

# THE RUNDOWN

AN INITIATIVE OF THE CHENNAI RUNNERS

ISSUE #12 JUNE 2016

## GONE TOO SOON

PAYING HOMAGE TO LEGENDARY ATHLETE, SAMMY WANJRU

## HOW TO TRAIN YOUR INNER DRAGON

RUNNERS SPEAK ABOUT GETTING RACE-READY

## EARTH SONG

MEET PETER VAN GEIT, A MAN WITH A BIG HEART FOR MOTHER EARTH

## WEIGHT AND WATCH

BODYWEIGHT AND ITS IMPACT ON RUNNING





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Health  
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# THE RUNDOWN

AN INITIATIVE OF THE CHENNAI RUNNERS



**NIRANJAN SANKAR**

The author used to be a lazy couch potato who loved ice cream and beer. He started running five years ago, and quickly got hooked. Running has since been a life-changing experience in many ways. He still loves his ice cream and beer (but feels less guilty now about such indulgences thanks to all the running.)



**PREETI AGHALAYAM**

Preeti Aghalayam is a Professor at IIT Madras. She is also the President of Chennai Runners currently. She enjoys the (as yet unverified) distinction of being the shortest President of a running club in India. Her favourite things to do are write, read, run, eat chocolate, and of course, give long lectures about molecules and things like that.



**ASHWIN PRABHU**

Ashwin Prabhu discovered the joys of distance running several years back, roughly around the same time he got his first job. Over the years, running clearly has held his interest more than the Corporate world. Case in point, he doesn't hold a desk job anymore today, but still runs four times a week and considers himself a Chennai Runner for life.



**DR MADHU THOTTAPPILLIL**

Dr Madhu Thottappillil has been practicing Sports Medicine in Chennai for over a decade and a half. He has been associated with various sports bodies in Tamil Nadu in his capacity as a specialist in Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation. He is the Official doctor to the Board of Cricket Control of India for South India.



**SANDEEP BHANDARKAR**

Sandeep Bhandarkar is a serial entrepreneur with a passion for distance running. He has run several marathons and has been coaching runners for the last few years, from beginners to those wanting to qualify for the prestigious Boston marathon or run the Comrades ultra. He writes extensively on technical aspects in running through his blog [www.therun-way.com](http://www.therun-way.com).



**SIDDHARTHA MENON**

Despite his uncertainty about why he does so, Siddhartha Menon has been running marathons periodically since his first one at Hyderabad in 2011. He works at Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh.



*Dear Runner,*

We, at The Rundown, like the idea of a context, a backdrop, against which we ideate and curate every edition. This issue, as we brainstormed over several cups of sugarless black coffee (with only a few drops of milk), we wondered what June meant to us! For those of us conscious of the environment, June has come to represent a month dedicated to recognise the Environment — June 5 is officially celebrated as the World Environment Day. What can we, as runners and runners with sensitivity to the world around us, do to, in our way, celebrate Mother Earth, we wondered? And almost unanimously, we thought of Belgium-born, Chennai-based runner, trekker, social worker, activist and a brilliant organiser, Peter Van Geit and decided to profile and feature him on the cover of The Rundown. In a straightforward, straight-from-the-heart interview with The Rundown's Preeti Aghalayam, Peter shares his journey with us and discussed the future of Nature and how we can continue to respect and nurture her.

In addition to Peter, the attempt this edition has also been to introduce to our readers, new voices — voices of experts and voices of experience — that will allow us not only to get better with our own running goals

and aspirations but also gain deeper insights into the very idea and essence of running and what it means to different people. We particularly enjoyed a contemplative piece by Siddhartha Menon and we hope the essay will resonate with you too.

In this issue, you will also meet and hear four runners share with you their specific training plans; as a result, you can appreciate how different people have different approaches to achieving same/similar goals. Say Hello also to running expert and coach Sandeep Bhandarkar, who kickstarts his three-part series, exclusively for The Rundown, with a column on understanding the concept of body weight and its role in running, running better and faster.

Our regular columnists remain and continue to enrich us with their expertise. Oh! And for some comic relief, don't forget to read our favourite Maami Thayir Saadam as she, in her own words, rightly "strikes back".

That's it for now. Go ahead; read, and enjoy

*Regards,*  
*Akhila Krishnamurthy*

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# GONE TOO SOON

“Shine on Sammy, wherever you are,” writes *Ashwin Prabhu* as he pens a moving homage to legendary athlete, Sammy Wanjiru

This column throws light on the stories and lives of men and women who braved all odds, shed sweat, tears and blood over 42.195K to etch their names in the book of running history. The column will criss-cross time and space and go back and forth across the decades led by nostalgia and sentiment and not logic, and in that sense will not be a chronological retelling of running’s greatest achievements

The first few lines of a ballad, *Gone Too Soon* popularised by Michael Jackson in memory of his friend Ryan White who had been expelled from school for contracting HIV and who had finally succumbed to the disease in 1990, go like this:

*Like A Comet  
Blazing 'Cross The Evening Sky  
Gone Too Soon*

*Like A Rainbow  
Fading In The Twinkling Of An Eye  
Gone Too Soon*

*Shiny And Sparkly  
And Splendidly Bright  
Here One Day  
Gone One Night*

Sammy Wanjiru was one such blazing comet who streaked across the sky of the marathoning world, burning a bold path entirely his own before consuming himself, like comets are wont to do, in a tragic end.

Many eminent sportswriters covering distance running have often debated about the greatest marathon even run in living memory. Almost unfailingly, recent pieces of writing on this subject have zeroed in on one race — the 2008 Beijing Olympics marathon. Run in oven-like 84F (~29C), smoggy and humid conditions on the streets of China’s capital city, expert commentators settled into their seats for what they thought would be a conservative race, run at a defensive and sedate pace where each runner would wait patiently for the other to make a mistake and not risk burning themselves out on that oppressively hot morning. Enter Sammy Wanjiru. Throwing all caution to the wind, Sammy ran the first 5K in 14:52. Consider that the then women’s world record holder at 5000m,

Tirunesh Dibaba had run 15:41 two days earlier to win the 5000m Gold medal. If one had thought this was spunky and perhaps even a tad foolish, the next 5K was run 19 secs faster. The lead pack of just 5 runners was at the half-way mark in 1:02:34, a meagre 5 secs off the then world record, propelled largely by the mad genius of Sammy. He continued to push the limits, his own and that of his fellow competitors before breaking off in the last 5K and striding solo, majestically, into the Olympic stadium to finish in an Olympic record time of 2:06:32, close to 3 minutes faster than the previous record set in 1984 in Los Angeles. Sammy was 21 years old that year. He had already broken the half-marathon WR in 2005 in Rotterdam when he was just 18 years old, running the distance in a breathtaking 59:16, a record he would break twice again in 2007, eventually lowering it to 58:33.

Fast forward to 2011 by which time Sammy had won the Chicago marathon twice and the London marathon once, besides winning the World Marathon Majors championships in 2009, a title which carried with it a jackpot of \$500,000. These achievements combined with his sensational Olympic performance had the pundits proclaiming that here was a marathon star who had already done enough to rank amongst the sport’s all-time greats. On May 15th of that fateful year, the sporting world woke up to the news of Sammy having died in a fall from the balcony of his house in the Rift Valley town of Nyahururu. A death shrouded in a mystery revolving around what was initially termed a suicide but later revised to an accident, with the added complexity of a domestic dispute with his wife and an illicit affair with another woman thrown in.

