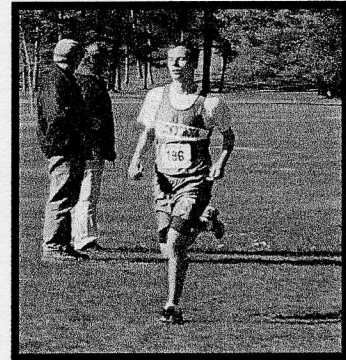


“Asics Trainers and Nike Racers”

By Jared L. Best

I do not see fun in a leather football, a baseball glove or bat, nor a set of golf clubs. My mind is and will always be focused on shoes; not on the typical dressy shoes or sneakers, but my Asics trainers and Nike racers. I am an athlete: the activity is running and the sport was Cross Country. Unlike the game of football or basketball, this sport not only requires skill, but heart and determination as well. Let us face it. Almost anyone off the street can run. However, only a select few can and are willingly able to run a five kilometer race under seventeen or even eighteen minutes.

In Warwick, New York, in the fall of 2006, I felt like I was on fire and that nothing could stop me. My mind was racing just as fast as my legs were, and I attempted to pass everyone I managed to get behind. I will never forget passing two of my senior teammates during that race, which was a big accomplishment for me at the time since I was only a sophomore. It was the New York State Cross Country Meet, where teenagers from across the state would come together, compete, and prove their determination.



I am not a spectacular runner, but to me, it was that race where I shined the most, and that race was inspiring. From that point on, I made running a nonstop habit—maybe even an addiction. It became and developed into my unique, individual religion where I was my own god. My philosophy became: “I am in control of how fast or slow things flow.”

I run not only because I want to conquer my old personal times and records, but I run for various other reasons. When I run, I feel completely tranquil, and all my troubles and stress seem to vanish, like a state of Nirvana. It seems like complete freedom from the world as if the soul would rush right out of the body. One could almost forget the burning movement of the legs, the increase in breathing and heart rate, or the sounds of nature, automobiles, and people. The unfortunate and often surprising cramps during races are bad enough, but what makes it worse is that you have to push through it and ignore the pain. Running would be the most difficult thing for me to toss aside in my life. It is a passion to me, a very important asset to my life.

My favorite quote that appeared on a running tee-shirt that I received is “People begin running for any number of motives, but we stick to it for one basic reason...to find out who we really are.” (George Sheehan, M.D.) Why else would one run? It seems like the perfect scenario during a race. You feel like you want to give up, but you push yourself to go faster and faster. You know the finish will come sooner or later; it is just a matter of getting there. Once you cross the line though, you find an even greater respect for yourself. It is more about the journey rather than the destination that truly matters. Running, in a sense, can be compared to life itself, and for me, it will always be present. Sooner or later, the competitive races will fade away in my life due to old age, but I will

still have running shoes. Running on your own is not terrible; it is quite the opposite since you can have time to yourself. My love and dedication to cross country has always helped me to achieve higher goals in this sport, and I will therefore continue on this venture when I become a member of Clarkson's cross country team.

My hometown of Hague, located in the Adirondacks, contains mostly undeveloped properties, vast amounts of forested lands, and one small active street, Graphite Road. My house is a few miles from the "busy" part of the town, where a neighbor is rare to come by and three cars in a row are considered traffic. My favorite season to run is the fall since it is not brutally hot nor is it extremely cold. Also, the leaves turn red, orange, and yellow which make a picturesque atmosphere for running. Almost every day, I go out and run on the muddy and hilly trails behind my house, or sometimes I manage on the treadmill in the living room—my shoes always double knotted. I will maintain this habit, since running has been imbedded into my personality. All I have to do is just turn on my MP3 player, move my legs forward and back, and forget everything. It is just me and my running shoes: a companionship I would never give up and an addiction I would not want to go without in life.

