

FALL IS COMING!

By Rob Maxwell, M.A.

I, for one, love when it cools down. Everything just feels better. Going to football games in Florida in September just doesn't feel like football—unless you like to consume a gallon of water to re-hydrate just watching! But come October and November, we start to get some pleasant temperatures, and now all outside activities take on more meaning—at least to me.

This is especially true for running. It is a fact that we run slower in the heat. I think you don't need too much confirmation to believe that, do you? But I really want to make that clear, because this comes up all summer long.

Many of my trainees, clients, and friends ask me, “What's wrong with my running?” or “Why am I in a slump?” And I even get to the point where I question my own fitness during the summer months, but I quickly remind myself---IT'S THE HEAT! It really is that simple. Your body has to work so much harder to maintain your “normal” pace because it's working so hard to cool itself down (which is one reason why you shouldn't just go by pace!). And the humidity just makes it harder to breathe. As I've explained to many of my trainees, there is such a thing as “cardiac creep”, which means that the heart rate will continue to creep up a little bit just by duration alone, whether or not you have increased your pace or not. I'm sure all of you have seen that before if you wear heart rate monitors. This creep is even more dramatic when it's hot out. If you wear a HRM, you will find that with just a little bit of increase when it's hot, your heart rate will shoot right up. When your heart rate is up, you are working harder—plain and simple. You don't have different maxes for the summer and winter, or different target heart rates, so you have to make adjustments to your pace. But this isn't about that. I just wanted to explain that there is a reason why we all slow down in the summer, and sometimes we just need to restate the obvious like I just did—so don't feel like you're losing fitness or not in great shape. In fact, if you've suffered through the heat in Florida doing any type of running, you will find that your pay off will be when the fall races start—you'll see your reward for “sweating it out”.

So this is the good news. The cooler temps are coming. Many people report to me that their 5K times can be as much as a minute to 90 seconds faster in the cooler temperatures. That has been my experience as well. So I always look forward to this time of year. This is when runners can again start thinking about their PRs, and really enjoying those runs again—to the fullest. This is the best time of year to start increasing your program, doing the speed work and increasing that volume so you can take advantage of the cooler temperatures and really enjoy those long runs in the fall and winter, as well as all the great races that the area has to offer.

Many of my articles can be technical, but this one—we take the month off. I just want to confirm that it's very normal for your running to not be at its best in the summer, and share the good news that cooler temps and better running is on its way. Are you ready?

There are some great fall and winter races in our area for you to put on your calendar. We, the Track Club, will be hosting the classic Paul deBruyn in November, which is really going to be

special this year in our great new location. We are also hosting the Stonewood 5K in December, which in its first year last year was a quick favorite of local runners. The Daytona Beachcombers are bringing back the classic Paint the Towne 5K in October, which is many runners' favorite course. And our good friend John Boyle will be putting on his annual Thanksgiving Day 10 Miler and 5K, which happens to be my favorite race. Run hard, eat turkey and spend time with your loved ones watching football---can you think of a better day?