

Barefoot/Pose Running Workshop with Max DeLacy

Summary

Introduction

'Trust your body, you are born to run' - Max

Humans have been running to survive for over 2 million years. I believe we are beautifully designed to do so efficiently and without excessive impact or stress to the system.

We have been wearing built up running shoes with heel raises since their advent in the 1970s (40 years ago). Since this time the % of runners suffering from injury has increased. Obviously, something doesn't stack up.



The chicken or the egg?

So.. the modern running shoe, with it's pronation control and padded heel, was created to protect us from the impact and potential joint damage of heel striking. But heel striking is only possible when running in padded, built up shoes.. go figure.

I'll have the fish please.

Step out of the causality loop, and suddenly other possibilities become apparent. If we run in something flatter and more 'sensitive', encouraging a lighter mid-foot landing, this removes the necessity for heavy, built up running shoes.

Some days we run and it feels natural, almost effortless. Other days, it is just hard work.

There is no perfect running technique that all should emulate. But for each of us there is an ideal stride length, gait, posture and mental state that facilitates beautiful running. The kind that has you smiling for no particular reason long after you have showered off.

While our best running requires a deep mental and physical relaxation, a profound "letting go", there are a number of physical and mental exercises that help us find our groove..

Warm-up exercises

Boxer's shuffle

Light bouncing on the spot, shifting weight from one foot to the other.

Plyo Hops

Both feet together, hopping forward and back on the spot

Masai Jumps

5 consecutive jumps on the spot, each one slightly higher, use arch, Achilles and calf as springs.

Single Leg Stand (SLS)

Lift leg up under you as if skipping. Hold position. Ensure hips are centred, body stable.

SLS to pull

Pull support leg up, ensure pull happens before foot is dropped.

Fast pulls on the spot

Pulling the feet under you using hammies, build intensity/cadence.

The Pose

Posture

Remember to always keep that feeling of expansion, never compression. Head back in line and lengthen through the crown of the head.

Relax the traps and shoulders, you should feel gravity holding your arms, heavy elbows.

Core (TVA & Pelvic floor) switched on, this should ensure the pelvis is engaged and level underneath us without an anterior tilt.

Knees and ankles flexed, soft and responsive.

In a static pose, the mid-foot ground contact point, the hips, shoulder and ear should all stack up. The lifted leg is underneath the body, heel lifted towards the butt. Aim for a figure of 4 shape with the two legs.

The Pull

The aim is to pull before you drop. This keeps the fall going, reduces breaking forces and perpetuates momentum. A mouthful, but those 2 words are at the heart of effortless running.

Partner Drill

Watch partner as he/she stands in 1 leg pose stance and switches legs by pulling support leg up. Give them feedback as to whether the pull came before the drop.

The Fall

‘The longest relationship each of us will ever have is with Gravity.’ - Max

This is where it all comes together. The fall must come from the centre not the head. We must work continuously to separate true fall from perceived fall, which is often our body tricking us by simply changing posture (butt back, head forward, increased hip flexion) and losing the ‘pose’.

Falling not running - partner drills

With all of these drills the challenge is not to pull out of the fall as your partner lets you go. Focus on keeping forward, don’t pull back out of the fall.



Forward Fall

Facing your partner, fall forward from the hips, head back, partner to cue by holding back of hand against belt line so person falling can feel where movement starts.

Falling /Hip Hold

Partner stands behind and holds person falling at the hips as they fall forward. Pull them back to upright. Let them go on 3rd ‘fall’. Runner tries to keep falling/pulling for 15 – 20m.

Partner Fall/Release

Runner puts hand on partners shoulder and begins to pull, then falls from the hips. As the partner feels pressure build on the shoulder, he/she pivots, ‘opening the gate’ and freeing the runner to take off, continuing to pull/fall.

Cadence – Maintaining the fall..

If we take away one message from this workshop it should be this:

‘Cadence is King.’

Everything else feeds off this. If we can get our cadence up to 90 lifts p/min p/foot (or 180 if counting both feet), magic starts to happen.

Ride that unicycle.

The simplest way to increase our cadence is to reduce the length (think radius) of our gait cycle. As the foot comes off support, make sure it does not push backwards. The first movement as the foot comes off the ground should be forward and through, keeping the cycle small and the foot on the imaginary pedal.

Partner Sole Slap

This drill encourages the pull through once foot is off support. As runner pulls/falls, partner follows alongside, trying to give the sole of the foot a light slap as soon as it comes off support to encourage it to pull through not push back. Ensure the slap follows the foot's natural cycle. No points for tap tackles.

Summary

Relax

Tension is the enemy of speed. Keep your shoulders and head back, spine long and hips, knees and ankles soft and responsive.

Go wild

To discover the joy of running get off the road and onto the trails. Vary the terrain you run on to activate and strengthen the full spectrum of muscles in your feet, legs, glutes and trunk.

Free your sole

All these exercises will be more effective when training barefoot. Running shoes are often the problem as well as the solution. With over-protection comes weak foot musculature, poor sensory feedback, unbalanced posture, altered biomechanics and increased risk of ankle injuries.



When barefoot is not a safe option, Vibram Fivefingers are the next best thing. They retain all the benefits of training barefoot with the grip and protection of a Vibram sole. More info including specials and stockists at <http://www.barefootinc.com.au>

I hope this is useful, and good luck for your ongoing health and fitness, with Mike and the Evo crew, I believe you are in good hands. Max