A very comprehensive long-form profile article in the *New Yorker* later revealed that Sammy had been battling an addiction to alcohol for a few years before his death, a trait which apparently was not entirely uncommon amongst Kenyan elite athletes. He had picked up the habit of having a casual beer or two during his training years in Japan in 2005. Success brought fame, money, attention and sadly, complications in Sammy’s personal life. In Kenya a rich man was expected to help not just his family and friends, but the village itself. People would line up every morning outside Sammy’s house asking for favors. A domineering mother and a second marriage to a Kenyan female marathon runner even while living with his first wife in 2009 (a culturally acceptable practice in Kenya) did little to simplify matters. His battle

“**Sammy Wanjiru was one such blazing comet who streaked across the sky of the marathoning world, burning a bold path entirely his own before consuming himself, like comets are wont to do, in a tragic end.**”

with the bottle continued and drunken binges with friends, bar-room brawls, rash driving and even rasher behavioral melt-downs at home featured alongside his running. Word of his downhill hurtle reached his Italian manager Federico Rosa who tried to rescue him by drafting him into a coaching camp run by another Italian, a celebrity coach called Claudio Berardelli. Even as attempts were



Photo Courtesy: Internet

made by his team of well-wishers to extricate him from the death-trap of his alcoholic addiction, Sammy went on a drinking spree one night in Nyahururu while on a trip back home from his training camp and a series of unhappy and regrettable events culminated in his fatal fall from the balcony.

Sammy Wanjiru's life, in retrospect, had started off like so many other talented East African runners, in utter poverty and anonymity, in a morning ritual of running 12 miles to and from school each day. Yet it ended so very abruptly and so very differently, in murky tragedy. The natural genius, the dazzling promise and all those hard years of training in Japan on a running scholarship in his teens had come

to an abrupt end. In what was ultimately a very brief time on the world running stage, Sammy had captured the imagination of the running fraternity. He stood head and shoulders above the rest of the pack and the only real question on every marathon expert's lips was — "How far can this guy go?"

As fate would have it, Sammy turned out to be a Shakespearean hero after all — possessing a rare physical genius yet inherently flawed in his mental make-up, heroic in his performances on the stage yet humiliatingly mortal in his life off it, simultaneously endearing himself to and sickening the reader of his life's pages by his conduct. In October 2010, just around 6 months before his death, even as he

was battling poor form, a stomach virus and low expectations from his coach and critics, Sammy prevailed in a grueling duel with Tsegaye Kebede at the Chicago marathon to win the race and silence the many naysayers. In a press conference immediately after the race, Sammy in his trademark, open, confident and honest manner in response to a question asking him if he was back in form and would now look at taking on Haile's world record, said, "The body is coming" to indicate that there was more one could expect from him in the near future. Little would he and the running world have known at the time that there would be a macabre twist in that statement of his 6 months down the line. Shine on Sammy, wherever you are. ■



# HOW TO TRAIN YOUR INNER DRAGON

Been running for a couple of years? Want to train to be a better runner? We at *The Rundown* spoke to four runners from different parts of the country — accomplished runners known for their sensible approach to running and training — and got them to answer a handful of questions that may be bothering you as you put together your own training routine. Oh, just so you know, these runners have different approaches and goals in running and it was very interesting to listen to their varied perspectives... Read on...



## Kannan ("Kay")

is an effervescent runner from Bengaluru. Kannan has two Comrades finishes under his belt (2015 and '16), and is well-known in running circles for his meticulous training regimen

## Rommel ("Rommel")

works with the Central Government and runs in all the places he visits for work. He has been running since 2012, and recently qualified for the Boston marathon with a scorching 3:10 at the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon in January 2016



## Venkat ("Ultra Venkat")

works at the HSBC Global Finance Center in Chennai and has been running for the past five years. He celebrated his 50th birthday in April '16 with a crisp 3:53 at the Brighton Marathon

## Ranjini ("Ranjini")

is a mother of two, and debuted with a half marathon in 2012 – a day after her younger daughter's first birthday! Ranjini has moved up the ladder pretty rapidly over the years, with systematic training and oodles of discipline. She holds a personal best of 3:43:09 at the Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon 2016



### How important is the long run in your training routine? At what pace do you typically run them?

**Kay:** LSD (long slow distance) runs are very important. That's where you put your entire kinetic chain to stress. I would say you should run them slower than goal marathon pace, preferably a relaxed, conversational pace. Typically, they would cover a maximum of 60-70% of the race distance. For example, for the 90K Comrades marathon, 55-60K long runs would be de-rigueur. I also like to do back to back runs over the weekend sometimes — 30K on Saturday and 20K on Sunday, for example, is one combination.

**UV:** I usually do three runs per week as part of my training — and all three — interval, tempo and long runs are equally important. The long run builds endurance, it helps

the body get used to staying on the road for a longer duration. The pace is slightly slower than race pace. Although I don't really get hung up on the pace — I judge the effort — so if I happen to be in cooler climate (compared to Chennai), I may be able to run them slightly faster. But never faster than goal marathon pace. At any rate, there is a recommended pace band maybe 5:20-5:40 mins per km, which gives me some flexibility. Also, I prefer to run the first part of the longer run slower and then pick up the pace, so as to conserve energy smartly. I incorporate inclines whenever I can, into my long runs.

**Rommel:** Long runs are surely important as part of my marathon training. In recent times, however, I have stayed away from anything longer than 2 hours and 30minutes of running — which is around 30-32K. I feel that one doesn't need

anything more than that in the lead up to a marathon. I usually run them slow in the beginning of the training plan, slowly increasing the pace to get close to (but never faster than) the goal marathon pace, closer to the event date.

**Ranjini:** Of course long runs are very important. At the beginning of the training plan — say 5-6 months prior to the event — I focus on building endurance with lots of easy long runs. As the event approaches closer, I run the long runs closer to my goal race pace. If not the entire long run, I run at least a part of it near race pace. For example, in a 30K long run, I would run the middle 15-20K stretch at that faster pace. I know many people run long runs much slower than that, but I am comfortable this way!

### How often do you do speed intervals? Is it on the track or

### or road (or treadmill)?

**Kay:** I typically run speed workouts at my 5K pace and try to improve upon it. I prefer to run speed intervals (typically short bursts of 200m – 6-10 times) on an inclined treadmill (so that the pace is precisely controlled and doesn't fluctuate) in front of a mirror (to check my form and make sure there are no compromises). I don't think a weekly interval run is required, so I only do these runs at the beginning of a long training period, and also during taper (to help with fine finishing).

**UV:** Speed workouts — I hate treadmills, and avoid them like the plague. I do my speed workouts on flat roads. I have tried them on the track a few times but it hasn't taken. The distances vary from 400 to 1600m, with some sort of progression in distance and number of reps

over the course of the 12 or 16 week training period. The goal is to keep the time for each of the repetitions within a tight band (5s), and also, to ensure that the pace of the last rep is as much as the first one.

**Rommel:** I have given up speed intervals. But as I approach the event — say around two months prior — I do fartleks/mile repeats. I have done shorter, more traditional speed intervals in the past, but have recently stopped them due to the high chances of sustaining injuries.

**Ranjini:** I run the speed intervals on a synthetic track, once a week. In fact, I don't take a break from intervals at all — even during what some people call the 'off season', I hit the track for 400/800m repeats once a week. Close to the event date, I may do longer intervals, like 2 miles each. The build up at any rate is gradual, so that over the

course of a month I move on from 400m repeats to 800m repeats.

### Do you believe the hype about the high protein intake needed for runners on a daily basis? What do you do?

**Kay:** I would say yes, although there is no benefit to eating more protein than your body needs — it also probably puts an undue load on your kidney! I am vegetarian but I do eat country eggs, four egg whites and two yolks, everyday. On strength training days I add on a whey protein shake. Also we all eat a lot of beans, legumes & dals at every meal. We include a good variety of foods in this genre — Soya beans, rajma, chole, dal, etc. Some of the things I do routinely are checking my body composition, and levels of Vitamin D and B12. I try to ensure that I am maintaining good muscle mass %, and take



vitamin supplements when the levels are low.

**UV:** I do think that protein is important for runners, particularly for recovery. I eat eggs maybe a few days a week, and drink a whey protein shake on my run days (three times a week), within 30 minutes of the workout. Most importantly, during the training period I am extremely strict about avoiding all fried foods and sweets.

**Rommel:** I am a big fan of protein and consider it very important indeed. I focus on Indian home made foods, including eggs, soya, fruits, and vegetables, and don't take supplements.

