



RECOVERY – How and Why for distance runners.

If there was a way that you could better perform in your training sessions and ultimately reduce your event times and chances of injury in as little as 30 minutes a week, would you do it? Maybe.

Over many running seasons, one thing that stands out with those that keep improving and excel is that they are more “Dialled into their running and training”. By this I mean that when they are training well and quickly improving, it’s the extra things they are doing that seem to really count. The most important things are strength training and you guessed it – recovery.

It can be difficult however to be completely dialled in all the time, especially when the challenges of life are added to the mix – So its important to try to incorporate this into your schedule with as minimal time impact as possible.

Whilst the scientific evidence supporting the benefits of recovery techniques is constantly changing, some things do work well even if it’s a combination of placebo and scientifically proven benefits.

5 Top tips for RECOVERY

Cold water/Ice baths

Ice baths have been used for many years by professional teams and sportspeople. Whilst the evidence of the actual benefits and at what temperature and for how long can be analysed at length, there is something about it that just works

How: If your gym doesn’t have these facilities or you cannot find them, don’t stress. Make a habit of starting (and therefore likely finishing) your long runs near the water. Jump in straight after your long run for up to 10 minutes! Otherwise grab a couple of bags of ice after that really tough session, empty it into a bath, add some water and presto – same thing!

Massage

When you find a good massage therapist, you notice the difference. Its best if they have been around and or participated in sports through their career though as they will get you, rather than touch you and keep telling you you’re “Too tight”. One of the things a good therapist will do is talk to you about certain parts of your body that may require attention, for me its more prevention than cure. If something is not right, their magic hands may be able to spot and rectify an issue before it becomes serious.

How: Ask fellow runners who they see and don’t be afraid to try them out. Trust me when you are comfortable with your therapist you will know. If you are incorporating other recovery techniques, you may get a massage only every 2-4 weeks!



Compression

Its so simple it's frustrating. There is independent research that shows both a performance and recovery benefit for compression garments. Practically though, it can feel warmer if you are wearing long tights in warmer weather. Longer garments cover more of the limbs so they are preferred – however you can get benefits from partial or full cover!

How: In cooler weather run in tights and see if you feel the difference. Otherwise wear shorts from time to time to protect the hamstrings and quads AND if you get calf soreness and niggles – Get the sleeves. However to get the full benefit use tights before and or after exercise. Try this – next time post training or racing don't just jump in the car and drive home, put your tights on first. See how stiff you are when you pull up at the next servo now! Some things just work guys, this is so simple and easy to do even if for only worn for 30 minutes after that tough Weekly run.

Stretching & Rolling

This may be a targeted stretching session or Yoga session as one variation or simply taking the time to work on any niggles with a foam roller. Again this may seem like a chore, however it can be effectively done in the privacy of your home or as part of a session in your existing gym membership – again though maybe every now and again only.

How: I prefer the more sporty Yoga sessions for actual stretch benefit. An instructor that is hands on and into running is a welcome bonus. If stretching, resistance bands can really help to assist you intensify the stretch if they are used as an anchor off a point and around the limb you are targeting (this is just too hard to explain in writing ☺). With the foam rollers – technique is important. Don't just roll up and down! Work up towards the heart BUT “roll and release”. By this I mean font just roll up and down along a particular muscle but roll in small increments of 1-2 inches and hold when you hit a tight spot. Continue to hold until the pain goes and then progress another 1-2 inches.

Compression recovery boots

I've left this last. For a couple of reasons – I don't want to “Push” it down your throat and they are a relatively new product. [And yes I'm an Ambassador for Air Relax Australia too](#) (One of the brands), but I put my name to it because I believe in it! It was a few years ago now that I first tried these compression boots – back then they were very expensive and hard to get, but I felt the benefits or using them and after speaking with some of the Worlds best Ultra runners at Comrades Marathon in 2017, I decided to further research and incorporate them into recovery. I use them most nights now and it's a simple as slipping them on for 20 minutes. The units I use are exceptional value. For around \$1000, just think about it in comparison to the cost of 1 event, a good watch or a new bike, it's a no-brainer. Further proof for me was my Wife [@chezhayward](#) a usual sceptic, blown away by the ease of her long run the day after her first use.

How: Track them down or try them then for as little as 20 minutes most nights (On a Couch working or watching Television) simply relax and recover away!



So – incorporate what you can from some of these tips. I am sure you will get some benefit!

[Vlad Shatrov](#) (Instagram) and [Facebook](#) is an Elite runner and Founder of [Runlab](#). In 2018 Runlab is running multiple specific training sessions in the Lead-up to UTA. Runlab also has weekly trail running and road running sessions catering for runners from the Hunter right through to Southern Sydney.