I wish chiefly to impress on all athletes who may read this book that if they wish to excel at any branch of sport they must train. Train steadily, consistently, and constantly, and always bear in mind that however well they may be doing it is possible for them to do better.

Alf Shrub, one of the greatest of English long-distance runners of the first half of the 20th century

The long run is what puts the tiger in the cat.

Billy Squires, famed coach of runners such as Bill Rodgers, Alberto Salazar, and Dick Beardsley

A lot of people don’t realize that about 98% of the running I put in is anything but glamorous: 2% joyful participation, 98% dedication! It’s a tough formula. Getting out in the forest in the biting cold and the flattening heat, and putting in kilometer after kilometer.

Rob de Castella, famed Australian long-distance runner

The marathon begins at 20 miles.

Frank Shorter, 1972 Olympic marathon gold medalist

Second place is not a defeat. It is a stimulation to get better. It makes you even more determined.

Carlos Lopes of Portugal who, at 37 years of age, won the Olympic marathon in Los Angeles in 1984

We are different, in essence, from other men. If you want to win something, run 100 meters. If you want to experience something, run a marathon.

Emil Zatopek, the greatest distance runner of his era
The marathon can humble you.

Bill Rodgers, four-time winner of the Boston and New York Marathons

I have never been a killer. I’m not an aggressive personality and if I can remember any emotion I felt during a race it was fear. The greatest stimulator of my running was fear.

Herb Elliott, perhaps the greatest miler of all time; he never lost a mile race in his life

The long distance runner plods on mile after mile, day after day, week after month after year. People turn to stare, and children who have a legitimate reason for being in the park without a golf club in hand want to know why I’m running.

Hal Higdon, in his classic book, On the Run From Dogs and People

The secret of my abundant health is that whenever the impulse to exercise comes over me I lie down until it passes away.

J.N. McEvoy, 1938

A colleague reported that a patient of his, a competitive runner, often ran against the flow of runners during workouts because when running behind men he felt an uncomfortable impulse to stare at their buttocks. Running against the flow, he experienced pleasure at feeling that people would admire his strong and graceful stride and might even notice the bulge of his genitals in his skimpy briefs.

Michael Sachs, PhD, “A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Running,” Running as Therapy

Running is like going to a spring: each of us drinks our fill, and new runners come, pushing aside those in front.

Michael Sandrock, Running With the Legends

I learned years ago when I was training about 24 kilometers a day that if I shifted the daily balance to 32 kilometers one day and 16 the next, I got better reactions without increasing the total distance I was running.

Arthur Lydiard, famed running coach

Where do you dwell when you are running?

Joshu Sasaki Roshi, Japanese Zen teacher

You cut your journey as much from your own personality as you do from the external world around you, so no one can say much that will help you understand what it means to meet your small and larger self during the commitment to forward motion that will continue day after day through your waking hours. From the moment you begin until the moment you finish you are committed to an indivisible problem whose only solution is constant and unrelenting effort.

Jim Shapiro, Meditations From the Breakdown Lane: Running Across America, as he began his journey at the Pacific Ocean in California

[Running] gives a sense of free movement and personal physical power. If we race, it gives the excitement, risk, reward and drama of competition. It can give the rich companionship of running with friends, or the equally rich solitude of running alone. It gives the joy of learning the textures of the earth with your feet, and the fulfillment of taking your body beyond its known limits. In origin it is associated with escaping danger and succeeding in the hunt, both essential to life. It is so simple, so pure, so enjoyable, so rewarding, and yet so arduous. Nothing matches a hard run in what the poet Yeats called “the fascination of what’s difficult.”

Roger Robinson, Running in Literature

Epilepsy, paraplegia, blindness, deafness—what do these unfortunate afflictions have to do with running, which is surely a pursuit of the immensely fit? Simply that some men and women bearing these burdens are active, enthusiastic, and sometimes quite formidable runners. This is all part of a remarkable situation: people with a large spectrum of handicaps—from temporary neurosis to lifetime disability—have found running not only possible, but also an acceptable way to return to the unafflicted world; to be like, or even better than, the “ordinary person,” to experience those heady sensations, traditionally denied to the handicapped—victory, or even hard-conceded defeat.

Dr. Peter Wood, Run to Health

Without a race every so often, I lose the sense of awe at what I can do when I press myself, and at the same time I know my humility. I forget that racing can make the impossible possible and the possible impossible. Only here can I end up running faster than I ever thought I could or unable to cover a distance I’ve gone a thousand times before. Every race is a question, and I never know until the last yards what the answer will be. That’s the lure of racing.

Joe Henderson, The Long Run Solution

There is more to failing than picking yourself up out of the dust, brushing off the grime and trudging onward. For every defeat, there is a victory inside waiting to be let out if the runner can get past feeling sorry for himself.

Ron Daws, The Self-Made Olympian

In autumn, the sound of my belch is heard through the land. Fall is the Camelot of runners. There are races everywhere—races run in air turned crisp and invigorating, the perfect temperature for distance running.

But the races also bring tension. In those minutes before the start, I feel threatened. I know I may be beaten. I know I will surely feel pain. And not only my mind knows this, my entire body knows it and acts accordingly. Hence, the belch. That is the way I react when I am in a situation where I am embarrassed, frustrated or apprehensive. The belch is something rarely uttered in anger. It is not the roar of a lion, but the bleat of a sheep.

Dr. George A. Sheehan, Dr. Sheehan on Running

A male runner in distress is a heroic figure; a woman runner in distress is further proof that we are fragile creatures who are physiologically unsuited to marathon running.

Kathrine Switzer, Marathon Woman

The goal I can neither reach nor let go of is out there somewhere. I dread meeting it. So until it shows its face I will continue to do what I have always done. I will keep on doing my best.

Joan Benoit-Samuelson, Running Tide

Running myself to the point where I stagger or am totally drained is not heroic, but a poor show of misused energy. I will retire from the race long before I reach such a state.

Tom Osler, Ultra-Marathoning

I do believe that the [Boston] marathon is bigger than its sponsors and bigger than its creator, the Boston Athletic Association—so much so that if no one put up the money and the BAA could not manage the race, runners would still gather at the Hopkinton town green to run to Boston on Patriots’ Day. If the towns refused to issue permits to allow the race to pass, I believe runners would risk arrest to run.

Tom Derderian, Boston Marathon

Running is a way of life for me, just like brushing my teeth. If I don’t run for a few days, I feel as if something’s been stolen from me. I look forward to my runs. I run alone. I don’t like to wait for people. It’s a great way to get acquainted with yourself. I love it. I just go along and think the good thoughts, think about my life. The air is fresh and sweet.

Johnny A. Kelley, two-time Boston Marathon winner and three-time Olympic marathoner; completed 58 Bostons in his lifetime.