

# Be smart with your injuries

By Bill Shaw

*The Facts*

Published August 4, 2008

**R**ehabilitate: “To put back in good condition ...; to bring back or restore ... to a normal or optimum state of health... by medical treatment and physical or psychological therapy” (*New World Dictionary of the American Language*, Second College Edition).

I began this column in my head in a slow slog on the Freeport Intermediate School track in the heat and humidity of Saturday morning shortly after 7 a.m.

I am in rehabilitation.

In 30 years as a born-again runner, I have been fortunate and avoided debilitating injuries, with the exception of taking a serious spill on my bike in August 2004. I had a painful bout with plantar faciitis in 1993, and experienced miscellaneous muscle strains, tears and pulls.

On the threshold of 70, my balance and flexibility are failing a bit. I fell in early May as I trained for two triathlons. I bloodied my face and chipped my front teeth. Stubbornly, as most addicted runners, I continued to run with a bad hamstring injury and a painful case of sciatica. I limped slowly through the run segments and finished the May triathlons.

Imprudently I continued

to run with some serious injuries. So here’s some advice for runners who are into deep denial as I was about injury rehabilitation.

Although it is against our nature as addicted runners, **Rest** and stay off the road for a week, a month or however long it takes.

**Educate** yourself about the injury. The Internet, runners’ publications and a multitude of other publications provide information about running injuries — their causes, effects and treatment.

**Have** your personal physician diagnose your malady and recommend treatment or a specialist who might be able to deal specifically with your injury. A runner, like a defendant who is his own lawyer, has a fool for a doctor if he treats himself .

**Accept your limitations.** I am a mediocre athlete. In addition, I must accept the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” and the ravages of old age and the slowness of recovery.

Though it is against our nature as runners, **BE patient with your injuries.** I just had to go on and finish those triathlons despite the additional damage to my body and the intensification of my injury.

**INVESTIGATE alternate exercise activities.** Swimming and cycling don’t give me the same endorphin rush as I get with running, but I can maintain some of my conditioning.

**LOWER your expectations when you return to the road.** Jeff Galloway, in his Book

on running, says we lose 100 percent of our conditioning if we are off the road for 35 or more days. Rehabilitation is a slow process.

Before you hit the road, have a thorough **INJURY analysis and evaluation** by a health care professional. Ask for his or her release before you resume your training.

**TAKE small steps in your rehabilitation.** Walk first then walk and jog before running.

**ADD distance gradually.** The rule of thumb is not to increase your distance more than 10 percent every two weeks. A psychological factor in rehabilitation is commiseration.

**TALK to fellow runners about their injuries and experiences.** Runners usually discover maladies and problems more serious than their own in a dialog with fellow sufferers.

**INSPIRE others with your rehabilitation.** Some who are injured give up on rehabilitation. Be a model and a mentor. Don’t be reclusive.

**OFFER your time as a volunteer in race activities.** Volunteer work is inspiring and encouraging for the walking wounded.

**NEVER give up.** You may not return to your former level of performance, but you will be out there eventually running again. Be prudent and practical on the roads and trails. And if your problem is not pain but an injury, put yourself on the road to **REHABILITATION.**

**Bill Shaw’s running column appears in *The Facts* every other Monday**

