



THE POOR PRINT



Marathon Running 101

Max Schwiening

The Build

Start your training off very easy, you should be able to talk while running. Make your runs as short as they need to be to be able to train every day. Try to make the total distance for the week increase each week – aim for around a 10% increase, but change this depending on how you feel. Work out the average weekly distance and speed you need in the eight weeks prior (ending one week before your marathon) using the ‘Tanda’ prediction on this website: <http://app.paceguru.co.uk/>. Work in a 5-10km race or hard run once a week or fortnight in the eight weeks prior to the marathon. Don’t race the weekend before the marathon!

Quantity over Quality

A marathon is a long way, and so in training you should also run a long way. This does not mean it is necessary to do one big run every Sunday

and then shorter faster runs during the week. It would be much better to slow down all of your runs to avoid injury and run further every day. Increasing the distance you run each weekday by a little bit allows you to run much further each week than trying to run really far on the weekend. Slicing your runs up into two or more a day can be very helpful in increasing your daily distance. This is especially useful if you struggle to find time during the day and you don’t want to be running around on cold winter nights. If you are lucky enough to live within a reasonable distance to your work then running your commutes can be very good - and if they seem slightly too long, remember that you could always do them later in your training when you are fit enough.

You should make all of this running slow enough that you find it relatively easy – you should never feel like you need to vomit after a run (unless you had some dodgy seafood the night before). Training fast does have its uses: as I mentioned, you should think about doing a short race every (other) weekend leading up to the marathon. This will get

you used to the feeling of being in pain and pushing hard during a race so you can actually get to your limit.

Track your Runs

Recording the distance you run and at what pace is very important in being able to plan your build and check you are on target. The cheapest way would be to download the Strava app and record your runs using your phone. If you don’t want to carry your phone, you would have the plot the route you run on Google Maps and time how long it takes you. By far the best way is to use a GPS or smart watch to record your runs.

Train Hot, Race Cool

When we run, we are at most 20% efficient at using fuel to move us forwards – almost all of the rest is lost as heat. You basically become a small kettle when you run. This heat you generate goes into evaporating your sweat which cools you down. So, despite what society makes you feel – sweat is your friend. The more you can sweat, the harder you are able to work without overheating. It is possible to get better at sweating by training hot. So layer up when you train and you will grow bigger and more efficient sweat glands.

When it comes to race day, wear as few layers as is legally possible and dump as much water as possible over your head. If you have done your training right then you should be able to get around a marathon drinking and eating very little, if anything.

Train Heavy, Race Light

Training wearing heavy shoes or with a rucksack will increase the intensity of your runs without you having to increase the pace. This is very helpful as it may reduce the risk of injury and shift your perception of how hard a certain pace is. For race day, get some nice light trainers that you have run in before and go minimal on the clothing. No leggings, base layers or arm/leg warmers are necessary (unless you are doing the North Pole Marathon).

Race Smart

The hardest bit about racing a marathon is to know what pace to start out at. Most people get it completely wrong and that’s why they ‘hit the wall’. However much training you have done, it is still almost always possible to get round a marathon without ‘hitting the wall’. The problem is that the majority of runners start running the marathon at a pace

much faster than they are able to sustain for the whole distance. So when 20 miles comes around, runners start dropping like flies - and this does not just happen to the average runner (just search ‘The Crawl’ on YouTube).

To have a much more enjoyable marathon you need to run a negative split – where the second half of your run is faster than your first half. This means starting off really slow, so slow you should probably be able to talk for the first 10 miles. If you have recorded your runs then you can use them to predict how fast you can run the marathon and then set off at that pace. The website I mentioned above should predict your finish time to within 10 minutes providing you stick to the pace it tells you.

Good Luck

There are many more subtleties to marathon running than this, and much of this does not represent the current popular belief about training. All of this does have some very good scientific rationale behind it however, so if you would like to know more please feel free to message me.■

‘Domestic Conflict’

Anonymous

The following piece contains scenes which may be distressing for some readers.

The noise is muted. It’s just a buzzing dull throbbing in the back of my head that I can ignore.

The hand, however, is a problem. The hand is what your eyes are drawn to, what your heart palpitates on seeing clench and tighten on fabric. We fear the physical so much more than the words, because it’s real and here and now. We can’t ignore the hand.

It’s probably better that I’m blocking out the screaming. The words would hold threats and such aggression that my mind would tremble and hide in the safety of my subconscious. Block out the noise. Focus on what can be stopped.

