



BE A BETTER RUNNER

REAL-WORLD, SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN TRAINING TECHNIQUES THAT WILL
DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE YOUR SPEED, ENDURANCE, AND INJURY RESISTANCE

SALLY EDWARDS

Ultra-marathoner, former master's world record holder in the Ironman Triathlon, and Triathlon Hall of Fame inductee

CARL FOSTER, PH.D., F.A.C.S.M.

Professor of Exercise and Sport Science,
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

ROY M. WALLACK

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Roy Wallack's Dedication: To Norman Wallack, possibly the coolest dad in the universe.



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>>> INTRODUCTION

THROUGH THE CROWD, just as the clapping that filled the conference room began to die down, I saw Carl coming at me. “Of course, we’ve known all along that it’s all true!” he said of the speech just delivered here at the annual meeting of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) by Dr. Daniel Lieberman, a Harvard professor of evolutionary biology who discussed the research that underlies his theory that shoeless human hunters ran long distances in daily life for thousands of years before civilization began. “Everyone on this planet was born a runner!” he said.

“Yes,” I responded. “Running is so enmeshed with our identity and history and survival that it’s almost spiritual. It connects you with who you are. To not do it almost makes you less human in a way, doesn’t it?”

Carl Foster, Ph.D., esteemed exercise physiologist and professor at the Department of Human Kinetics at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, nodded knowingly. “It was great to hear that what we’ve instinctively known about running can now be backed up by the facts,” he said. “And you and I have been thinking about, and writing about, the hard facts about running for a long, long time, you know?”

Yes, I know. Carl and I have known each other since the mid-1990s, when we met for the first time at another ACSM meeting. As we like to say, we clicked right away because we started arguing within thirty seconds!

I favored heart rate as a way to measure performance. He favored RPE, the Rating of Perceived Exertion system of Gunnar Borg of Stockholm University. Both he and I are strong personalities, are highly competitive, and do not give an inch. I’d founded one of the world’s biggest running shoe stores, Fleet Feet, and finished second in the 1981 Hawaii Ironman triathlon. He’d gone mano a mano with some of the world’s top athletic theoreticians. He forced me to defend myself—and as anyone who knows me will tell you, I always defend myself.

I was right, he was wrong. My heart rate analysis was objective. His RPE, despite the numbers and regression analysis you might wring from it, was subjective. On top of that, I was arguably the expert on heart rate training—Carl even admitted that he’d read my heart rate book, the first of its kind on the then-new heart rate monitor, and called it “quite bright.” That made me glow, because it might as well have been a compliment from the mouth of God.

After all, even though Carl was wrong about heart rate versus RPE, he didn’t just fall off the turnip truck. After doing his dissertation under the wing of academic and coaching legend Dr. Jack Daniels, Carl went on to establish himself as one of the world’s foremost authorities in analyzing and quantifying athletic performance. And his curiosity was limitless. For years, he’d been studying everything from the VO_2 max of an Olympic 1,500-meter runner to the oxygen uptake of a cardiac patient trying to climb a flight of stairs. Carl’s depth of knowledge in the field of running and athletic performance was legendary.