**Ranjini:** My challenge over the years has been to seamlessly integrate my training into what

my family needs on a daily basis. With two small children at home, I have focused all along on a mostly vegetarian, healthy South Indian diet. Recently, I started to take a protein supplement, when I realized that the proportion of carbohydrate to protein is rather high. I feel good, and hope that this will help me as I go along!

**Wondering at which event you can hope to meet these guys?**

Kay is planning to run 42 marathons in 42 weeks starting June 2016, to raise awareness about first responders and road safety (and yes, he turned 42 in April this year). Do look out for his blog posts and support him in his venture! (<http://running.kannansundara.rajana.com/>)

UV's next is the Dream Runners Half Marathon in Chennai on 24 July and the Malnad Ultra 50K on 8 October 2016.

Rommel is running the Airtel Hyderabad Marathon on 28 August and is gearing up to race the Spice Coast Marathon at Kochi on 13 November 2016.

Ranjini is running, and possibly pacing the 2 hour bus at the Dream runners half marathon on 24 July, followed by the Bengaluru Full Marathon 16 October.

*If you have any other marathon training related queries you would like us to get information on, do write to us at [therundown2014@gmail.com](mailto:therundown2014@gmail.com) — we will put together good advice for you in our next edition!* ■

ONE LEAF FELL FROM A TALL, TALL TREE  
AND SUBTLY KISSED GNARLED ROOTS  
BENEATH;  
A LOVER'S KISS BELOW SUNNED-SHEATH  
OF GREENEST LEAVES, A JUBILEE.

AN ARC OF BRIGHT GREEN CANOPY  
WARMED MY HEART IN BLUEST MOOD,  
AND ONE LEAF BLEW A KISS FROM YOU.  
IT TWIRLED AND PRANCED AND FLOATED BY,  
THEN WITH A TOUCH IT CAME TO LIE  
GREEN IN MY HAND, A DEAR SURPRISE.

- EXCERPT FROM ONE GREEN LEAF  
BY RHONDA JOHNSON-SAUNDERS

Celebrate  
**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY**  
with The Rundown and raise awareness  
**TO PROTECT OUR PLANET..**

Because green in your hand,  
should not be a surprise.



# WEIGHT

In this new, three-part series, **Sandeep Bhandarkar** analyses, bodyweight in-depth and its impact and effect on running

# AND



# WATCH

I love running the half marathon at SCMM (Standard Chartered Mumbai Marathon) most of all because I get to see a wonderful sight across the road when I am on Marine Drive: the elite marathoners loping away gracefully at a mind-boggling pace of around 3 minutes per km. This is the best you can get at distance running and I look at them with a mixture of awe and envy as they pass by in the blink of an eye. What is it that makes them tick?

A great way to improve is to observe and analyse the best in that area, whether in sport, business or what have you. In distance running, it is the elite runners who can give us pointers to improve our own performance. The big question then is what should we be looking for? Elites out-perform us because of three key factors: bodyweight, running form and training. These factors need to work synergistically for optimum performance; weakness in even one is likely to unbalance the three-legged stool. I have left out genes as we clearly have no control over them. And before you wonder about nutrition, it is (along with recovery) an integral part of training. I plan to discuss the impact of one factor in each quarterly publication of The Rundown, starting with bodyweight in this one.

I consider our weight as possibly the most crucial factor as it affects us in two ways: not only is it important to improve performance, the adverse impact of 'excess' weight on our joints can lead to serious long term consequences.

### EXCESS BODYWEIGHT CAUSES A LARGE UN-WANTED IMPACT

An average recreational runner

takes about 21,000 steps while racing a half marathon. We also know that the impact our legs make with the ground while running is two to three times our body weight. This means that for each 'extra' kilo more than what our joints have been designed to bear, the cumulative additional impact on our legs while running a half marathon works out to a whopping 52,500 kg or 52.5 tons (21000 \* 2.5)!

Our ankles, knees and hips have been designed to take loads commensurate with the normal body weight for our height. If we increase training intensity without reducing excess weight first, we expose our lower body joints to a large extra cumulative load. I have given below the cumulative impact which a single kilo of excess weight can cause over a 16 week and a 12 week training cycle for marathoners and half marathoners, respectively.



### CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF A KILO

	Marathon	Half Marathon
Training Cycle	16 weeks	12 weeks
Average Weekly Mileage	60km	40km
Total Mileage	960km	480km
Average Impact Per Step	2.5kg	2.5kg
Cumulative impact of one kg of excess bodyweight	2,400 tons	1,200 tons

Note: (1) Average impact per step is 2.5 times body weight (2) Assuming 1000 steps per km

I hope the above numbers have startled you as much as they startled me when I saw them for the first time. To put it in perspective, if you lose just one kg, the cumulative impact you can reduce during the 16 week marathon training cycle is equivalent to the maximum take-off weight of six Boeing 747 jumbo aircraft!

### BODY WEIGHT IS DIRECTLY RELATED WITH RACE

**TIMES**  
A runner moves their weight against gravity with each stride. It is thus logical that their weight is closely related to how fast they can run. Simple physics tells us that the percentage drop in their weight will reduce their race timing by an equal percentage, all the other training variables being the same [for the mathematically inclined,  $m1/m2 = v2/v1 = t1/t2$  when momentum is constant]. Thus a 1% decrease in their weight will automatically lead to a 1% improvement in their race timing at the same training level. For example, a 1% improvement in race time for a 3 hour marathoner will be 1 minute 48 seconds (1% of 180 minutes) while for a 4 hour marathoner it will be 2 minutes 24 seconds. This is good news for slower runners with higher fat percentages; it is easier for them to lose weight and the reduction in turn will lead to a larger improvement in absolute times.

### DISTANCE RUNNERS NEED TO WEIGH LESS THAN THE NORMAL POPULATION

Now that we know excess weight is detrimental, the key question is what should be a good target weight to aim for. There are many factors which contribute to a person's 'ideal' weight including gender, age, body frame and body type. A simple calculation commonly used by dieticians works well for me.



Take your height in centimetres and reduce it by 100 (for men) and 105 (for women) to get a good sense of the upper end of your normal weight in kg. For example, for a person who is 5 foot 8 inches tall, their height in cm works out to 173 and so their normal weight should not be more than 73kg. This however is the upper end of normal weight for the normal population, not athletes and definitely not distance runners because we literally fight gravity with every step. We thus need to further reduce this number by about 5%-10% to get an optimal weight for recreational distance runners (elites of course will be even lower). So for the above runner, a good target weight would be around 65-69kg. This weight would be optimum to handle the impact loads on the lower body joints and will also help in shaving time when they train and race.

Since weight reduction needs to come from reducing the excess fat in your body, another way to estimate a target weight is through your body fat percentage. A target

fat percentage of below 20% for men and 25% for women is considered good for recreational distance runners (male elites are well below 10% while their female counterparts have a fat% of around 12%). Many modern weighing scales measure your fat% and although the readings are not exact (the method used to measure depends upon the water content in your body at that time), you can get a fairly good idea if you measure your fat% at the same time and at the same hydration level; first thing in the morning after waking up is thus a good time to measure it.

#### **IT IS ALL ABOUT THE SMART DIETING**

Research has clearly shown that weight loss happens because of changes in diet, not due to exercise. Although the impact of food does vary across individuals, there are some good dieting principles: eat lots of vegetables, preferably in raw or sautéed form, eat moderate fruits, nuts, seeds and protein, and avoid processed foods and sodas. A quick word about fats: healthy fats like ghee and those found

in dry fruits are very good when consumed moderately, it is processed food which is the real villain. If you hit a weight plateau, review what you are eating currently and try experimenting by dropping or replacing a particular food you think could be hindering your weight loss effort. When I stopped losing weight while training for a marathon, I got an almost immediate weight loss benefit when I replaced chapatis and milk with brown rice and curds.

