

Introduction to Advanced Fitness

It never occurred to me in 1978 when I quit high school teaching that I would soon take up full-time coaching. High school coaching had been a sideline for me and I never thought of it as intellectually challenging. That perspective changed when I happened to read Hans Selye's book, *The Stress of Life*.

Selye's concept of the General Adaptation Syndrome was an idea that transformed my way of thinking about the training process. Suddenly I understood running in a way that has motivated me to continue in the sport for more than twenty-five years as a coach, a writer and an athlete. I'm the sort of person who is motivated by ideas more than money or power. And the idea of adaptive training was a subject into which I could sink my intellectual teeth.

In thinking about the training process from Selye's perspective, I realized that adaptation was experientially accessible. In other words, by attending to our training experience we could feel adaptive processes as they occurred. These processes were governed by rules and principles which are grounded in the laws of exercise physiology, but independent of them. My mission in writing about the training process was to formulate a new set of adaptive principles that would enable me to teach and coach my athletes how to read their body for best racing results.

My first book, entitled *How to Read Your Body*, was an attempt to formulate a new system of adaptive training unlike anything in the running literature. Those ideas were rudimentary at first, but they formed the basis of a second book—*Running by Feeling*—published by Competitive Running Press in 1999. In writing *Running by Feeling*, I took a huge step forward in my ability to solve the perennial problems of competitive training and racing: How to optimize and schedule training effort; how to use a heart rate monitor to structure race-specific exertion; and how to become psychologically balanced in the face of competitive pressures.

My next book—*5K and 10K Training*—recently published by Human Kinetics Publishers, answers three important questions that were only surveyed in my previous work: How can we establish new ability-building workouts without becoming sick or injured at the outset? How can we measure changes in ability during a training period? And how can we sequence a series of training periods to build ability progressively and programmatically?

All of my writings begin with a presentation of the fundamental building blocks of adaptation—effort and energy. The articles in this section will give you a solid introduction to these ideas so you can appreciate how to use them to solve complex training problems. There is no way, however, that I can develop my ideas fully in a few brief articles. I encourage you, therefore, to pursue your interest in adaptive training by reading my books.