The woman is pale and drawn. She’s bug eyed but her eyes can’t stay open, she’s sagging with loss of oxygen and her mouth opens and closes like a gutted fish. I’m pretty sure she’s not hearing her own voice, the scrape of vocal chords constrained and grating on each other in a terrible terrible pitch. All she will be hearing is the thud of her own heartbeat, and her ears crackling with the pressure.

The hand contracts and I’m watching listlessly, with a dull curiosity, each muscle and knuckle, each fingertip white and bloodless from the pressure. I can’t do it now.

Lips moving, the spit flying into her face, she can’t wipe it off. It is uncomfortably easy to watch her, frozen as she fades.

In the morning they’ll call it domestic conflict, as if both parties are fighting.■

Self-Care

Emma Gilpin

‘Self-care’ and ‘self-love’ have become everyday terms, a revolt against a society which tells us, constantly, that we are not quite enough. Inevitably, there are those who criticise and mock this self-care movement: the idea that people should spend time looking after and taking time for themselves can seem strange or uncomfortable in a world where we are so acutely aware of other people’s suffering. Sure, it’s possible that we have problems of our own but, compared with other people across the world, they seem miniscule. Perhaps those of us with the opportunity to study at one of the best universities in the world should pipe down, be grateful, and get on with things. In reality, self-care is still important.

During Peer Support training, we were reminded that in the event of an aeroplane crash people are told to put their own masks on before helping others. This is a simple, but important, thing to remember - whether you’re on a flight, supporting friends through fifth week, hoping to get more involved in charity work and activism, or simply trying to develop a decent relationship with a new tutor. It is very hard to be helpful to anybody else when you are struggling and not taking care of yourself. I think this takes a while for many young people to internalise, because when you first leave home you are suddenly left in charge of your own well-being, like a chick fleeing the nest on Springwatch, uncertain and a little bit shaky on the flying front. It may seem selfish, or like a waste of time, but taking time out to look after yourself when you start to feel stressed by work, or the state of global politics, is not only a nice thing to do, it is a form of protest. In a world, and especially an environ-

ment like Oxford, that tells us we should be busy all the time, it is an act of political resistance.

‘Self-care’ can be a somewhat awkward phrase. It might seem a bit cheesy to admit that you look after yourself, or need to spend time processing the aspects of your life that are more stressful. It sounds a little like you need to spend an evening a week literally soothing yourself, covering your body in cocoa butter and sitting very still. But self-care can come in any form and under any name. It is simply the bold act of spending time doing things you like, just because you like doing them. ‘Self-care’ is a positive term as it

gives meaning to the time we spend on ourselves, whether we spend that time exercising, cooking, drawing, watching sitcoms or indeed covering ourselves in cocoa butter and sitting very still. In an environment where we are encouraged to spend every hour of the day being productive, it is important to schedule this time for ourselves.

The summer before I came to Oxford, one of my favourite songs playing on YouthComm (Worcestershire’s hippest youth radio station) was ‘Don’t Be So Hard On Yourself’ by Jess Glynne. I heard this song most days towards the end of that summer, driving

around in my mum’s Golf. But somehow, when I started university, I completely forgot Jess’ words. It’s so easy, when you’re here, when you’re anywhere, to get caught up in life’s difficult parts, exciting parts and stressful parts, and forget that you are a person and you need time to process. We all need time for self-care, whether you cringe at the term or not, and if you need an idea for your next act, I’d personally recommend listening to some Jess Glynne.■



In the Event

Amanda Higgin

Xanda and I have been having a conversation about our respective literary collections, wandering together around University Parks after having lunch in town. As an English Literature degree student, Xanda is obliged to have a huge collection of books of impressive quality; as an English Literature A-leveler I choose to have a large collection of dubious quality. Sci-fi might not be sophisticated but, at least in my opinion, Orson Scott Card beats Jane Austen every time. We pause on the north side, watching the ducks in the pond by LMH.

‘In the event of my death,’ Xanda continues, ‘you can have first pick of my library.’

I look sideways at her for a moment before responding. ‘That’s a bit morbid, isn’t it? I appreciate the offer, but can’t it wait until your last will and testament?’

She shrugs, ‘I haven’t actually written a last will and testament. I probably should.’

‘Why?’ I’m suddenly a little concerned for my friend, although she seems unflustered.

‘I’m not expecting to shuffle off this mortal coil just yet,’ she smiles to lighten my evident unease. ‘It’s just always good to be prepared. There’s no reason you should leave your legacy to chance in the event of some awful act of fate. It’s one of the reasons I write down any secrets I’m keeping or ideas I have so that, in the event of my death, that knowledge won’t be lost forever.’