The best time to focus on knocking off your 'excess' weight is in the pre-season, which is the period before race specific training commences, around 16 weeks before a marathon and 12 weeks before a half marathon. This will also ensure that you get the best out of your training workouts. I would strongly advise against 'crash' diets as you are likely to lose muscle along with fat. So try to lose that excess fat through smart dieting and remember that if you lose even one single kilo, you will save your joints an immense amount of adverse impact. 'Take it a kilo at a time. And happy running!' ■



# GO-TO SPOTS!

*Niranjan Sankar* browses around and lists some of the best websites for runners, and running...

Running has been around forever, since the first cave-person decided to step out for a quick trot to enjoy some fresh air and get some lone time away from his spouse and kids. There were no gadgets then, and definitely no internet. Many runners still consider running a primeval

activity, a time to let themselves just be, unencumbered by all the modern technology which enslaves us during the rest of the day.

However, for better or for worse, we live in a connected world today, and there is a wealth of information

and great social opportunities provided by the internet. This can help you run better, avoid injury, find running buddies, set up training plans and motivate you in so many ways.

Here, we list some of the best sites out there for runners:

## RUNNER'S WORLD

([www.runnersworld.com](http://www.runnersworld.com))

This is the definitive resource, the Wikipedia/Encyclopedia for runners, from the publishers of the most popular running magazine there is. It covers the whole gamut of runner and running-related issues — from reviews of new shoes in the market to exercise recommendations with videos, gender-specific tips, training plans, race day tips, et al.



## HAL HIGDON

([www.halhighdon.com](http://www.halhighdon.com))

Hal Higdon is a writer for Runner's World and the author of dozens of books on running. He is also an accomplished runner with a marathon time of 2:21 (2 hours and 21 minutes). This website is best known for a comprehensive range of training plans for every distance from a 5K to a marathon, and for first-time runners to experts.



## JEFF GALLOWAY

([www.jeffgalloway.com](http://www.jeffgalloway.com))

Another great athlete, and former Olympian, Jeff Galloway founded the run-walk method, which he strongly advocates as being the only way to run long distances. According to Jeff, this method reduces injury, soreness and fatigue and aids recovery. Somewhat counter-intuitively, Jeff claims that this method actually improves your finish time. Legions of runners swear by this method and this is the perfect site for them. You can look for training plans, training groups, running retreats, and also sign up for e-training with Jeff himself.



## AIMS RACE CALENDAR

([www.aimsworldrunning.com/calendar.html](http://www.aimsworldrunning.com/calendar.html))

A calendar of races across the world promoted by AIMS (The Association of International Marathons and Distance Races). If you want to experience some of the biggest and best races in the world, this is a good place to find one.



## DC RAINMAKER

([www.dcrainmaker.com](http://www.dcrainmaker.com))

There are tons of gizmos to aid runners, and Ray aka DC Rainmaker, provides useful and comprehensive reviews of many of these. His detailed, objective and unbiased reviews cover almost every minor feature of the product, with real life tests and comparisons. And there's a lively online forum where the product is discussed and debated further. Ray is usually quick to reply to any further questions you may have on the product. In all likelihood, this is the best gear review site there is.

## FACEBOOK

([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com))

Running is getting increasingly popular, as the world is getting increasingly social. Images and stories of friends on Facebook who have run marathons or half-marathons, who have transformed their bodies and lives through running, who have found inner peace (or the love of their lives), have inspired thousands to take up the sport. And what better motivation for your own running than sharing your cool running photos and getting zillions of 'likes', and inspire even more runners. Facebook may just possibly be doing more to promote running than Runner's World.



## DAILYMILE

([www.dailymile.com](http://www.dailymile.com))

This is essentially a Runners' Facebook + log. You basically upload your workouts and get comments, kudos and advice from your peers. You can search for workout buddies in your area and also participate in events. The site keeps track of your training and your gear, and can tell you, for instance, when it's time to replace your running shoe. For more serious runners, with better analysis of your runs (and less social features), [www.runningahead.com](http://www.runningahead.com) is a great site to look at.



# EARTH SONG

To mark the World Environment Day and in the backdrop of the month dedicated to respecting and nurturing our nature, *Preeti Aghalayam* pinned down the very busy Belgium-born, Chennai-based Peter Van Geit, a runner, a trekker, an organiser and above all, a man with a big heart for Mother Earth

Photo Courtesy: Swetha Joyson



From L to R: Running across the Rohtang Pass (part of 500K run from Srinagar to Manali); Organizing a Triathlon; the Chennai Floods; With actor Arya in the open waters; Social trek by the Chennai Trekking Club

At a Garbage clean up; Running through the Himalayas; Selfie with Zeus - his German shepherd; Volunteer work during

Forty — that’s the number of official, announced running events in June 2016 in India. In addition, several smaller events, publicized only in local circles, are invariably conducted. And this is during summer, when the weather is anything but conducive for running in our tropical country.

The Full Marathon events in Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Bengaluru, etc. draw massive crowds of late, and particularly with the all-pervasive social media attention, it feels like everyone is running all the time! Despite this growth, the Indian running scene is still in its nascent state compared to, say, the United States, and the time is definitely ripe to think deeply about the future. In particular, to celebrate and acknowledge the World Environment Day on June 5th, we at The

Rundown wanted to talk about Mother Earth and the part runners can play as we continue on our journey towards Personal Best timings and other records. Who better to share views on this topic than Peter Van Geit?

This Superman from Belgium has called Chennai home for the past 17 years. He and the massive army of “outdoors enthusiasts” that constitutes the lovely Chennai Trekking Club (CTC), have, over the past seven-odd years of their existence, systematically and meticulously worked on various aspects related to health and wellness, while keeping the good of the environment and social consciousness firmly in mind.

The Chennai Trekking Club organises treks, marathons, ultra marathons, swimming sessions,

triathlons, tree planting, beach/river/slum clean-ups, lectures, workshops and scores of other events big and small, throughout the year. The Chennai Trail Marathon & the Jawadhu Hills Ultra, organised by CTC, are very popular among intrepid runners, and have been widely appreciated by all, as events with a “lot of heart”.

We spoke to Peter specifically about marathons and how as organisers, runners, volunteers, well-wishers, or even just denizens of the earth, we can work together to make the Indian running scene a better one from the viewpoint of the environment...Taking time out from his busy schedule, a day after his return from Vietnam, where he spent time cycling and exploring the beautiful country, Peter spoke to us as usual, straight from the bottom of his large heart...

**How can we make marathons more earth friendly?**

Marathons in India have become very large events of late. There are 10000+ participants, and a huge number of volunteers, and others as well who are out on the roads on event day. Although the original intent of the marathon is to foster healthy living through physical activity, the amount of garbage generated is immense — and that obviously has a very adverse environmental impact, which in turn affects our health! Sometimes we should pause and ask ourselves —what’s the point?

The main sources of garbage are the aid stations, and the finish area where breakfast is served. At the aid stations, it is the norm to use plastic bottles and/or paper cups. At breakfast counters, pre-packed boxes are provided, or paper plates

& plastic flatware are used. All these are single time, use & throw items, and for a large event, generate a mind-boggling tonnage of garbage that is sent to the landfill.

I think there are simple things that we as organisers can do. First, all the single use paper and plastic items can be replaced by biodegradable substitutes. Areca plates for breakfast and banana leaves at aid stations, as examples. Second, the breakfast can easily be served buffet style — which reduces food waste as well. Third, as far as possible, existing infrastructure (e.g. college canteens that serve large number of people everyday) can be used — steel plates and tumblers that can be washed after use. Finally, for unavoidable garbage, source segregation could be done meticulously so that all recyclables are sent to recycling plants, with

maybe a compost pit for the organic components, following proper eco guidelines, so that ultimately the waste going to landfills is truly minimal.

We at CTC have taken all these measures successfully, particularly in the beautiful Jawadhu Hills run, where we go completely green. We made a single time investment and bought reusable plastic cups. We provide peanuts and cut bananas on banana leaves. Breakfast is buffet style and everyone is encouraged to take only as much as they want to eat. Of course we are conscious of the fact that runners shouldn’t be inconvenienced — we try hard to ensure that they don’t have to wait at aid stations for supplies. But making decisions so that the load on the environment is significantly lower, is not difficult, really.



