



Running: A Global History

Thor Gotaas

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In the past decade, the number of Americans who consider themselves runners more than doubled—in 2008, more than 16 million Americans claimed to have run or jogged at least 100 days in the year. Though now running thrives as a convenient and accessible form of exercise, it is no surprise to learn that the modern craze is not truly new; humans have been running as long as they could walk. What may be surprising however are the myriad reasons why we have performed this exhausting yet exhilarating activity through the ages. In this humorous and unique world history, Thor Gotaas collects numerous unusual and curious stories of running from ancient times to modern marathons and Olympic competitions.

Amongst the numerous examples that illustrate Gotaas's history are King Shulgi of Mesopotamia, who four millennia ago boasted of running from Nippur to Ur, a distance of not less than 100 miles. Gotaas's account also includes ancient Egyptian pharaohs who ran to prove their vitality and maintain their power, Norwegian Vikings who exercised by running races against animals, as well as little-known naked runs, bar endurance tests, backward runs, monk runs, snowshoe runs, and the Incas' ingenious infrastructure of professional runners.

The perfect gift for the sprinter, the marathoner, or the daily jogger, this intriguing world history will appeal to all who wish to know more about why the ancients shared our love—and hatred—of this demanding but rewarding pastime.

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Louis Hartford:

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