

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

The Basics of Pose Running Techniques

Brian MacKenzie

What is the definition of good running technique? There isn't one. But why? These are questions that Pose running's founder Dr. Nicolas Romanov has asked since 1979 and that I've been asking, well, since "shin splints" entered my personal lexicon. So what is good running style then?

There are laws that govern us all and there is no changing the way gravity affects us. In every sport the elite all have some things in common: they use gravity to their advantage; they are compact in their movements; and everything is done with almost an effortless approach.

How do elite athletes run? If you were stripped of your shoes and asked to run barefoot on the road, would you run the same way as you did with shoes? Why not? Because unless you already run Pose-style, or like Haile Gebrselassie or Michael Johnson, you probably run with your foot landing in a manner that quite destructively sends shock waves up your legs into the ankle, knee, and hip joints. In most cases, your foot will land in front of you (photo 1). Think about this for a second. If a car were traveling down the street would you stick something in front of it to speed it up? When an object is in motion, if something lands

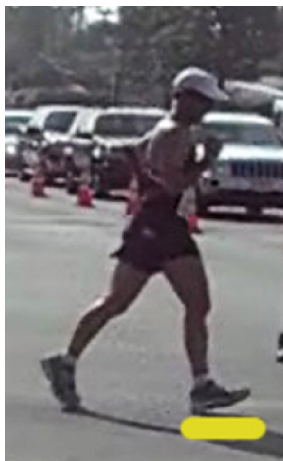


Photo 1

in front of its center of mass, it will either slow down or stop quite harshly.

The human foot is designed with enough padding on the ball of the foot for the Tarahumara Indians, certain indigenous peoples of Africa, and our ancestors to get around without Nike Shox. It is not designed for the heel to strike the ground first and to roll through to the toes. Take off your shoes and jump up and down barefoot on your heels. Do it! I dare you! Wait, no don't, you didn't sign a waiver! What you should do instead is to jump from and land on the balls of your feet as if you are jumping rope. Then give it a whirl with those heels, or even from "mid-foot." Doesn't work so well, huh?

This brings up another point. If you were to do a set of twenty jumping squats or a set of twenty jump rope jumps, which would be a more efficient movement for getting your feet off the ground? Obviously, the jump rope hops require less muscle activation, less energy, and less effort. In part, this reflects the difference between muscle contraction (jumping squats) and muscle elasticity (jumping rope). That makes the difference between finishing a marathon ineffectively and finishing a marathon effectively. One will have a lot of pain associated with it (for various reasons I will talk about in another article), and the other will have much less.

We like to think of running—or other movement—happening in three separate phases: the pose, the fall, and the pull. The pose is the point at which your foot passes under your center of mass and you make the

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The Basics of Pose Running Techniques (continued...)

shape of the number 4 with your legs and look great (photo 2). The fall happens when you let go, use gravity to your advantage, and just fall. You can see the slight forward lean in both pictures. The pull, where the supporting foot is pulled, instead of pushed, from the ground and movement continues. You can see this happening in photo 3, where the rear leg is still bent but coming off the ground. You can also see how neither foot is in contact with the ground at this point. If you are not in contact with the ground, you cannot get hurt!

As a 180-pound man whose background is in power and strength sports, I am by definition not a runner. Now, though, some would beg to differ as I have completed several runs ranging in length from 5 kilometers to 101 miles. There is a reason that, at 180 pounds, I am faster than most men and women 30 pounds lighter than I and why I have the ability to run for 100 miles at a time. It started by changing the way I ran. I have worked at it since 2001, and I have trained others at it for more than three years. I am by no means fast but I sure as hell am more efficient than most. Learning how to run properly and train properly (and safely) is why I can do this.



Photo 2



Photo 3

Brian MacKenzie is an expert in strength training for endurance athletes as well as a coach for Multisports Orange County. He currently holds a double certification through the International Sports Sciences Association (ISSA, CFT, and SSC) and is a level-2 POSE-certified running coach. In addition to owning [CrossFit Newport Beach/Genetic Potential](#), Brian founded and operates one of the only internship programs for professional trainers in California.