Photo Courtesy: Peter Van Geit

**What conscious steps can runners take?**

Well, it's easy. At the aid stations or food counters, drop the trash into appropriate containers. Most events segregate trash; so make sure you follow instructions regarding separating plastics/paper from organic/food waste. Of course at breakfast, pick only

what you can eat to avoid wastage. Mainly as a runner you need to co-operate with the organisers, who have hopefully put proper systems in place.

Another trend I see of late is that all events provide bright coloured T-shirts. Of course for organisers and sponsors it provides instant

visibility and is an important collateral item. But as a runner, how many T-shirts can you possibly use? I would suggest that runners try to opt out of event T-shirts, as they use synthetic dyes and the process of manufacture and ultimately disposal of these materials is not environmentally friendly, especially on a large scale.

I know that runners like to participate in well known events in distant locations, and achieve PBs and so on. But I think it's good to pause and occasionally wonder if it's really worthwhile to travel to another country, creating a huge carbon footprint, spending a lot of time and money, just to run for 4-5 hours. There are so many beautiful places to run in, in India, which are easily accessible, it will be great if runners started exploring and experiencing these more, rather than chasing after something they see others doing on social media!

“There are so many beautiful places to run in, in India, which are easily accessible, it will be great if runners started exploring and experiencing these more, rather than chasing after something they see others doing on social media!”

*CTC organizes a massive number of events throughout the year-marathons, triathlons, etc. What would you say is your philosophy, as event organisers?*

We started off as a trekking group, as you know. But generally we are all about the outdoors, and being close to nature. We go out every single weekend of the year — something like 3-4 events every weekend! Trekking, mountain biking, trail running, open water swimming, these are just some of the things we do, to take people out of the concrete jungles. So you could say that we build a consciousness about health,

and get mentally and physically recharged, by being outdoors and at one with nature.

In recent editions of our running events, we have also started associating various causes related to our green activities. “Ainthinai” which is one of the arms of CTC has taken up several tree plantation activities, and building awareness about such causes fits in neatly into the larger events we organise. Due to the work done by CTC over the years, particularly during the December floods and in its aftermath, we have become fairly well known now. The interest in our activities and events has risen quite sharply.

The Jawadhu Hills Ultra and the Chennai Trail Marathon are organised by us to cater to slightly more experienced runners. We like to keep the number of participants at a certain level, and not scale up too much. The events are completely handled by our in-house teams, end-to-end. We have done away with expensive items like timing chips, as we like to keep the events economical, and completely not-for-profit. We built our own registration portal using CTC talent, so that as far as possible third party dependencies are eliminated. The events are run purely on our passion, because we want to give you all the rich experience of outdoors running and being close to nature. The feedback from the participants has always been very positive and it encourages us to continue down this particular path! Runners recognize that even though some aspects may not be perfect, CTC pours heart and soul into the events- and really, that's all we volunteers can ask for.

**What do you look forward to in India in future years?**

The members of CTC share this passion — we want to get people outside the cities, we want you to experience beautiful trails that are so close by, we want you to have these intense running experiences in inspiring, clean surroundings, we want you to see how people are so hospitable in these lovely places, almost untouched by man. It's so awesome that truly, you can keep on running, and never have to stop, and your dependence on aid stations or whatever becomes irrelevant!

In the future we want to organize a niche, challenging, international quality ultra race (or two). Perhaps as we build more visibility, we can get better participation — from Indians and others. It will be wonderful if these places that our explorations have revealed to us, are put on the world map. But mainly, we look forward to putting together niche events that focus entirely on runners' experiences in pristine natural surroundings. Of course, leaving behind only footsteps...

**Citizen's apathy - how do you think we can counter that?**

I remember that in 2009, we had organized a trek to TADA waterfalls. This being a very popular tourist destination, we could see the damage done to this location by man. We immediately kicked off a cleaning activity, 100-200 people volunteered and we could clear several tons of garbage. It doesn't matter if it's a marathon runner or a non-runner or whatever, but when people come forward, change will surely happen.

Since the devastation wrought by the December floods in Chennai,



Photo Courtesy: Peter Van Geit

our group has organized at least 50 cleanups — in slums, municipal schools, along the adyar river, in parks, etc. People have come out and participated very well in these activities – of course all these have been completely volunteer based, and could you imagine, that 1000s of citizens would come out for such work?

I believe that the only thing to do is to keep at it. We have been remarkably persistent in our efforts. We have our team of photographers who meticulously document our activity every single time. We post on social media, with high quality photos and detailed descriptions. Suddenly, the movement just grows, as the images stick in people's minds, and everyone wants to be a part of the changes happening around them.

Maybe it is true that people are apathetic, particularly when it comes to issues like hygiene, and green practices and so on, but I think it's because they are not exposed to such aspects from a young age. In my travels, and also in my home country I have seen that the awareness about urban waste and the environment are quite high when the government and all other stakeholders come together

and work for the common good.

We ourselves at CTC have grown in our past seven years, our awareness and our ability to conceive solutions to various problems has been scaling very well. From just removing garbage on a regular basis from various locations, to segregation, recycling, home composting, we have come a long way now... And all along we have found support, out of guilt or whatever, when they learn about these things the citizens have joined hands with us.

*One remarkable aspect of CTC's efforts has been to galvanize youth — obviously the future lies in their hands, but how have you managed to get youngsters to engage on these "uncool" activities like clean-ups & so on?*

Really, all we can do is start with ourselves. The core members of CTC are very driven, passionate individuals, who believe deeply in the ideas and can be remarkably persistent. We don't allow ourselves to get frustrated easily. We understand that the influence of people around you is strong. If they are not environmentally conscious, then youngsters don't realize the importance of this type of living. But we truly believe that individuals can bring about massive change.

Not everyone has to become aware and start eco-friendly practices on day one — if 1% of the population changes, it's enough, and it's a beginning! Slowly, over time, it will trigger the rest, especially if the government lends a little bit of weight and support.

Marathons & running events, which at the core are meant to make people healthier, should shoulder a big responsibility — I am confident that over time, with all of us working together, we can retrieve the original & natural beauty of India!

And there you have it! A lot of food for thought about runners, marathons, and life in general, from this remarkable individual. "Explore the unexplored" says CTC's byline, and our hearts fill with hope when we see first hand the passion they share, and the humility with which they approach this massive problem of reducing human burden on mother earth. We hope that on the occasion of World Environment Day, it gives you thoughts to mull on, and ideas for a handful of simple changes to make in your lifestyle as a runner and a citizen of the world, and to celebrate our short life on this wonderful planet. ■



Get up to date with the various initiatives and events by CTC, & also see the amazing visuals and write-ups they put together at their website – <http://www.chennaitrekkers.org/>



# INDIAN MARATHON SCENARIO

Indian Marathoner hopefuls at the Rio Olympics by *Team Sportstar*

In the race to the Rio Olympics, Indian athletics has a healthy look, thanks to the marathon runners and the walkers.

Seven of the athletes, who have qualified for the Olympics, are in the marathon. How many of them would eventually run the marathon in Rio remains a mystery.

O.P. Jaisha and Sudha Singh had kindled high hopes among the Indian fans when they were placed 18th and 19th in the World Championship in Beijing last August.

Lalita Babar had also qualified for the Olympics at the Mumbai Marathon earlier in January.

Realising that their Herculean efforts to cut down a few minutes

may not eventually fetch them much laurel in the Olympics, Lalita and Sudha have since qualified in the 3000 metres steeplechase as well, to have a shot at glory in Rio.

The national record holder in women's marathon, Jaisha (2 hours 35 minutes, 43 seconds) has been trying to win a qualification in the 1500 metres or 5000 metres. Coach Dr. Nikolai Snesarev who has been training the athletes mostly in Ooty is confident that Jaisha would meet the qualification standard, possibly during the exposure stint abroad.

