



The Long and Short of It – DM Peterson

Perfect Form

The Friday before the Tahoe Relay I was treated to a lively debate between **Rob Main** and **Val Sell** regarding running form and more precisely turnover vs. stride length. They were quite spirited. As is often the case, I found that they often seemed to be saying the same thing in different ways and thus they were unable to understand each other. In the end I think they agreed to disagree or disagreed on agreeing or something like that. I certainly found it interesting but did not want to think too much about it with a race the very next day!

You can hardly open a running magazine, web-site or blog now days without being bombarded with a whole slew of advice on how to run. I have used up a fair amount of space and ink dedicated to the subject of bare-foot running and my own attempts at same. Quick update: I am up to one-mile on the Montgomery HS football field, alternating 100M of quick strides and 100M of slow jogging. For me this bare-foot running has seemed to be beneficial so far in that I just *feel* more efficient. I am certain that I am running with more of the desired mid-foot strike than in the past and although I have not put myself to the ultimate test before the merciless stop-watch – I feel like I can better get up on my toes and really sprint when I need or want to.

Okay, so running bare-foot striders can possibly improve your form. The bare-foot part may be “new” but anyone who has been around running; especially *track* knows that doing striders to enhance your speed and form is older than Jim Thorpe.

Besides the wonderful world of running bare-foot, what else is out there to improve your form? Well, LOTS of stuff that’s what! I know of at least two formal running technique schools of thought:

Chi Running is described on their web-site as: “the world’s leader in teaching safe and efficient natural running technique” and teaching “the benefits of barefoot-like” running”. Besides promising improved efficiency and reduced injuries, the Chi Running Technique is described as blending “the powerful movement principles from T’ai Chi, with running”.

Pose Method is described on their web-site as: “a system for teaching of human movement”. A further description states “if you analyze the movement of any body through time and space, you will clearly see that the body passes through an infinite number of positions. Pose running promises to “dramatically improve training and racing performance, help prevent injuries and create a competitive edge.

Wow. They both sound great though they seem at first glance to take different approaches. One “eastern and philosophical” the other “western and scientific”. Only further investigation can reveal whether either is for you.

The Empire Runner

Personally, I find this all very interesting but will strive to continue to keep a balance between technique and just relaxing and having fun.

Meanwhile after listening to Rob and Val I latched on to one component of their discussion surrounding *turnover*. That is to say how many strides one takes per minute - so on my Thursday night long-run I decided to take random samplings of my own turnover rate. I counted every other stride then doubled it after each one-minute interval going up Canyon, around Ilsanjo, up the Gravel Grind, down Richardson, and along Channel Drive. I was shocked to find that no matter the terrain, my speed or perceived effort – the number of strides varied by no more than one or two per minute, averaging right around 170. If you look up “how many strides per minute is ideal?” on the internet you will quickly find several links that claim 180 is the magic number.

So, I guess I need to find a way to pick up another 10 strides per minute without going into cardiac arrest. And... I really wonder exactly what I am doing differently when I am going faster vs slower, uphill vs downhill vs flat if my number of strides seems to stay constant. I am betting on either stride length and/or push-off which was at the heart of the Rob vs Val debate.

I guess the next step in the process will be for me to read more and see what other folks are saying about form and stride length and average turnover rate. Sounds like something best done in a chaise lounge while sipping an IPA.

Department of Corrections

Last month in my Annadel “rant” I mis-stated a couple of facts. Here are my corrections:

- 1) The number of State Parks targeted for closure is 70 state-wide not just northern California.
- 2) The DMV annual fee initiative would have cost motorists \$17 dollars not \$10. So YES you could still buy 3 gallons of gas with the money you saved by defeating the initiative.

State Parks Department

Thursday I did my first “bandit” run in Annadel now that they have closed the park Tuesday thru Thursday each week. It was a little eerie knowing that the park was closed and it got me thinking a little bit about the men and women who maintain and patrol our parks. We have all heard of the “thin blue line” representing the police but it seems to me we tend to take for granted the thin *khaki* line formed by our State Park Rangers. Next time the park is actually open and you see one of these fine folks give them a wave and thank them. And **BUY A PARK PASS** while you wait for Sacramento to sort this all out.