

# + BECOME A BETTER RUNNER WITHOUT MORE RUNNING

## REDUCE INJURY WITH RESISTANCE

**Running is, without doubt, the most effective form of cardiovascular exercise, whether you want to improve your fitness levels or burn more fat. It also reduces stress, improves your mood, and is one of the most popular forms of mass participation sport.**

For these reasons many people will choose to include some form of running in their health and fitness approach. As they get more involved and want to continue seeing the results of their efforts, they also tend to start running farther and/or faster.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with this approach as it will, in all likelihood, deliver results, the issue is that so-called 'weak' runners open themselves up

to a whole host of potential injuries when trying to run farther or faster.

One of the main reasons for this is that most of us are functionally weak due to a more sedentary lifestyle and the many hours we spend sitting each day. This has resulted in poor mobility and flexibility, weak cores and glutes, and shortened hip flexors, which are all essential to facilitate optimal, efficient running.

It therefore pays to supplement your running with various specific resistance training exercises to reduce your chances of injury, while at the same time helping to make you a stronger, better runner. This will lead to greater enjoyment of the sport, giving you the ability to continue engaging in it indefinitely to derive the greatest benefit.

## STRONGER RUNNERS ARE BETTER RUNNERS

**Jordan Metzl, MD, a nationally recognised sports medicine physician and fitness instructor who practises at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City, is an expert who strongly advocates a cross-training approach for anyone who runs, especially those who use it as their predominant form of daily activity, to reduce their chances of injury and make them better athletes.**

His best-selling book, *Running Strong: The Sports Doctor's Complete Guide to Staying Healthy and Injury-Free for Life*, addresses common weak areas in most runners such as the glutes, hips, and core, which are all essential to providing stability while running and generating the power needed to run faster for longer.

According to Metzl, "weak muscles not only slow you by breaking down your form but also create an imbalance in your body, which can lead to injury and sideline your training."

He suggests incorporating sport-specific exercises such as single-leg squats, lunges, and hops to build both strength and stability.

"The benefit of great balance isn't just to prevent you from falling on your butt. A stable runner is a healthy runner and a more efficient runner. One of the most important elements of injury-free running is good alignment." Here are five of the best exercises to make you a stronger, better runner ...



# RUN STRONG



**BY** Pedro van Gaalen, Managing Editor  
**DEMONSTRATED BY** Charné Bosman,  
2015 Comrades runner up  
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY** Cindy Ellis  
**SHOT ON LOCATION AT** F.I.T Wellness  
Centre at The Campus, Bryanston



**BEFORE YOU START**

- **Visit a physio or biokineticist** for an assessment to determine if there are any underlying biomechanical issues or weaknesses that may be made worse with these exercises.
- **Ensure you have adequate flexibility and mobility** to perform these exercise with proper form.
- **Perfect each movement** without added resistance (body weight only) before adding weights to the exercise.
- **When you do start to add weight** get progressively heavier and drop the reps.