Quite encouragingly, Kavita Raut who qualified for the Olympics in the SAF Games in Assam does not look likely to run away from the challenges of the marathon. She has been training with her coach in

Nasik and is likely to run two half marathons in Europe in preparation for the Olympics.

Equally, among the men Nitendra Singh Rawat, who clocked 2:15.48 in the Mumbai marathon has been diligently training with coach Surinder Singh Bhandari for the Olympics.

Versatile runner Kheta Ram (2:17.23) and T Gopi (2:16.15) are the other two who have got the Olympic qualification in the marathon.

Quite notably, none of the Indian men ventured to run the marathon in the World Championship in Beijing, and thus could not gauge themselves in a world class field. ■

# A THING I DON'T TALK ABOUT WHEN I TALK ABOUT RUNNING

"Running is a continuous learning process. The deepest learning," writes *Siddhartha Menon*, "it seems to me, is about oneself"...  
A contemplative essay





This title might seem self-contradictory, and actually I don't talk very much about running. But I am curious about the question "Why": "Why running" is the overarching question, but there are more specific ones as well. Some of these I have been asked, for instance "Why a marathon?" or "Why take part again in an event you have run before?" or "Why take part in events at all, if it's the *running* that you love?" My interest is not so much in articulating answers as in recognizing how difficult it is to do so. I don't see this as a problem: it is the nature of the why-beast to be elusive. And let me say at the outset that I don't claim to speak for runners generally — presumably there are many who are quite clear why they run.

But each of these "why" questions gives me pause: they stimulate my thinking but are hard to answer convincingly, and that is perhaps why, when I do talk about

running, I don't usually talk about them. They take me to murkier ground than if I were to talk about shoes, routes or training plans. The province of "why" is less susceptible to being charted: it can be surprising when it is traversed attentively. To be sure, reasons that would meet any of the "why" questions are not hard to find and no doubt people are sincere and honest in giving them. It is just that when I utter them, or even think them to myself, I find myself wondering how far they are true for me.

Let me take the overarching question to illustrate this, i.e. "Why running". I can easily rule out a few familiar reasons: it isn't to lose weight, since I am skinny and always have been; nor is it really to keep fit because I have tended to take fitness for granted in the sprawling campus where I live; it isn't because I am a gifted athlete or have ever felt that I was "born to run"; it isn't because I love racing — I don't, though I do enjoy

seeing how fast I can go (as long as it doesn't hurt too much).

Is it, then, that I love running? How I wish I could simply affirm this — there would be an end to the matter. But the fact is that I do not invariably run with love in my heart. There are surely times when I am driven more by a training routine — or by the need to complete what I have set out to do at an event, or by a cussedness that gets me out of bed two hours earlier than strictly necessary. This is not to say I hate it — if I did I would stop — but it certainly isn't always the lift to my spirit that I associate with love for what one is doing. Hence, for me, love is an insufficient answer.

Is it, then, that it boosts my self esteem and possibly my public image to be considered a runner, and not just a runner but a marathoner? I am sufficiently immodest to bask for a time in the glow of these labels

but I don't believe for a moment that they drive my running. When I first found myself running longer distances than the crowd, as a teenager, it may well have owed something to my need to establish an identity. I was not great at other sports though I enjoyed them, and running was not very popular amongst my peers. So to give myself to a fringe sport was a way of being distinctive. But when I ran my first marathon in my 40s running was no longer a fringe activity, and now it is becoming increasingly mainstream. I can no longer attribute my running, if ever I could, to the desire to be seen as different, or to see myself as different. Ego, like love, is at best a partial explanation.

Then how about the varied sensory pleasures that come with running? The cool of early morning on a darkened street with the only sounds your patter on the road and the first birds and maybe the

wind in the trees, then easing into a rhythm of stride and breath that could go on forever, the muscle-surge as you break into an interval run or as the Finish Arch comes into view, and the relief when it is done, the "high" afterwards that we are told is due to endorphins (whatever they are) kicking in, the sense that you have earned your tiredness and hunger...All of these are pleasurable. But I would hesitate to say that I run because of them: they are more like by-products, and in any case they are offset by any number of not so pleasurable sensory experiences: the ache and sometimes the wry self-pity of having to come out when the world is asleep, your legs heavy and the prospect of running for two or three hours ahead of you, the anxiety about stumbling in the dark and having to inhale the exhaust fumes of a passing truck, or during an event the disjunction between mind and body at some point after 20 miles... But these too are no more than

by-products, which is why one continues to run in spite of them.

Likewise, I would see the social benefits — the mutual encouragement and respect, the ease of friendship with strangers on a shared run — as incidental. I do not seek them out. Most of my runs are done alone and I still think of running as a solitary pursuit. I do not run in order to have company or make friends, though when these occur I am the better for it.

As with anything one does seriously, running is a continuous learning process. The deepest learning, it seems to me, is about oneself. I have learnt amongst other things that it isn't at all obvious to me why I run. And yet, as long as it brings more pleasure than pain, more joy than sorrow, I shall continue doing so. I shall not break my head over why, because I suspect that any answers I come up with will be hedged around with qualifications. ■

# HAM JAM!

One may think it is more productive to run the hills for faster and efficient calorie burn-out but the strain to the legs, the hamstring, in particular, is nevertheless absolute, warns *Dr Madhu Thottappillil*



There are two kinds of runners who are my patients; those who have recently embarked on their running journey and those who have been running for a while now and are doing what it takes to get better — clock more miles, get faster or do something constantly to increase the calorie burn-out ante. Recently, a young woman landed in my clinic with acute pain in the back of her thigh. She had just started running, she mentioned. In the course of our conversation, I also realised she was sprinting and not jogging. She claimed she was an athlete while in school and hence was very confident she could pick up speed, overnight. To add to that, someone had apparently told her that speed was the best way to lose calories, and fast, which incidentally was the primary reason she was running. While her confidence in her abilities must be lauded, the

rigors of change keep the body busy and this must be something we have to be constantly aware of. I figured as I examined her weak spot that she had indeed pulled a hamstring.

Another seasoned runner came to me two days ago. I was surprised he was here because he was someone who usually took the necessary precautions. He was just back from a week-long summer break in Kodaikanal. He knew his exact problem as a strain in the back of his thigh and knee region. I gathered he had been running in Kodaikanal where the terrain is undulating. You don't necessarily get to run on straight, flat terrain which is what our legs are conditioned to. One does not realise the strain on one's legs while running uphill. One may think it is more productive to run the hills for effective and faster calorie burn

but the strain to the legs, the hamstring, in particular, is nevertheless absolute.

A 'pulled' (or strained) hamstring is one of the most common injuries that I encounter amongst runners. The hamstring, unlike what its name suggests, is not one muscle. It is a group of three muscles that are present at the back of the thigh. The muscles are Semimembranosus, Semitendinosus, and Biceps Femoris. The function of these muscles is to bend the leg at the knee and also extend the leg at the hip joint.

This particular injury is usually common amongst sportspersons who participate in sports that rely on explosive speed. Long distance runners usually sprain their hamstring during speed work, hill work or other training diversification exercises.

## Causes

- Relative inflexibility in this area
- Muscle strength imbalance. Hamstrings are more prone to injury when they are less than 60% as strong as the Quadriceps
- Muscle fatigue

*The symptoms of a 'pulled' hamstring are dependent on the severity of the injury.*

- A grade 1 strain describes fibres that are stretched but not torn. Here, the athlete usually describes a

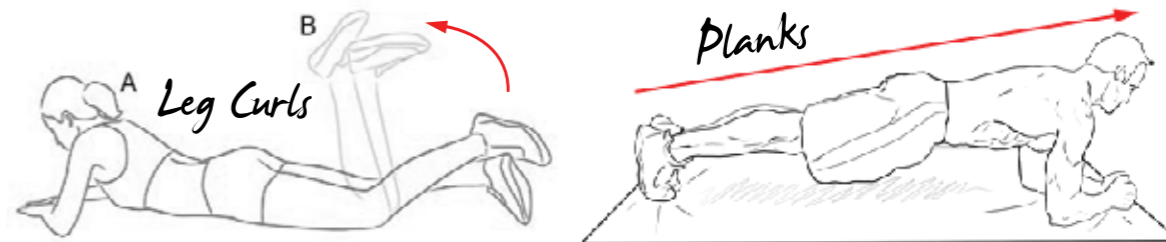
slight pull or ache at the back of the thigh. The onset of the pain may be gradual. Minimal pain along with swelling when the knee is extended.

