

# Editor's Note

A recurring theme in last fall's movie *Friday Night Lights* is the transience of the football players' participation in the sport that dominates their lives. In numerous scenes, the boys are told that this season, this time of their life, is all they have; after they are done playing high school football, all that remains are memories. Before the championship game, the coach reminds them again that while they have played football for 10 years, this game would be the last time most of them would ever suit up—for the rest of their lives.

I couldn't help contrasting this reality to my own and that of most runners I know. High school running was great, but it was merely the very beginning. My final state cross country championship was 23 years ago; I can barely remember the specifics. I not only have kept running and racing, but have exceeded my dreams of those years, both in PRs and in the variety and quality of running I've experienced.

One advantage of the finality of high school football is the significance it gives to each game. We often don't fully appreciate something until it is gone, and knowing that it will soon end provides poignancy. *Friday Night Lights* highlighted this, but also clearly showed the overwhelming negative side as well, as we watched parents and townspeople living both in the past and vicariously through the current generation of high schoolers. While running year in and year out can get stale, I'd rather get my significance through setting a goal and training hard for it than declaring an end date after which life is spent looking wistfully back.

Fortunately, we, as runners, can continue to compete and excel for decades after high school, regardless of our level. Runners, in fact, have more future than those in just about any other sport, regardless of our age. And the level at which we compete is limited only

by our desire and dedication, as illustrated by our annual Masters of the Year rankings on page 20.

Of course, for all the runners who keep going strong into their 40s, 50s, 60s and beyond, many runners experience an end as final as a high school football player's graduation because of injury. Keeping healthy requires patience, intelligence, and, of course, the right shoes: shoes that fit your feet and provide the right amount of cushioning, stability and control for your gait, training style, and running surface.

To help with this often-bewildering choice, we publish an extensive road shoe guide in the spring and fall. For the past

several years, we've relied on David Spetnagel of St. Louis, MO, to research and write our reviews. Reviewing is by nature both a technical and a subjective process (see more on this in the intro to this month's guide), and Spetnagel is extensively qualified in both spheres. As a former aerospace engineer for McDonnell Douglas, few can exceed his understanding of the physics and materials that go into shoe design. As a runner since junior high, he personally understands the runner's needs, and has worn his share of foot coverings. His first running shoes, he reports, were a pair of Puma Tornado racing spikes that he wore in the 400 and 800m and cross country during high school.

It was during a college internship in the Mojave Desert that he says "running evolved from my sport to my lifestyle." For a year he ran and raced the trails of the Angeles National Forest, running 100 different trails during his last 100 days. It wasn't until five years later, however, that he merged his vocation and avocation, opening Fleet Feet St. Louis with his wife, Debby. In addition to the daily exposure to shoes and shoe customers, Spetnagel has, in the past dozen years, coached high school, college and adult runners, presided over two running clubs, and timed or directed hundreds of races.

We're confident that you'll appreciate this breadth of expertise as you use Spetnagel's charts and text to choose your next pair of shoes—shoes to keep you healthy this season, this year, and for years to come.

  
**Jonathan Beverly**  
Editor in Chief



David Spetnagel in one of his stores.