

Running shoes

Contributed by Administrator
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Over the last few years running shoes have been undergoing a steady and continuous evolution. Some sportswear manufacturers have put more resources than others to find out technological solutions intended to improve some features like the shock absorption, the sweating, the long-life, the lightness, the flexibility and so on. Today, on the market there is an endless number of running shoes which meet everybody's requirements. It should be said that each marathoner has different characteristics: a different body weight, foot fulcrum, distance covered speed, a different style of running.

The distance covered speed can already be considered an important watershed when you decide to buy a pair of running shoes: the more you weigh, the more you need protective coating shoes: a neutral intersole and the rubber having the same density or antipronation (very useful when you lie prone and your foot tends to slide on the inside towards the heel: in this case the sole will have two different kind of rubbers, of different thickness, the thickest one in the back inner side of the shoe for the best support and necessary to help with the problem). Who runs at a speed lower than 15 Km/h needs just one model of protective coating shoes. Athletes who don't weigh a lot and run faster need even lighter shoes when they speed up in their trainings or races.

I usually make use of something like 15 pairs of shoes a year: they all have a neutral kind of sole as I don't have any problem with my foot base. They are as follows:

8 protective coating running shoes, weighing about 320 grams. I wear them especially while keeping the pace in a slow distance running, during the warm-up before a fast training, or in a race.

2 intermediate running shoes, weighing 260 grams. I use them in the long distance running, which is a kind of race very similar to a marathon, where after a slow start, the running pace increases gradually until it becomes the same than a race. That's why I need protective coating shoes at the beginning of the training but, at the same time, let me press and run faster at the end.

1 pair of track shoes which I use in my athletics track trainings (to say the truth, very few by now) or in the cross-country races (just a couple a year).

4 racing shoes, weighing 170 grams. I don't accept any compromise on their manufacturing. I want them to be perfect, always, as the truth is disclosed even through them when you put on a number on your breast or when you run the most important trainings.

The latest shoes I have been using are personalized, hand-made in Japan by Asics (my sponsor), in the past taken on the cast of my foot by the company engineers and improved taking into account my advice: I think they are the best shoes ever worn both for the high quality of the materials used and because of the thickness of the intersole which perfectly fits my running style.

I run about 150 km before replacing them, while the protective coating and the intermediate ones last about 500 km. I replace them quite often, as soon as I feel they haven't been offering the same reliability in terms of absorption to prevent any injuries. Also I don't overuse the light shoes, contrary to what many other athletes do, as I think a necessary condition to prevent injuries and overlast for an athlete is safeguarding your own muscle and joint integrity. Therefore, I prefer using protective coating shoes more often than the racing ones. Usually I'm quick to understand if a shoe fits my feet or it doesn't, even if I prefer walking around for a while before wearing them in a race or a training. Of course, it hasn't always been like that: just think of the European Championships in Budapest in 1998 when I couldn't make up my mind on which shoes to wear in the race and I ended up wearing a pair of shoes never worn before. Well, I had done the same with the previous pair of shoes with the difference that it wasn't an usual training, but a race with medals to win. Then I suffered from an insole fasciitis and I needed wearing protective and, at the same time, light shoes: I made up my mind and chose the new ones to wear. When I started to run I realised the pain wasn't so unbearable and I won the gold medal thanks to a perfect performance.

Something I always avoid doing is washing my shoes by hand or in the machine, many athletes even spin-dry them: it seems to me that both the rubber and the upper change their characteristics and the shoes are no longer the same; of course, this is particularly true when you don't have to buy all the shoes you use, I personally get a lot of shoes free. It's different when you have to buy every pair you use. Well, in that case you are allowed to wash them.