

## AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION; A TON OF CURE

By Dr. Derek Conte

Imagine an athlete running a 26-mile marathon in perfect form: head up and straight, shoulders relaxed, arms pumping fluidly, legs churning freely, powerfully under him, the breath moving rhythmically in and out. He finishes the race in about 2 hours; a great time. Now, let's strap a 16-ounce weight to his left wrist. What do you think his time will be now? How can such an asymmetry hurt performance? Say the runner takes about 1,500 steps per mile. Multiply that by 16 ounces and you get 24,000 ounces or 1,500 pounds X 26 miles and you get 39,000 more pounds carried on one side of his body. This weight will not just be felt in his arm but, as the entire spine and frame must compensate, it will be felt throughout his frame. This weight imbalance creates great inefficiency. Over the first 1/4 mile he may not even notice the weight or lose any time but with every step the stresses grow, sapping his energy and causing wear and tear that will eventually lead to injury and joint destruction.

Obviously, no runner in his right mind would strap a weight to his body at odd points but this is exactly what happens if his head or pelvis is tilted due to spinal misalignment. Weight imbalances such as these can be recorded by a simple test in which he would stand on two identical scales simultaneously, one foot on each scale (he would simultane-



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ously be evaluated for postural distortions). The difference reveals how much energy is being wasted with every step, every day of his life – even when he's not running.

I have seen differentials of greater than 50 pounds in 250-pound bodybuilders who weren't complaining of pain yet and differences of over 25 pounds in competitive marathon runners. That's 25 pounds X 1,500 steps per mile X 26 miles = 975,000 pounds of poorly distributed weight in a marathon! - an incredible waste of energy. Over a lifetime, imbalances like these are a major cause of degenerative arthritis. By simply adjusting the spine and pelvis it is possible to completely balance the body to neutrality. The implications are obvious: that energy can be saved in huge amounts, longevity of joints increased, and the probability of injury proportionally reduced. One runner in my office had his best triathlon time improve by 45 minutes and his best marathon time improve from 2rs 35in to 2rs 20in (a 10 percent improvement). These are not miracles; they are the results that come from taking the time to analyze your mechanics and applying it to performance.

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