- A grade 2 strain occurs if there is a partial tear of some of the muscle or tendon fibres. These injuries follow an acute event. A sharp pain is usually felt in the back of the thigh or higher up toward the buttocks. Walking is usually difficult and a limp is often present. As extending

the knee stretches the injured muscle, a limp is often present. The area of injury will be swollen along with tenderness.

- A grade 3 strain describes the rare situation where there is complete tear or rupture of the muscle or tendon. Here the symptoms of pain and swelling are very intense and high. These injuries are usually described as having occurred with an audible 'Pop' sound.

## Hamstring injury prevention tips



- Flexibility programmes should be incorporated into the training routine

- Lower back stretches and pelvic tilt exercises should be incorporated to stretch the muscles of the lower back

- Quadriceps stretch to stretch and/or roll the quadriceps and hip flexors

- Hamstring stretches should

preferably be done by lying on one's back rather than standing up and reaching out to the toes

- The core muscles strengthening must not be neglected. I always advocate the incorporation of 'Planks' into the training routine

- Leg curls is a simple exercise to strengthen the hamstring. Focus on moving the muscle through its full range of motion, hold it briefly

at the top of the action, and then return slowly. Progress very gradually through the weights

- Bent Leg Active Isolated Stretching is another useful stretch which improves the length of the hamstring by using the quadriceps to straighten out the knee

- Glute bridges is another exercise that can be incorporated into the training routine

## Treatment

Immediate cessation of running followed by Icing, rest and elevation.

Grade 1 or most grade 2 injuries heal spontaneously with rest and

the runner will eventually be able to return uneventfully. Hamstring injuries take three to four weeks to recover. If the symptoms persist, it would be prudent to consult

a specialist to evaluate the injury to explore various diagnostic and treatment options that may include medications and physical therapy followed by rehabilitation. ■

# MTS STRIKES BACK



Life is full of challenges. So incidentally, is running. MTS makes sure you are armed with knowledge, at least to fight the battle that is running in India in 2016, if not the whole damn war. In this edition, MTS talks to people that are “into” marathons, cycling, etc., but struggle with basics like etiquette & food. Her obsession with a certain number worms its way into this piece, unobtrusively and without warning...

*Disclaimer: This is a fictional piece and any resemblance to fellow runners heavy breathing in your ear is purely coincidental. Really.*

**Dear Ma'am,** I am into boutique races. As you are no doubt aware, even these races are getting very crowded of late. Last month, I ran a race in Padavarahalli, and it was a nightmare. I was just taking my pre-race selfie, and had stretched my left arm out. I had of course angled my body slightly to the right, and, as my left side photographs better, was just about to turn my head when I accidentally brushed against another runner-who didn't apologise. In the ensuing scuffle, the starting gun sounded and we rushed off, & I missed my PB by 0.03s. My photo was also ruined and I feel I must find this person and make her pay. How do I track her down? Please advise.  
- Narsi Ssus

HEY! I was the person you whacked with your right elbow. You got me in my eye, that too! I curse you.

Hope your mobile's selfie camera reduces to micropixels and you get a wart on your forehead (on the left side).

**Ma'am** - I am into cycling of late. However, I am finding it difficult to figure out how many Kms of cycling is equal to 1Km of running. So as to avoid any miscalculations, I submit this to you. - Bhutt Sore

I love math problems. Thank you, dear fake reader, for this question. Using a very complicated code (written by yours truly, you are welcome), I have determined that the answer to this question is 42. The mind truly boggles at the improbability of this, & itches to add an additional few yards to balance the equation to the decimal.

**I am into protein management.** I read in an online forum that as a runner I must eat 10 eggs a day. I am wondering, why not the hen itself?  
- Carbol Oader

Protein is massively important now. It is, to 2016, what Boost (not the shoe) was to 1980. It is the secret of MY energy. I suggest you try harder, or buy an ostrich or something.

**Dear Ma'am** I am participating in an abroad marathon race next month. So I was wondering if you could kindly please using your store of knowledge help me plan how to go about this. Also, when should I tell my wife? - Airy Ticket

Okay this is the real deal then. A marathon is 42.195Km long. Abroad is located most likely at a distance larger than that. It is essential that you carry a passport to get there. Not to mention a visa. And a ticket for some sort of inter-country transport. Why don't you wait till you are deep inside the foreign country, convicted of some crime (e.g. faking documents for visa) & at risk of deportation, then run 42 times clockwise in a circle before you call your wife? It may be best.

*I have heard that steam or ice baths are good for relieving post-marathon stress on the muscles. It is very confusing for me. Which should I pick for maximum benefit? I want to be back to running at the earliest.* - Impatiencienza

I remember once long time ago, after I ran a very tough marathon. I was so sprightly and energetic the next day. All my friends were surprised. They asked me the same question. “What is it, MTS — ice or steam?” The answer was neither. What I had done was taken a nap. Meanwhile, last week, I had a great steam bath. It was great. And all I had to do was step out of my house. Got to love Chennai!

*Someone photo-bombed my “I finished” selfie. Can I sue her?* - Narsi Ssus Again

Yes. ■

# UBER COOL...

Yup, you are right! In this column, **Harish Lakshman** introduces us to some fascinating and cutting-edge gadgets that are out there for those looking to add that splash of oomph and cool to their running life...

It is amazing how the list of gadgets and accessories keep on increasing as a sport becomes more and more popular, and mainstream. Running is no exception. With the increasing global popularity of running, there

are more gizmos to spend your hard-earned money on than ever before! And I am not talking about GPS watches, heart rate monitors, etc. These ones move it up a notch! Here are my top six picks:

## The HydraCoach

It is not just a water bottle ! The HydraCoach hydration monitor is a revolutionary interactive fluid measurement device that automatically calculates, monitors and provides instant feedback on fluid consumption for athletes, medical professionals and other health conscious individuals. Determined by a user's weight and duration of exercise (sport version), the product will generate a personal hydration goal for the day. The monitor can be further adjusted manually in the setup mode to accommodate other known hydration factors (i.e, intensity of exercise, heat, altitude, pregnancy, etc) to meet each user's specific hydration needs, or the recommendation of one's coach or other nutrition expert. You can read more or buy it at: <http://www.hydra-coach.com/company/index.html>



## The MilestonePod

Get more data with this device clipped on to your shoes! The affordable and simple shoe-worn device gives you:

1. A smart shoe odometer. You will now know the total mileage of your shoes. No more manual tracking!
2. Gait and performance metrics. Get unique foot-based data not available from other devices. This includes data on Foot Strike, Impact Rate, and your running efficiency!
3. A convenient GPS back-up. The Pod works everywhere, even indoors. And no charging needed!

You can get more details or buy it at <http://milestonepod.com/how-it-works/>

## Knuckle Lights

Perfect for many runners who are out on the road by 4 AM! As the name suggests, Knuckle Lights are the first and only lights designed to be worn on your hands, in the perfect position to light your path and be seen on your next run or walk in the dark. Once you try them you will realise how much more comfortable they are compared to the ones you wear on your head! You can get more details or buy it at <http://www.knucklelights.com/>





## The Tigerlady

This is quite relevant to women runners, especially given the numerous episodes of guys in two-wheelers trying to “attack” them. TigerLady is a small and effective women’s self-defense tool. At less than two ounces, TigerLady is easy to carry and will fit in your back pocket, bag, or even your favorite clutch, but keep it in your hand while running alone. TigerLady fits perfectly in your hand. Make a fist and TigerLady is ready for action. They carry them as safety running grips. Holding grips can take the pressure off your arms and shoulders while you run. When it’s dark and the adrenaline kicks in, it’s hard to get a good look. The hollow channels on the underside of TigerLady’s claws are designed to collect DNA and protect it, thereby making a positive identification. Of course, how well equipped the police in India are on catching culprits based on DNA is entirely a different matter! You can get more details or buy it at <https://www.tigerlady.com/>

## Stryd – the Running Power Meter

Runners can now get a new device that promises to monitor your running power. Called Stryd, this small pod clips to your shorts and uses 3D movement and environmental sensors to calculate how much force you use to move forward, regardless of changes in conditions like incline, wind, and surface. All of this gets communicated to your smart phone or sports watch, including Garmin and Suunto devices.

