

Seoul to Soul

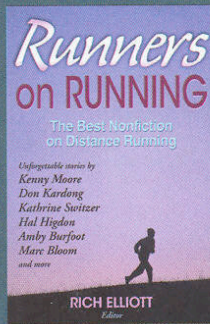
By Ben Johnson Jr.
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THE FIRST thing you'll notice about Ben Johnson's tell-all autobiography is that much of it contains interjections by his spiritual adviser, Bryan Farnum, in the form of "discernments," expressions of the word of God spoken through Farnum and presented as the truth. If you can get past these discerning sections, Johnson's words are often heartfelt and quite expressive for a man who is known for his shyness and stuttering during interviews. "I see... but there is nothing ahead, only empty space, which I will fill with my speed," he writes in the opening section about his 100m final at the Seoul Olympics.

Vowing to reveal the truth about his doping suspension in 1988 and subsequent stripping of his gold medal, Johnson gets right down to business in the first chapter, telling the story of what happened after that fateful Olympic 100m final in the doping control room, how a man named André "Action" Jackson, a friend of Carl Lewis's, was given clearance to the room while his coach Charlie Francis was not. And how Jackson kept handing the thirsty gold-medallist cans of beer from the fridge as Johnson lay on a physio table waiting to give his urine sample.

Much of the intrigue of the book centres around Jackson, the "Mystery Man." If Johnson's allegations are indeed true, there are some stunning revelations behind the alleged spiking of the beers in Seoul. Remember, Johnson has admitted to taking part in a steroid program leading up to the Games, but not to using the drug he got busted for. There have always been questions surrounding the case, such as why Johnson would have a large dose of steroids in his system during the event itself. The drug-testing official had told Johnson it was in fact a "lethal" amount, and as the steroids are used as a recovery-booster and not a speed-inducer, it never made sense. It is also amazing that Johnson was allowed to drink eight cans of beer prior to giving his urine sample. So the new details on "Action" Jackson thread of this story make it worth opening up the saga again.

Canadians have since moved on from the Johnson ordeal, but Johnson himself is finally able to tell everything the way he wants to. It's a healing venture for him more than a literary experience for the reader, but nevertheless sheds new light on a tale that has been recounted and investigated by countless outside sources. This is Ben Johnson's 250-page way of moving on. Hearing it in his own words, you can feel his pain. A man whose whole life was dedicated to running fast lost everything one Monday morning with a knock on his hotel room door in Seoul. —MK



Runners on Running: The Best Non-Fiction of Distance Running

Edited by Rich Elliot
Human Kinetics

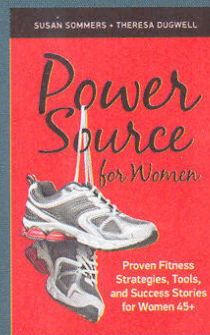
THERE'S A LOT OF MEDIOCRE writing about running out there, but you won't find any of it in *Runners on Running*, an inspiring collection of 30 pieces of running-related non-fiction, compiled and edited by Illinois-based running coach and writer Rich Elliot. There are a few true classics among the selected works, among them George Sheehan's 1978 *Running*, a meditation on the personal discoveries that runners enjoy through the sport.

If that's all too philosophical for you, turn to *White Man Can't Run*, a daring essay about running and ethnicity by Amby Burfoot, which triggered a torrent of 10,000 letters to the editor of *Runner's World*, where it was first published.

For physical descriptions of the running experience, my personal favourite is *Runners*, a 2003 essay by Rogers Hart, which I often photocopied and passed on to the runners I coached. Don't let the generic title fool you on this one – it's a beautiful encapsulation of his years running with friends, and all of the sights and smells on the road.

Kathrine Switzer's *Get the Hell out of My Race and Give Me Those Numbers!* covers the author's famous story of running as the first female registered runner in the Boston Marathon, when race director Jock Semple tried to swipe the bib numbers off her chest during the race. In *I Don't Like to Run Long Distances*, ultramarathon woman Pam Reed explains her fascination with running long.

The book is broken down into categories of challenges runners face and how they overcome them: spirit, body, mind, mentor, race, bonds and heart. None of the pieces are too long, making this a perfect bedtime book to get motivated for the next day's run. The writing spans several decades and the editor picked the best of the best. Most of the essays are sure to entertain runners of any ability. —MK



Power Source for Women: Proven Fitness Strategies, Tools, and Success Stories for Women 45+

By Susan Sommers and Theresa Dugwell
BPS Books

TAKE A LOOK at the race results in any major 5K, 10K or half-marathon in Canada and you'll see that women over 45 now account for a large proportion of the participants. *Power Source for Women* targets this fast-growing segment of the running and fitness population. Co-authors Susan Sommers and Theresa Dugwell met at a Toronto YMCA in 2007 and were inspired to write the book after Sommers spoke at a successful women's fitness workshop hosted by the Y.

Women who are struggling to maintain a fitness program will find a well-laid-out plan in this book, including self-assessment tools and questionnaires, advice from role models, and strategies to overcome the mental and physical challenges of sticking to a workout routine. The authors – both runners – have very different but equally inspiring life stories that drove them to collaborate on this project to equip other women with the tools they need to reach their fitness goals. The book treads nimbly between practical advice and stories of real-life experiences. —MK