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Five Running Books You Should Be Reading

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After your evening run, try reading one of these top-notch running books this summer. Photo: www.shutterstock.com

Any or all of these should be on your list for the summer.

There are a lot of books about running. There are memoirs by famous marathoners, how-to guides on running your first 5K, and fictional stories of athletes. But, when you poll runners, the same favorite books come up again and again. These are not training manuals — of which there are also many — but stories about being a runner.

Recommended for those looking to learn more about their sport, or just looking for a good read, make sure you crack open these five books.

Born To Run – Christopher McDougall

There's a reason this book is being made into a movie and has remained on *The New York Times* bestseller list nearly every week since its publication in 2009. The semi-autobiographical story of McDougall's journey to run with the Tarahumara Indians in Mexico, joined by a collection of elite ultra-runners and mixed with historical anecdotes on the science of running, captured the zeitgeist of a changing running industry.

The book has been credited with being at the forefront of the natural running

movement and a catalyst for the minimalist running shoe trend. It's also just a fun read. More than any other, *Born to Run* is cited by runners as one of their favorite books about running.

"That was the real secret of the Tarahumara: they'd never forgotten what it felt like to love running. They remembered that running was mankind's first fine art, our original act of inspired creation."

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Once A Runner – John L. Parker, Jr.

Once a Runner is filled with over-the-top writing, a central plot pitting fictional collegiate miler Quenton Cassidy against evil school bureaucrats, and a clichéd final race where everything is decided. Yet, its legions of fans will tell you the book is simply one of the only accurate depictions of what it means to really be a runner — day in and day out.

Until its re-release in 2009, the out-of-print 1978 novel was shared among track teams and passed between training partners. Used paperback copies sold for over \$75 online. In 2008, Parker wrote a sequel, *Again to Carthage*, following an aging Cassidy's quest to come back as a marathoner. The cult classic is a must read for all serious runners.

"You don't become a runner by winning a morning workout. The only true way is to marshal the ferocity of your ambition over the course of many days, weeks, months, and (if you could finally come to accept it) years. The Trial of Miles; Miles of Trials."

What I Talk About When I Talk About Running – Haruki Murakami

Murakami is better known for his award-winning novels, like *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* and *Kafka on the Shore*. But in 2007, the lifelong distance runner turned his attention to chronicling his own athletic pursuits.

What I Talk About When I Talk About Running is part training diary, part anecdotes of running adventures, part memoir, and part philosophical musings on life. For the writer, running is very much a metaphor for everything. His training for the 2005 New York City marathon offers a sort of framework for the book, but it is truly about whatever Murakami wants it to be about. Not for those craving action, *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* is best enjoyed by the meditative runner.

"When I'm running I don't have to talk to anybody and don't have to listen to anybody. This is a part of my day I can't do without."

The Perfect Mile – Neal Bascomb

In the annals of sports history, Roger Bannister's first-ever sub-4:00 mile is a landmark. But the story of how it was achieved is more interesting than a simple recitation of dates and times. Published in 2004, no doubt to coincide with the 50th anniversary, Bascomb's book tells the story of Bannister, Australian John Landy, and American Wes Santee as they all aimed for the historic barrier. Though the outcome is known, it's hard not to root for your favorite of the trio as the races progress — particularly Santee, who gets the shortest end of the stick.

Bascomb also makes the important decision not to end the book with Bannister's race, but shows how the runners continued doing that they did even after the historic

event. Well-researched and well-written, *The Perfect Mile* is an exciting story that just happens to be about running.

"Landy and Bannister were profiled and compared on every score — their birth dates, heights, weights, and fastest half-mile, mile, and two-mile times. Images of the two runners were placed next to each other. Final quotes from the two were published."

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Running With The Buffaloes – Chris Lear

For a season in 1998, Lear followed the Colorado University cross-country team on its quest for a first-ever national title. The team, which included Adam Goucher just as his career was taking off, goes through ups and downs over the year — all which Lear is there for.

The main focus is on Goucher and coach Mark Wetmore, who Lear was also training with at the time in a bid for the **Olympic Trials**. Voted consistently as one of the best running books, *Running with the Buffaloes* is written very simply, but gives people a look inside one of the top running programs and a real understanding of what it takes to be one of the fastest runners in the country.

"The decision to sacrifice for running is not Goucher's alone. It is a collective decision. The road ahead will be tough, and they understand that they will need to lean on each other to get through the season."

About The Author:

Kelly Dunleavy O'Mara is a journalist/reporter and former professional triathlete. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and writes for a number of magazines, newspapers, and websites. You can read more about her at www.sunnyrunning.com.

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