



Hi Fellow Runner, it's Coach Jeff from RunnersConnect!

In today's issue of running wisdom I am digging up an old article I wrote way back in 2013 about Ryan Hall's withdrawal from the NYC Marathon.

I thought it was pretty relevant given the NYC Marathon is a week away and we've been seeing a lot of athletes coming into our [6 week bootcamps](#) struggling to break out of an injury cycle and getting stuck in a plateau between races.

I think us normal runners can often feel like we can't relate to the elites, but one thing I have always stressed is that the super elites struggle with the same issues you and I do - they just struggle with them at faster paces :)

I really think you'll enjoy this analysis and likely see many of the same struggles and problems you face in your own training!

Enjoy and have an awesome week of training!

THIS WEEK'S RUNNING WISDOM

In case you haven't heard, one of America's premier talents in the marathon, Ryan Hall, has withdrawn from the 2013 NYC Marathon.

Unfortunately for Hall, this is the third consecutive major marathon he's pulled out of, and prior to that, he dropped out of the London Olympics due to a hamstring injury. He hasn't finished a marathon in nearly two years.

For those of us who have struggled with injury and poor performances, we can relate to Hall's misfortune and understand how difficult this must be for him.

However, I also think we can glean some important lessons from Hall's hardship.

In this article, we'll outline three key training principles you can learn from Ryan Hall's marathon struggles and how you can apply them to your training.

Breaking The Injury Cycle

Hall's injuries began before the London Olympics, when plantar fascia problems hampered his training leading into the trials.

Then, during the Olympic Marathon, a hamstring injury forced him to drop out at 10 miles. That same hamstring issue caused him to withdraw from the 2012 NYC Marathon.

Later that spring, Hall withdrew from Boston with quad pain. This fall, it seems the injury has moved to his hip.

While located in different parts of the body, these injuries are likely connected and illustrate the difficulty of breaking from the injury cycle.

1. The plantar problems probably resulted in Hall altering his form to take pressure off the amount of work his foot had to do. The result was over working the hamstring.
2. The time between the Summer Olympics and 2012 NYC Marathon was only a few months so his hamstring injury never had a chance to heal.
3. Then, it's likely his fear of reinjuring the hamstring lead to him becoming quad dominant (trying to push the leg back, rather than pull from the hamstrings and glutes as it should). This over worked the quad and resulted in a strain.
4. This fall, it seems the problem is in his hip and is consistent with his previous injuries as the issues move up the kinetic chain.

This is why it's so difficult to break from the injury cycle.

I am sure Hall has some of the best therapists in the world treating his injuries. But, the body is a connected chain and will always compensate (often times unknowingly) when we have pain or weakness in a specific area. This results in a never-ending cycle.

How you can learn from this

1. First, I think it's important that you don't set goal races after being injured.

I believe one of Hall's mistakes is signing up for the next marathon before he's even healthy.

I work with too many runners who, after an injury, "need a goal race to stay motivated". I understand the mental component to this, but what inevitably happens

is they stop listening to their body and instead push towards that upcoming race.

Maybe the best thing for their body is to back off a speed session or skip a few long runs, but because the race is coming up, they stubbornly force the training.

2. Second, remember everything in the kinetic chain is connected.

After an injury, even when you're fully healthy, your body and mind are going to try and protect it. As such, other parts of your kinetic chain are going work harder to compensate and this may lead to another injury.

It's even more important that after an injury you work on improving your form, lack of mobility, and strength of your entire kinetic chain.

Train To Your Current Fitness Level

On a related note, I think one of Hall's current pitfalls is that he's simply trying to train at a level he's not yet at.

After a phenomenal debut half marathon and marathon, Hall has been pushing the envelope trying to run faster and keep up with the record breaking performances over the last year. However, there has been nothing to suggest in his racing that he's fitter than a 2:08 or 2:09 marathon runner.

Perhaps the worst thing that happened to his training was the fluke, course and wind-aided 2:04 at the Boston Marathon.

Hall is trying to train as a 2:03 or 2:04 marathoner when he's nowhere near that fitness level.

Your takeaway

I wrote a few weeks ago about the [dangers of setting arbitrary goal times](#). Too many runners, due to either lack of knowledge or unrealistic expectations, set goal times that are far outside their fitness level. Whether it's stubbornly trying for a Boston qualifier or setting the sites on a barrier, like sub 4 hours.

Training for paces you're not fit enough to handle is the easiest way to overtrain, get injured, and stagnate.

Base your training off your current physiological fitness and let your recent races tell you how fit you are and what your goals should be.

Don't Train For The Same Race All The Time

Ryan Hall has neglected to focus on events outside the marathon for nearly three years. Sure, he runs the token half marathon as a tune-up or marathon-paced workout, but he hasn't focused on developing his speed, efficiency or other energy systems in a long time.

Compare this to some of the other notable American marathoners like Kara Goucher, Dathan Ritzenhein, Shalene Flanagan, and Desi Davilla. All three spent time focusing on shorter events like the 5k and 10k between marathons.

This speed development was more than just a few workouts, they raced full track seasons. The result for all three have been consistent (as consistent as one can get in the marathon) performances.

Your takeaway

Stop training for the same race distance month after month, year after year.

Develop a long-term plan that challenges all your systems, provides new stimulus for your body to adapt to, and helps take the strain off running the same event over and over. You'll stay healthier and run faster.

This article was in no way meant to disrespect Ryan Hall. As you can tell, he is more like you and I than most runners think. He has the same fears, struggles and faces the same challenges we do.

Hopefully, Hall's spotlight can help you learn from his mistakes to help make yourself a better runner.