

## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

*Exercise ferments the humors, casts them into their proper channels, throws off redundancies, and helps nature in those secret distributions, without which the body cannot subsist in its vigor, nor the soul act with cheerfulness.*

JOSEPH ADDISON (THE SPECTATOR, JULY 12, 1711)

I love to sweat. All told, I have run distances equal to four trips around the world on a treadmill and on the streets of Manhattan where I live. I have biked to the moon and back, dueling it out with a red, blinking pacer light on a LifeCycle control panel or logging countless laps in Central Park. I've even crossed the Atlantic a few times—in the pool—and I've swum in almost every ocean around the world competing in Ironman triathlons. When I am running, biking, or swimming, happiness pours out of me. I am not alone. Everyone who exercises regularly experiences this bliss. And it is available to you, too, anytime you break a sweat. *The Athlete's Way* is an individual process but ultimately a universal experience.

Everything that human beings do for our survival—eating, sleeping, reproducing, and working physically—breaking a sweat—is designed to make us feel good biologically. We are rewarded for doing the things necessary to stay alive. This is a generous biological design, and at the same time, the key to our survival. All animals seek pleasure and avoid pain. Maintaining life in the human body was designed to be an ecstatic experience, as was bonding with other humans. Throughout our evolution, physical exertion and sticking together have produced neurochemicals that scientists are just beginning to identify as being associated with happiness. One reason the psycho-pharmacological business is booming is that our bodies are not designed to be sedentary or isolated behind computer screens. Doctors prescribe pills to make people feel better—I prescribe sweat, community, energy balance, and a sense of purpose. Humans need to move. Organic, self-produced bliss, kinship, and stress reduction are available to all of us, if

we are willing to break a sweat, bond with other humans, and chase our happiness down.

While racing, I have sweated my way through many spectacular landscapes. Athletics have taken me to Brazil, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Denmark, Austria, Germany, and Hawaii, as well as the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the swamplands of Florida, and the vast emptiness of Death Valley—and many other amazing places. But most of the time, I train inside a New York City gym or in Central Park—which are just as exotic as any landscape for me. The sea of people in front of me is ever changing. People watching and connecting to others gets my juices going. The real joy of sport for me is in the process, the connections to other people, and the places I go inside my head—not the places I go with my physical body.

I have stayed in New York City for my entire athletic career and plugged myself into the energy of humanity here. Central Park is my microscope; international races are my telescope for exploring the athletic process. Luckily the “lab rat” aspect of indoor training triggers the same neurological responses that have evolved for hundreds of millions of years. We feel good when we sweat. I have learned how to find Nirvana on the treadmill, and I am going to teach you my secrets.

## TO KNOW IS NOT ENOUGH

*I use my single windup, my double windup, my triple windup, my hesitation windup, my no windup. I also use my step-n-pitch-it, my submariner, my sidearmer, and my bat dodger. Man's got to do what he's got to do.*

SATCHEL PAIGE

I was born in Manhattan and have lived in the same East Village apartment since 1988. If I train outdoors, I'm usually in Central Park or along the waterways surrounding Manhattan. I love indoor training, too. Treadmills allow me to lose myself in the purest form of running. On a treadmill it is just the simple, repetitive organic motion of running. There is nothing to navigate, nowhere to get to—just running—and running fills me with the purest bliss of any sport.

My approach to exercise has been influenced by my surroundings, education, and upbringing. Urban, down-to-earth, creative, no-nonsense, cosmopolitan, and left-of-center are words I'd use to describe my philosophy.

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This book is quirky in many ways—it breaks the mold. I graduated from Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, a small nonconformist liberal arts school with no tests or grades, where students design their own curriculum. I wrote my college thesis on “Cultural Imperialism in Developing Countries,” basically studying the impact of Big Macs and Mickey Mouse in India. As a college student I traveled to India a few times and spent many hours meditating in ashrams. The Eastern philosophies melded with my athletic and scientific brain at an impressionable period. I am a free thinker and encourage you to “think about your thinking” and take accountability for it. I will teach you everything I know, but you have to participate in the process.

The Hampshire motto is *Non Satis Scire*, which means “to know is not enough.” As a writer and coach, I bring this philosophy to my teaching. *The Athlete’s Way* program is about taking knowledge and continually adapting it to fit your life in a way that keeps you evolving. I want you to discover ways to apply and expand on the building blocks I will provide through your own trial and error. You will need to discover solutions for yourself, not just plug in a set of rules. I will give you guidance and hold your hand through the process, but ultimately you need to tailor this advice to your personality if you expect it to stick.