I look out over the park and wonder momentarily whether she has a point. It’s a big swing in tone from our bookshelf-measuring contest moments ago, but then perhaps it shouldn’t be. Death has a habit of being surprisingly mundane, although I’m lucky not to know it well.

‘One of my parents’ friends died at uni,’ I voice my thoughts. ‘He must have been 20, or 21. Got too drunk at the Union bar and was thrown out, but none of his friends noticed so he ended up walking back to college on his own. He fell down some stairs, landed on his head, and that was it.’

‘It happens,’ Xanda sighs. ‘I dis-

courage dwelling on the subject because, after all, we are here to live and not to prepare to die. The point is not that you need to set your affairs in order right now because you might die any minute; goodness knows, we’re too young for that! No, the point is that, well, you ought to be ready in case you don’t get all of the time you planned on. I’m in this world partly to improve it; if I die, I don’t want any of my plans to be lost. If I write them down then they outlive me, at least in some way.’

‘That’s true. Dying might even make them more successful, depending.’

As Xanda begins to wander further down the path and I follow beside her, I take a look at the snowdrops beginning to suggest that spring may be about to appear out of winter. There’s probably a worthy metaphor there, if you care to find it.

‘Still, I wouldn’t like to worry my parents by calling for a lawyer.’

‘Your parents are lawyers.’

‘All the more reason!’ I laugh, and we go back to talking about books.■

Slow Travel: Bodies of Water

Tobias Thornes

Like a great, central artery, the Trans-Siberian Railway sweeps right across the vast expanse of Russia the giant. From Vladivostok in the East to Moscow in the West, through snowy plains and forested mountains, crossing countless streams with names unknown to travellers overwhelmed by so great a swiftly sweeping, vanishing array, it can transport you in less than a week from end to end.

Joining this aged network from its newest, northern limb on my slow cross-country journey across the ‘Second World’, I stopped some third of the way westwards in the sub-polar city of Irkutsk. That city, in itself, proved a place of little splendour, save for its exquisite gaily-coloured Orthodox churches still stamping a magical and distinctly Russian character upon a settlement rendered somewhat drab by Soviet-era changes. Here are ugly twentieth-century buildings – assaults against the art of architecture just as atrocious as any other turgid post-war tower-blocks in the West or in the East.

But what I’d really come for was every bit the gleaming gem of Russian natural beauty that I’d been promised it would be. Surrounded

by mountains that predate the dinosaurs, atop a seven-kilometre-deep sediment-filled rift that stood the test of thirty million years, lies the largest, deepest, oldest body of fresh water on Earth: Lake Baikal, ‘Nature Lake’.

Its waters, also some of the world’s clearest, stretch down to a depth of over one and a half kilometres, teeming with life. Gazing in awe upon this glassy expanse, it was difficult to imagine such profound deeps, and the many unique and wonderful works of nature concealed therein. Arriving on an antique, picturesque railway that man had made, in a quainter era, to skirt this great mirror of enchanted adoration, I saw its timeless beauty from many angles – except of course from beneath the icy waves.

That I did not submerge my own body within those frigid waters was perhaps just as well: I discovered that the lake may be clear, but it isn’t always clean. Every year several thousand tonnes of liquid waste disgorge into the crystal waters from bulging boats and tourist resorts that dot the shoreline. And for nearly five decades a paper mill pumped in pollutants, threatening the age-old kaleidoscope of life for the sake of empty pages belched out in their blank, faceless reams.

Baikal’s very vastness almost made it vulnerable, not long ago, to the threat of an oilier ooze, as profit-

pained prospectors sought the quickest path to lay a Russia-China pipeline, right through its sacred waters, carrying with it all the risk of potential leaks and spills. Fortunately, the government stepped in and diverted the pipe just days before its construction, and instead of a paper mill I was greeted by the Baikal Nature Reserve exhibit that has somewhat ironically replaced it. Maybe this special place will survive the murky footprint of recent modernity after all.

Yet if the future’s clean and green, Russia certainly hasn’t kept up with the times. The contribution of renewable energy to its electricity has been almost static for years, being mostly in the form of decades-old hydroelectric dams. Russia’s commitments under the Paris Climate Change Agreement somewhat craftily constitute a thirty per cent emissions cut by 2030 on the 1990 levels of the filthy USSR, which is actually a rise relative to today.

For Russia, fossil fuel is king, and she draws in huge sums selling billions of barrels of oil and voluminous quantities of gas west into Europe and now south, via a new body of pipelines, to a China hungry for energy and eager to abandon its even dirtier coal. There are reserves without reckoning lurking beneath Siberia, enough to cause climatic devastation if the world doesn’t change its habits and avert an im-

pending apocalypse of its own invention. Russia’s whole ‘business model’ is based on the hope that it will not.

