

The difference from the first stretch is that I bend my leg at the knee for each rep. Both exercises, I will do ten reps each leg.

A seated variation, using something like the ROLL Recovery R3 can help dig in better. These pictures will help you visualize the exercise:

These are similar to Phil Wharton's active isolated flexibility. After a long battle with IT band issues, and a hamstring tear, these helped me remain healthy.
**About Andy**

Andy is an Adidas-sponsored athlete, University of Colorado at Boulder graduate, and one of the best trail and mountain runners in the world.

A few of his noteworthy accomplishments:

- 2nd place, 2015 World Mountain Running Long Distance Championships
- Olympic Marathon Trails qualifier (multiple times)
- 1st place, 2015 USATF Trail 50k National Championships
- 1st place, 2014 and 2015 Mt. Evans Ascent
- 1st place, 2014 Rock ‘n’ Roll Denver Half Marathon
- 1st place, 2014 USATF Colorado 10k Championships
- 1st place, 2013 USATF Colorado 5-mile Championships

**Connect with Andy:**

Follow him on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).
Max King: National Ultra Running Champion

As I've gotten older, one thing is for sure, recovery is king and if I take care of my body, getting out the door for a run isn't as difficult. So, prehab has been key to allowing me to continue to train and race at a high-level years beyond many of my peers back in college.

Recently I've found that a healthy regimen of foam rolling, self-massage, and mobility stretches keeps me more flexible and everything feeling good as I head out the door for a run. I will alternate rolling with mobility exercises every other evening before going to bed. I really hate using the first couple miles of a run just to work the kinks out. If I can do it at home by rolling on a ball it makes my runs so much more enjoyable.

The second thing that athletes need to develop as they get older is strength, or rather, not lose strength as they get older. Adding some strength in for all runners at all ages is essential to moving correctly and thus reducing injury risk.

Finding the right person to help you is the key here. Just jumping around, squatting some weight, and throwing a kettlebell isn't going to cut it. Develop a program with someone that knows what they're doing and you'll gain movement and strength.

Right now, I’m focusing on the Bridge, Side Plank, Anti-rotation band work, Clam Shells and hip mobility stuff like the MYRTL Routine, and hip flexor stretching.
About Max

Max King is a Salomon-sponsored athlete living in Bend, OR with his wife and two kids. He has competed around the world in running events ranging from 100-mile ultras, steeplechase, mountain racing, to obstacle racing winning both the 2011 World Mountain Running Championships and the 2014 World 100k Championships. He's competed in four Olympic Trials. He is also a two-time winner of the World Warrior Dash Championships.

His experience also includes 4 years as a specialty running footwear buyer for the Footzone, numerous years coaching both youth and adult athletes, and has just launch a series of running camps for both adult and youth.

Connect with Max:

Follow him on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram.

Visit his blog or learn more about his running camps.
A note on injury prevention...

I hope you’ve enjoyed this brief glimpse into pro runners’ favorite injury prevention and recovery strategies.

I want to encourage you to read through each entry and look for patterns.

What are the common themes here?

Are there multiple elites who follow a similar philosophy or prevention approach?

How can you incorporate these lessons into your own training?

If you’re familiar with my work, you know how much I love injury prevention. Because staying healthy allows you to do everything: run faster, train smarter, have more fun, and get more enjoyment out of our wonderful sport.

What’s crazy is that 70-80% of runners will get injured every year- that’s higher than pro football!

Being trapped in this injury cycle is demoralizing. It makes you want to quit and wonder why you put in all this work... only to watch it go down the drain as you sit on the sidelines with an injury.

Just imagine how much more you’d love running (not to mention, how much faster you’d run) if you could simply prevent more injuries?

Thank you for downloading this guide; my goal is to inspire you to focus on prevention, make it a habit, and then reap the rewards.

Run strong,

Jason.

PS. I’d be thrilled if you joined the SR Facebook community. We’ve got a great group there 😊