## MAKE IT YOUR OWN, AND OWN IT

*You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist.*

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

This program is practical. It is designed to be used. This book comes from my life experience—it is not a theoretical or academic dissertation. Even the science in these pages has been filtered through my athletic process. I want to bring you inside my athletic mind so that you can understand your own athletic mind. I share everything I have learned in this book, knowledge I wish I had had when I started my athletic career more than twenty years ago. *The Athlete’s Way* is a memoir and a manual designed to educate, motivate, and inspire you.

I want you to connect to this book. My goal is to transfer the enthusiasm and passion I have for sport to you so that you will seek exercise—not avoid it. I hope this book becomes one that you keep by your bed stand,

drip sweat all over, lug around in your gym bag, and share with friends and family. I want the zest of your athletic experiences to leave a mark on these pages. I want this book to improve your life. I want you to succeed.

I have poured the same amount of hard work, intuition, and attention to detail into crafting this program as I have into every athletic challenge. I have tried to find ways to inspire you to exercise. I want you to seek breaking a sweat with the same motivation as I do. I'll be rooting for you. I am eager to learn from you, too. I encourage you to use the website [www.theathletesway.com](http://www.theathletesway.com) as an interactive tool. On the Web site you will find updated resources, interactive training tools, and forums to share experiences with other people living their lives the athlete's way. I hope that this book will be a catalyst for getting a conversation started and lead to an exchange of ideas.

Many of the scientific ideas I present here are things I discovered first through life experience, then went back to my father, or medical journals, to get further explanations for. Hopefully, the ideas will get the dialogue going with medical professionals, too, and lead to further scientific research. Many of the ideas I propose in this book push the envelope and are at this point, like so many things in science, still just an educated guess.

*The Athlete's Way* is a movement and a work in progress—you can influence the future of this program, and other people's lives, by sharing your insights via forums on my Web site. And your insights will help others. This is a program based on a philosophy of individual achievement and community, individualism, and collectivism. We're all in this together.

## YOU ARE A LINK IN THIS CHAIN

*The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.*

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Joseph Campbell's book *The Power of Myth* has influenced me as an athlete. It was published in 1988, the year I started racing. Myths fueled the idea that it was possible to tap into the fullness of my strength by pushing beyond my own limits and then letting go. As an athlete I could break free of the daily grind if I worked hard physically and used my imagination. Sweat, music, and mythology combined into a mystical brew, a life-giving elixir. Myths grabbed me somewhere deep down inside. They got into my spine. It was a metaphysical experience for me as a teenager, because I realized that I

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and “the other” were one. This experience of complete connectedness is what I have coined *superfluidity*—the episodic feeling of existing without any friction or viscosity—a state of pure bliss I will explore in this book.

My copy of *The Power of Myth* has taken a licking. This summer I used it as a seat cushion after long, sweaty runs. When I ran in the door and wanted to jot down my insights I would grab that book from the coffee table and sit on it so that I wouldn’t wreck the suede upholstery on the sofa. The book is now molded to my butt and I like that. Looking at its warped cover now, I realize that my summer runs merged back into the same pages that had fueled me to get moving in the first place. My sweat marks and the gravity of my body imprinted on the book took the energy full circle. There is a personal history recorded there in the salt stains and warped cover now. You can do this with your copy of *The Athlete’s Way* if you want. I hope you leave your personal mark on these pages. Please also share your experiences on [www.theathletesway.com](http://www.theathletesway.com) and use the World Wide Web to connect with the Athlete’s Way community. You can give something back by sharing the lessons you’ve learned inside the athletic process, and bond with other people. Your insights could inspire someone else to exercise. The more people we have breaking a sweat every day, the better place the world will be.

*Both tears and sweat are salty, but they render a different result.  
Tears will get you sympathy; sweat will get you change.*

JESSE JACKSON

I am confident that *The Athlete’s Way* will improve your life by extracting gallons of sweat from your skin in years to come. If you do drip your own sweat into this book—literally or figuratively—you will make a dream for me come true. I want to make you want to sweat. My life success has been about dreaming big, staying honest, working hard, making the most of what I’ve got to work with, and sweating it out every day. In these pages I will tell you everything I have learned with the hope that it will help you take your life to a higher ground.

CHRISTOPHER BERGLAND

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