Nor is nuclear power such a promising prospect as it once was set to be. The Trans-Siberian took me on through the rugged Urals region, where Earth’s most aged mountains stretch to the sky in a barrier 2500 kilometres long from north to south. The region became, from the twentieth century, Russia’s poisoned industrial heart, as factories and people poured east to escape the spectre of German occupation in the Second World War.

The mountains are as safe a refuge as any, driving such a cleft that the climate on their Siberia-facing eastern slopes is noticeably different to that of their warmer western fringes. This was where, in the heady rush of wars both hot and cold, Russia sought to develop herself into the world’s nuclear superpower. The hideous remnants of a too-hasty dabbling in dangerous physics are still there, supposedly secret but impossible to hide.

The Urals are a place of dark forest and deep mines, beautiful on the surface but hiding ugly truths. My train didn’t run through the little town of Kyshtym, site of the world’s third worst nuclear disaster in September 1957. For a decade the research centre there had dumped unfiltered radioactive waste into the now hopelessly corrupted Techa River, a tirade of toxic sludge accumulating in a squalid soup in Kara-

chay Lake.

When a waste tank was finally installed instead, little care was taken to keep it properly cool. The resulting explosion sent deadly soot settling for miles around. But few knew of the true extent of this hushed-up horror, and some nearby neighbourhoods – though dangerously radioactive – weren’t evacuated for over a year. It was not until 1976 that the USSR at last admitted to the rest of the world just why the security of the Kryshtym ‘nature reserve’ was so strictly enforced. The Techa River still retains thirty times the safe concentration of tritium.

But it wasn’t radiation poisoning that filled me with fear for the future as I descended from the Urals, which in many parts remain a wonderland of wildlife despite the industrial incursions. It’s worth remembering that many, many more people will die from the toxic fumes spat out by power-stations greedily guzzling Russia’s unspent reserves of coal than have died in all the world’s nuclear power disasters to date.

Air pollution remains the world’s biggest premature killer. And that’s without even counting the cost of the climate change catalysed by those carbon belching furnaces. If Russia wants lasting prosperity, and to preserve all this beauty for future generations, it’s rather the country’s barmy business model that’s going to have to change. ■

‘Kittens’

Charlie Willis

His Uncle Ronnie had found them. He came to their front door on that rainy winter’s evening cradling a bundle of ragged clothes. They were in the other room watching television when they heard the knock echo out into the hall. Her mother groaned, summoned just enough energy to lift up her hand from where it was hanging off the sofa and wave it at Sophie. Sophie struggled out of her nest of blankets and went out into the hall.

It was dark because they were only allowed the lights on in one room at a time. But the streetlights glared brazenly in the rain outside and threw uncle Ronnie’s bulbous shadow onto the floor of the hall. Sophie had known it was him from the knock. She hung back in the darkness for a moment. He knocked again.

‘Let him in,’ her mother’s weak voice came from the other room.

She heard, in some distant corner of her mind, a whisper of a thought that suggested she could just ignore her mother and keep the door closed. Those sorts of thoughts had only come into being since her eleventh birthday last month, but she was not yet ready to listen to them properly, let alone act on them. Her mother’s will was still an unshakeable truth, and Uncle Ronnie’s entrance into their dark little home was as certain as the setting of the sun.

‘Hello, my little lady,’ Ronnie said when she’d pulled the door away from him. The cold, damp smell of the wet world pushed its way into their hall. He stepped inside heavily, his boots squeaking on the floorboards. A rag from the bundle of clothes came loose and fell down by Sophie’s feet. She could hear his wheezy breathing over the hissing of the rain on the pavement outside.

‘I’ve got you a present,’ he croaked as Sophie closed the door behind him. A twinge of dread made itself felt in her

stomach.

‘Hello Ronnie,’ her mother’s voice floated through to the hall again, and Ronnie lolloped through to the lounge, leaving heavy prints of mud and rainwater in his stead.

The light from the lamp on the floor was yellow and thin and seemed eerily still against the flickering white light from the television. Her mother had forced herself upright in her sofa bed, and her pale hands were entwined together on her lap.