Cyclists have long used power meters to gauge their effort no matter what gear they wear or the terrain. But runners rely on pace, which doesn’t tell you how hard you’re working, just the final outcome. Runners also rely on heart rate, and this has its own set of problems with time lag and external variables like how much coffee you drank this morning. When you’re going uphill with the Stryd power meter, for example, you can see the power number increase even as your pace decreases. You can also monitor how hard you’re working as you fatigue during a workout or race. If you adjust your stride to run more efficiently, the device would show a decrease in power while going the same pace. You can get more details or buy it at <https://www.stryd.com/>



## Mission Wear and Towels

Sweat too much? Want that extra cooling when you are running? Mission’s EnduraCool instant cooling technology chills fabric surface temperature by up to 30° to help you control temperature on demand. Quick cooling means you command a competitive edge – and when you control temperature, you unlock performance. You can get more details or buy it at <http://www.missionathletecare.com/>



Running the Premier Races-  
Warm up for Boston



Photo Courtesy: Manivannan Vangalur

# SOUL-SOME

Durban is this way! Four words that kept *Manivannan Vangalur* going as he ran and finished his Comrades Marathon 2016 in style. Here he reflects upon the race and the perspectives he has garnered from running what is one of the toughest ultra marthons in the world

I got sick somewhere in the middle of the race; I'm running the Comrades Marathon, an annual ultramarathon of approximately 89K, counted among the world's largest and oldest ultramarathon race. This year, the race held on May 29th was a down run starting from Pietermaritzburg towards Durban. Between the 40th and the 58th km, I got sick; I had severe nausea and a bout of severe dizziness. I can't recall anything. Readings from my Garmin data, a day later, reveal that that stretch was the slowest 5K I have ever run in my life — 42 minutes.

“**When you run long distances with someone, you end up sharing a lot; sometimes you let them know your deepest, darkest secrets. In Chennai, I connected with a handful of very special people, all talented and spirited runners, who I consider among my best buddies**”

At the 58th km, I meet a random stranger, who asks me, out-of-the-blue if I'd like some Tums. I say, “Yes, please; and by any chance do you have some Imodium as well?” For those who don't know, Imodium is a multi-symptom relief most common for diarrhoea. “Let me check,” he says, as he looks into his pouch and pulls out a tablet. Who was he, and how and why did he show up with exactly what I wanted, I wonder much

later, reflecting upon what I consider has been one of the toughest races I've run so far.

I finish the race, well within the cut-off time — 9:57. I had trained consistently for 9 months; I knew I was going to finish within 9 hours. I also knew that even if something were to happen, I would still finish the race within 10 hours. I did. But I've been thinking and reflecting upon the race; about some of the mistakes I know I made and shouldn't have; about the humidity and my lack of training in weather that was akin to the weather in South Africa; about not wearing the right hat and the ventilation issues that caused me all the sickness and therefore affected my training.

But I think most often about that stranger who showed up; just at the nick of time. And then things fall in perspective. That the result of the Comrades Marathon was perhaps not the one I wanted but the one I needed. It is the result I was supposed to have... And that result I know will make all the difference. Like it always has...

I started running in November, 2002. I was slightly on the plump side and I had just turned 27. I remember my client had organised a 5K race in Louisville, Kentucky and I was almost certain I was going to finish the race pretty easily. I ended up finishing last but one. After the 1st km, I was panting. That embarrassment coupled with a nudge from my client spurred my interest and I began training for a half marathon in April 2003. Two friends joined me and I recall finishing my half marathon in fairly good timing - 2:17. I did the same marathon until 2007 and thereon actively started running half mar-

athons across the United States until 2008 when I officially became a full marathoner running the Derby Festival marathon in Louisville, yet again, clocking a 4:42.

To use a cliché, by then, I was hooked to running. I was in better shape, health-wise; I was eating healthy and running helped me regain my sense of self and accepting myself for who I am. For many years now, I have dealt with a skin disorder called psoriasis. A slow, incurable, auto-immune disease, that can be debilitating emotionally, running slowly and steadily helped me with caring less and less about how people perceived me and enabled me to gain more confidence and find an anchor that allowed me to find both purpose and meaning in life.

In 2010, I returned to Chennai, my hometown, where I went to school and college. I decided to spend a few years there, working with a bunch of friends and hanging out with my family. I didn't stop running. I started running with the Chennai Runners sometime in August 2011 — until then, I was a solo long distance runner; I also discovered running with music for company — and went on to play an active role in spearheading and nurturing the Besant Nagar chapter of the Chennai Runners.

You know when you run long distances with someone, you end up sharing a lot; sometimes you let them know your deepest, darkest secrets. In Chennai, I connected with a handful of very special people, all talented and spirited runners, who I consider among my best buddies — Niranjan, Preeti, Ashwin... the list goes on...



Participating in the Chicago Marathon



Carmel marathon april 14th in Indiana. I did 3:42

In Chennai, I also met Krishna (Kumar Rangachari), who first introduced me to the importance of strength training. With him and a small group of people, we'd bond over the Monday Morning Mottai Maadi routine, where Krishna helped us strengthen our core that in turn greatly improved my run. I met Balaji, (Subramaniam) Aravind (Kumar) and Ram (Viswanathan), to name a few, all quiet, motivated runners who continue to be among my best friends and runners and important influencers in my running career.

The Comrades story began in Chennai. Balaji would often tell me that I must give the Comrades a shot. And then Aravind, who had already run his Comrades in 2015, decided to run the Comrades again this year. Training with a friend would be great, I thought, and on the September 1st when registrations for the Comrades Marathon opened, I was among the first to sign up.

Consistency has always been my

forte, even if I say so myself. In September last year, I began following coach Lindsay Parry's training plan, hoping to do a sub 9 race. I ran four to five runs a week and complemented it with two strength training sessions. For the latter, I joined a Cross Fit gym here in Frankfort, Kentucky, where I live now, and to ensure I followed the plan which required me to run a full marathon every month, I signed up for different races across different states in America.

And then, the race day arrived. All I knew was, like I always say, I needed to just put one step in front of another and keep moving on. Between the toughest 18kms of the race, all I did was kept emptying my head of my thoughts. "Durban is this way," is all I kept telling myself and when I finally reached the finish line and the international tent where my friend from Chennai, a runner from the Besant Nagar chapter, Ashish Singh, who happened to be in South Africa and who hosted me, was waiting to welcome me with a bear hug,

I felt a sense of joy and elation. Ashish, by the way, assisted me at three different points along the course. At the 58th km, I told him, "Ashish, please apologize to all our friends tracking me; I won't be going for a sub 9 anymore." He said, "Coach (that's how they call me), don't worry, just keep going and finish." And just then, magically that stranger appeared with medicines.

Sometimes when I run, I have a whole lot of stuff on my mind; sometimes, I have a whole lot of nothing. I think of people who have motivated me, of those who have promised and let me down. I think of all the issues I have and of all the issues everyone has. But one thing I have learnt over the years of running, and of running long distances, all by myself is that come what may, you have got to keep moving on. Because running is a lot like life. If you feel down, you only have yourself to blame. Some days you can handle a situation; some days, the situation handles you. ■

# A RENEWED YOU IS A HAPPIER YOU

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