



# RUN healthy

By Edmund R. Burke, Ph.D.

Intense running workouts are great when it comes to increasing fitness. However, they can also suppress your immune system and even speed the aging process. Fortunately, smart sports nutrition can minimize these effects of hard training.

During long workouts, a runner's body releases cortisol, a stress hormone that interferes with the work of the immune system's white blood cells. As a result, your body is more susceptible to contracting bacterial infections during the hours immediately following such a workout.

More worrisome, hard exercise is known to produce free radicals. Free radicals have been shown to damage cell membranes and may be the primary cause of post-exercise muscle soreness.

However, by consuming during workouts a sports drink such as *Accelerade* that contains antioxidants (e.g. vitamins C and E), you can minimize the effects of free radicals on your muscles.

In addition, stimulating insulin release during exercise blunts the effects of cortisol. Sports drinks like *Accelerade* that contain carbohydrate and protein in a 4 to 1 ratio stimulate greater insulin release than conventional sports drinks containing no protein.

By drinking *Accelerade* during workouts, runners can get more of what they want from hard training and less of what they don't want.

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# from the editor

E. Gary Hill

THE PENN RELAYS just set a record for its highest overall attendance ever: 112,277. That came from individual days of 22,346, a meet record 39,104 and a meet record 50,827. The last-day record moved into the all-time top 10 U.S. attendances (see "Stat Corner," p. 50).

Drake just sold out its Saturday session for the 37th year in a row.

The Texas State Meet just drew 19,000 the first day, 16,000 the second.

The USC-UCLA dual meet just attracted more than 8000.

It would be easy for a casual observer to look at these numbers—which go with the news stories in this month's edition—and come to the conclusion that track is becoming quite the spectator sport in the U.S.

Unfortunately, nothing could be farther from the truth. Those affairs are exceptions.

They're glowing chunks of diamond floating

in a sea of dark coal. The reality is that convincing the general public to attend a track meet remains an elusive goal in all but a handful of instances. Fans aren't exactly camping out a week ahead of time to buy tickets in *Attack Of The Clones* mode.

So why is it that a select handful of meets are so successful? Why can they in one day draw more—in some cases many times more—fans than the NCAA or USATF Championships can in a 3- or 4-day run, even though the talent level is so much higher at the two nationals, and so much more is at stake?

The answer is a simple one: because the most successful track meets are more than just track meets. They're *social events*. People go to them for the camaraderie they engender as much as they do for the competition. It's akin to football's tailgate mentality. Sure, those pigskin contests on Saturdays and Sundays in the fall are important to those who pack the stands, but the real pleasure comes from the overall experience. Getting a group together to travel to the game, meeting more old friends in the parking lot, high-fiving with the people in the seats next to you. You become part of a huge extended family. And it's the nature of homo sapiens to be a sucker for "family."

The spectator-successful track meets all have that, in varying forms.

Penn has that. Has had it for years as a rite of spring on the East Coast, but now has it to the nth degree with the building of the friendly U.S. vs. Jamaica rivalry.

Drake has that. Has had it for years by making the Relays a week-long involve-the-whole-community event (the world's most beautiful bulldog contest?) bolstered by a series of class reunions.

The Texas State Meet has that. Almost all state meets have had it forever, but few do it as well as Texas, where speed is king and the sprints and relays are a religion.

Figuring out why those few meets are successful is easy. Figuring out ways for others to join them in the we-got-spectators club is not. Nor is it easy to keep we-got-it status if you do get it. And having it can be inconsistent. There's no better example of this than Eugene, where the Prefontaine meet remains the biggest selling invitational in the land (think *The Cult Of Pre*). But at the same time a city which once packed the house just about any time anyone stepped on the track now has trouble getting much more than 5000 people to show up for an NCAA or USATF Championships.

Obviously, sheer wealth of performance and hot competition aren't enough to sell tickets. But that's the starting point. The answer to this chicken-and-egg question is that it's easier to build a solid track meet into a good social event than vice-versa. The U.S. has some of the best meets on the planet going begging for more bodies in the seats. Who's going to step up and be the genius of a social director who can fill them?

The most successful track meets are successful because they're more than just track meets