Her new position gave gravity a fresh opportunity to morph her features. Her forehead seemed to droop and press down on the arch of her eyebrows, pushing them down at the outer edges and forcing her features further into the centre of her face. Her black eyes had sunk entirely into the depths of their sockets, leaving empty holes like cave mouths above the sharp ridge of the cheekbones. Fluid collected at the bottom of the creased skin that hung beneath the cheekbones and so her face seemed to be slowly slipping off her skull. Her mouth, downturned of course, was almost completely invisible and that, Sophie

thought, was what made it so hard to hear her voice.

‘Oh my love, look at you,’ said Ronnie. He knelt down beside her, his leather jacket creaking.

‘I’m not well, Ron,’ Sophie’s mother sighed, and as her thin shoulders rose up and fell down again she winced.

‘Well I’ve got your Sophie a present,’ and he turned to Sophie to holdout the bundle of rags. She reached out and moved the various layers aside. The bundle had a musty, lively scent. She heard a whimper coming from its core, and Ron hurried her along.

‘Come on, come on, you daft girl,’ he said, letting out the smell of old cigarette smoke. The bundle at last fell apart in Ronnie’s arms and it took Sophie a moment to make sense of the writhing knot that was revealed to her.

‘Kittens,’ said Ronnie, and he grinned. There were three, their little pink, pulsing bodies wrapped and twisted together. The whimpering and soft mewling grew louder as Sophie touched their soft, warm skin with her forefinger. ■

‘Sonnet Composed Inside Bristol Temple Meads’

Aidan Chivers

As I wait for my train I watch thoughts and strangers roam
In two centuries of litter where I stop and bathe my mind;
I trace the seats, the tracks, the stars, to see, or maybe find
A moment for myself in this place they’ve all called home.

I step across the gap, weighed down with the heavy tome
Of age-old words and waste, which leaves me stuck behind:
As the train enters the night, to its man-made path confined,
Harsh lights brush through Bristol’s moonlit monochrome.

A man stands still on the platform, looking back at me,
With eyes that catch me in their grasp, his pupils inky-black.
I form a poem in his head as Brunel’s station starts to flee;

He shrinks away, a distant shape across the track.

I lose myself, I turn, and aching, strain to see –
I watch and blink, but just my own two eyes stare back.

Bodies on Display

Kryssa Burakowski

The cultural fingerprints of the Austro-Hungarian Empire can still be found all over Zagreb, a city that was under the rule of the Habsburg monarchy for centuries. Its mark can be clearly seen in the traces of the fin-de-siècle Vienna Secession movement across Zagreb. Croatian architects of the period, many of whom trained in Vienna, have left a legacy of beautiful *art nouveau* architecture. There are numerous examples since considerable reconstruction was necessary after a large earthquake in 1880. (It’s just a shame that the further from the centre you go, the more desperately in need of a lick of paint some of these buildings seem to be.)

Perhaps the most obvious example of art nouveau style would be the Kuća Kallina (Kallina House), completed in 1904.

When I arrived in Zagreb, I was lucky enough to catch the end of an exhibition at the Galerija Klovićevi Dvori bringing together art from Croatian artists and members of the Vienna Secession (the most famous being Gustav Klimt). Yet in an ironic twist, my favourite paintings of the exhibition were not at the exhibition at all. For me, the highlights of the display were copies in monochrome of the three paintings Klimt had made from 1900-1907 known as the Faculty Paintings. Made for the ceiling in the University of Vienna’s great hall, they were destroyed in 1945 by SS troops retreating from Aus-

tria. Criticised for being inappropriate, the paintings were never accepted for their purpose.

Each painting tackles one of the oldest topics of study: jurisprudence, medicine and philosophy. What I found most interesting was the physicality of Klimt’s images. Instead of using symbols for the subjects, the areas of study are personified – but not by creating one being encompassing the key features of each subject. Philosophy sees human figures drifting in the cosmos, some clasping their heads in their hands. Medicine shows a mass of human bodies crowded around a skeleton, as well as the mythological figure Hygieia. The three female figures in the foreground of Jurisprudence are surrounded by a swirling ribbon of darkness while another figure, head-bowed, is in the clutches of the tentacles of a giant octopus.

It seems that, ever since ancient times, people have found it useful to understand or explain concepts and phenomena by creating humanoid characters, like the gods of the ancient myths. Klimt incorporates these classical ideas into his pieces with characters like Hygieia, as well as using more vulnerable, mortal human shapes. And these classical themes just keep returning. Zagreb’s architecture is also notable for the sheer amount of decoration on many of the buildings. There are so many figures that it has even given rise to a weeping-angel-like urban myth that they come to life at night to roam the city streets.

Gargoyles, decorative faces, statues, friezes and caryatids: carved human faces and stone bodies are everywhere above street level, watching over the people walking below. ■