

FACTS OF LIFE

23

ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF GYM GOERS WHO ARE ADDICTED TO EXERCISE

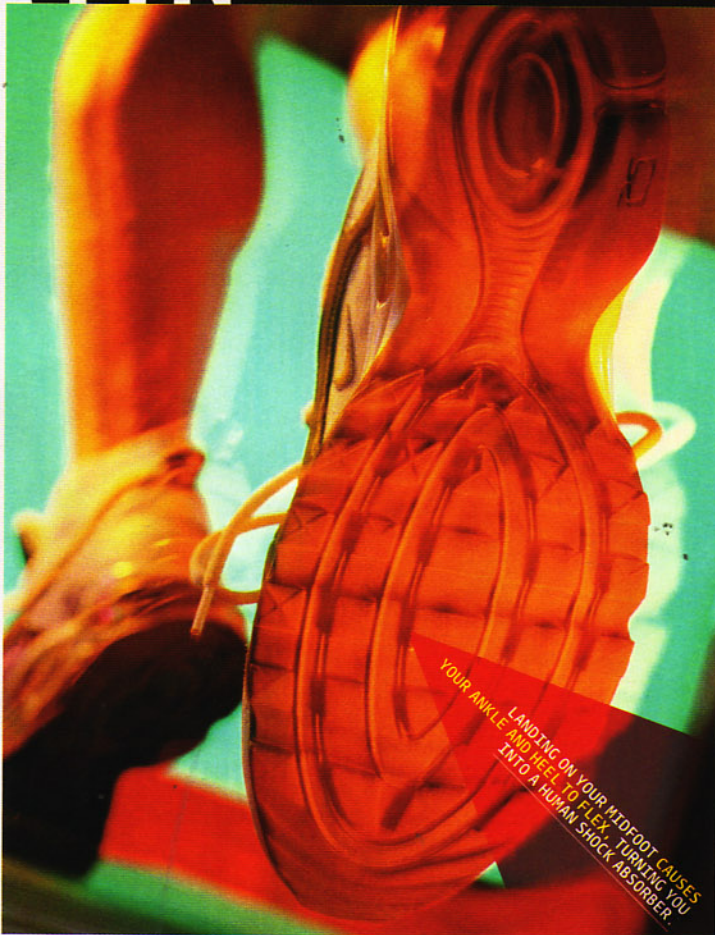
SOURCE: Australian Psychological Society

BEAT YOUR PERSONAL BEST

■ You already know to taper before the big race. But are you tapering the right way? Canadian researchers recently discovered that **cutting your total running time in half for 2 weeks prior to a competition will allow you to peak on race day.** You'll recover from the fatigue of training while maintaining your fitness level, says the lead study investigator, Laurent Bosquet, Ph.D. "Decreasing exercise intensity will cause detraining, but simply manipulating the workload will not." So if you're pounding out 40 miles a week and averaging 9 minutes a mile, cover 20 miles at the same pace.

GO-GO GOO

■ **Sucking on protein gel will boost your pedaling performance,** according to new research out of James Madison University. When compared with cyclists who used carbohydrate-only energy gels, cyclists who consumed gels that contained both protein and carbohydrates were able to ride 13 percent farther. One possible explanation is that the protein increases the number of carbohydrates that pass from your intestines to your bloodstream, and from there to your energy-hungry muscles. To slurp the same gel used in the study, check out gusports.com. The study authors recommend pounding a pack of goo for every 15 minutes you pedal.



STRIKING ADVANTAGES

■ Here's proof that we don't always do as we're told: **Seventy-five percent of runners land on their heels, even though it's known that striking the ground with the midfoot is faster,** states a new Japanese study. The researchers, who analyzed gait patterns of competitors in an elite half marathon, also discovered that heel strikers didn't fare as well overall as midfoot runners, whose ground-contact time was 17 milliseconds less than that of the heel strikers. To fix your form, run quietly, so your footfalls aren't loud, and you'll unconsciously switch to a midfoot strike.

[ON OUR RADAR]

MIND INJURIES?

Ever wonder why athletes suffer freak injuries where there is no obvious cause? Researchers at the University of Delaware performed neurological tests on 1,500 college athletes and found that **those who had sustained noncontact injuries had significantly slower brain-processing speeds and reaction times.** "We think their brains became overloaded when initiating dynamic movements, causing a loss of coordination," says study author Buz Swanik, Ph.D. A follow-up study is under way.

More than a third of men downhill ski.

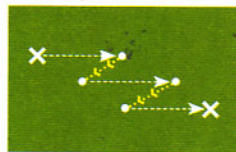


SHRED THE MOUNTAIN

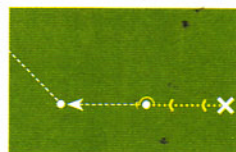
We're excited about **an ingenious new British invention that continuously applies fresh wax to the bottom of downhill skis.** The pumping motion of a skier's legs pushes the wax out of a sealed reservoir within the binding and through a series of tiny valves and pipes. The technology should hit stores by the winter of 2009.

Speed-up offense

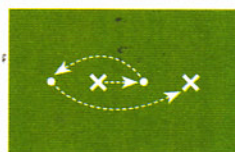
Before you huddle up for your annual pigskin playoffs, go to your local gridiron and run through this drill. "It'll hit all the right moves: acceleration, lateral shuffling, decelerating, and moving backward," says Michael Barnes, C.S.C.S., a former NFL conditioning coach. Perform the circuit 4 to 6 times.



1
OUT 10, BACK 5
From a three-point stance, sprint 10 yards, stop, and backpedal for 5 yards. Stop, and then sprint forward for 10 yards. Repeat.



2
RUN AND SLASH
Backpedal 10 yards, turn around and run in the same direction for another 10 yards, then break off at a 45-degree angle for 15 yards.



3
SIDE SHUFFLE
Shuffle-step to the right for 5 yards. Turn back to the left and run 10 yards. Finally, reverse direction and sprint for 15 yards.