

## The Evolution of Runners

This is my perspective of running. You may relate to some of it and the various phases that you may have gone through

### **The inexperienced runner:**

**Shy/Timid** – so you have been thinking of running for a while but haven't quite managed to get out. You hear about parkrun and decide to give it a go. You register and print off your barcode and attend your first event. You wear a baggy sweatshirt, your loose jogging bottoms and your white tennis trainers. You start off somewhere near the back. You are being overtaken by "old" people, people pushing buggies and people with their dogs. But you don't care. "I'm not competitive" is all you tell yourself. "I just wanna get a bit fitter". You realise that 5K is a lot longer than what you expected. So, you walk a bit then break out into a jog. Eventually you cross the finish line to an applaud of the time keeper and tail walker. A hot sweaty mess. You are feeling proud to have completed your first parkrun. Next day you have to roll out of bed as your body aches so much...

Fast forward 8 weeks.....you have realised that you need to dress better, so you go out and buy a running top and shorts (for the guys) and leggings (for the girls). Also, a proper pair of trainers. Sports Direct were having a sale and you pick up a pair of Nikes for £30 (pink pair for the girls). You ache less after each run and now you can run all the 5K. The mantra "I'm not competitive" goes out of the window. The person in the blue top IS NOT getting past you today. You up your pace and race them on the home stretch and beat them. After you both catch your breath the person in the blue top comes over and says, "I wasn't feeling too good and wasn't racing you". You nod politely but are thinking, but you kept on glancing back, take the corners to avoid me overtaking you AND tried to sprint to the finish. Would a simple well-done have hurt too much to say? WHATEVER!!!! Your times are dropping. Another PB this week. You tell yourself that you are now a runner.

**Your first 5K race** - You see an advertisement for Cancer Research 5K or Run Through and decide to register for it. It's on a Sunday so you play it safe by not running parkrun. You volunteer instead. There are so many people at the race. Where do I put my bag? Where/how do I pin my number to my top. Will there be water along the course? Where is the toilet? You think to yourself look at that skinny girl doing the warm up. Dancing around to the music. Yea if I didn't have to work and could spend all my time in the gym, I would look like that too. You are at the start line. Heart rate elevated. 3, 2, 1 GO!! There is a mass stampede as everyone goes off at full speed. You go with the crowd. But after 30 seconds you have to slow down as your lungs are about to explode and you can't breathe. Slowly you recover and get into your normal stride. It's a new circuit and lots of people about so you have to weave a lot. But you eventually see the finish line and give it everything. OMG!!

Another PB, a medal, a banana and some water. This is great you think to yourself. Maybe I could do a 10K next time?

**Mid-Week Runner** – you are not improving anymore. You have talked to people and they all say the same thing. You need to have a second run. So, you decide to go out on mid-week after work. This feels weird as you are not used to running in the evening and on the streets. Which route should I take? You run past a shop window and see your reflection. It's a reminder of reality. You don't look like Bolt running 100M. Suck it in and stay tall. That's better, but after another 10 steps things go back to normal.

Tech – you have done your research and bought a Garmin watch. Also, you have been to a proper running shop and had a gait analysis conducted. Now you know how your foot strikes the ground you buy the appropriate trainers.

### **The experienced runner:**

**Sunday long run** – you have made some new friends at parkrun and have been persuaded to come out for a longer run on Sunday morning. You meet at the agreed spot for 9am and you set off. You are nervous, as you haven't run more than 5K. You get to 7K and want to stop. You are so tired. Shall I call an Uber? You walk for a bit. The others go on ahead then double back for you. With their support you finish the 10K route. You think WOW I've just done 2 parkruns back to back. I must be so fit. As a reward you have a big breakfast convincing yourself that you have burnt far more calories than you are consuming. Later that afternoon you have a chocolate bar as you have earned it.

**Club running** – The Sunday morning friends invite you to their running club. You think - I'm not good enough to run for a club, am I? Reluctantly you go to a track session. You have been told you need to do some quick runs to improve your times. But it's been ever so long when you last ran on a track. The other runners start to arrive. They all look professional with their club running tops on (with their names on the front). The coach makes you do a proper warm up. Then you do a gazillion laps. You are so knackered. But OMG what great fun it was. And you weren't the slowest one there. You think you are definitely coming again. You wake up in the morning and get out of bed. OMG!!! Everything hurts. Glutes, calves, stomach and even your arms. But the pain doesn't seem to worry you too much as you had such a good time on track. You make a decision to join up next week. Over the next few weeks club running is dominating your life. It's track. No, it's a mid-week run. No, it's parkrun. No, Sunday long run. You have lost some weight. Your wobbly bits aren't as wobbly. You are reading up about carb loading before a long race. You are eating at funny times to avoid running on a full stomach. You have gathered more running clothes. During the winter months there is always something drying on the dining room chair or radiator.

**First 10K race** - You have now been running regularly 3-4 times a week. Your parkrun time has stabilised. You are enjoying the longer run on Sunday. Everyone is doing the Vitality 10K. You also enter it. It's a massive race and you have never seen so many runners before. It's a bit daunting but also quite exciting. You get into your starters pen and then have the long

wait. You just want to get on with it. Eventually you start. But this time you hold back a little at the start. Everybody runs by. As the race settles you notice that you are overtaking the same people that shot past you earlier. You can't help it. You have a smug grin on your face. Armatures you think to yourself. You are not used to running with so many people. You get boxed in several times. You learn to read the road in front of you to avoid it. You are getting tired but then a rhino runs past you. Your pace picks up. You eventually finish ahead of the rhino (just). You are very tired, but you have a 10K race under your belt. What next....

**First Half Marathon** – you have been bitten hard by the running bug and want more. So, you manage several more 10Ks and eventually book a local HM (which most of your club friends are also doing). You start to run to parkrun. Your Sunday runs become longer. You now have two pairs of trainers. Several running tops and bottoms. Your once immaculate feet are covered in blisters and hard skin. You think you are going to lose a toe nail after a long run. Vaseline is your best friend. You discover what runners' trots are and come home with one sock missing.

You complete your first HM. It was a lot harder than you thought. Secretly you had a target time to beat but didn't quite make it. You tell everyone that you were just running and enjoying the experience. Next time I will smash it you think.....

### **Checklist (things that may occur):**

Blisters/Vaseline

Runners' Nipples

Injury – various muscles/joints or lower limbs

Take your trainers on holiday

New Diets – Eat Clean, Vegan

Stop drinking for race preparation

Barefoot running

Divorce 😞