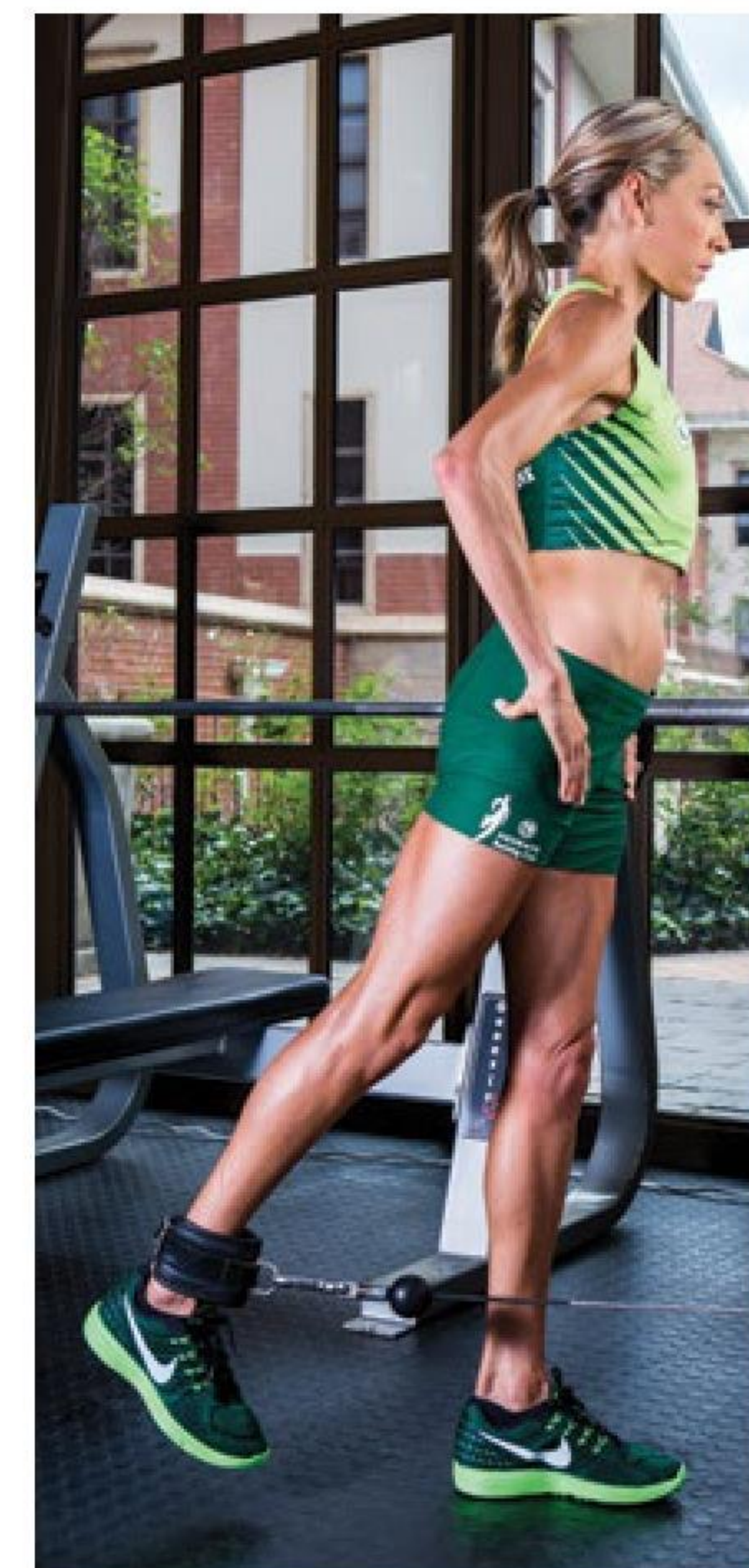




## SINGLE-LEG LEG PRESS

This effective exercise is a great way to build superior unilateral strength (equal strength on both legs individually) while also developing solid joint strength and enhanced mobility in the hips, knees and ankles.

**How to do it:** Position yourself in a leg press machine with one foot placed high up on the platform. Press against the platform to extend your knee and hip, stopping just short of full extension (maintain a slight bend in the knee). Lower yourself back down toward the platform, under control, by flexing your knee. Press back up to repeat the movement for the required reps. Once complete, repeat on the other leg.



## CABLE KICKBACKS

(aka standing hip extension)

This is another great exercise to target your glutes to increase your power while running and also enhance stability on a single leg.

**How to do it:** Attach an ankle cuff to a low pulley and strap it to one ankle. Stabilise your body by contracting your core and engaging the glute of your stabilising leg as you kick your other leg straight back by extending your hip. Return the cuff to the starting position slowly and under control.



## ABOUT CHARNÉ

Charné started running at the age of 16 after her family moved to Pretoria. "My niece was a provincial athlete and I started running with her. I fell

in love with running from the first day and within six months I had achieved my Gauteng North colours in cross-country. I represented my country 23 times in total, including six times in the World Cross-Country Championships."

## TOP RUNNING TIPS:

- Increase your distance by no more than 10% per week to reduce your chances of injury.
- Most people want to jump straight in to ultra marathons in the first year. Rather give yourself a two-year plan. Start with a few 5-10km races and improve your times at these distances before moving up to the longer events. This will provide you with motivation to keep improving your running.

## A TYPICAL TRAINING WEEK INCLUDES:

**Monday:** 10-15km recovery run and a strength session  
**Tuesday:** Interval session – 10 x 1km repeats plus easy jog in afternoon  
**Wednesday:** Mid-week long run

1h45m to 2 hours plus a strength session

**Thursday:** 1h30 easy run

**Friday:** 10km recovery run plus a strength session

**Saturday:** 1 hour easy run plus 30 minute tempo run

**Sunday:** Long run of 30-45km

## ON FOOD AND DRINK

"I love to eat healthfully. I prefer fresh fruit and vegetables with a source of lean protein. I also make my own fresh juice every day – I just love juicing. The biggest present my husband could get me is an Oscar juicer. I don't drink any alcohol in the seven-month build-up to the Comrades and Two Oceans ultra marathons. I do love my coffee though, but limit it to only 2-3 cups per day. I also drink a lot of water. I always reward myself with some kind of a sweet treat after a 40-45km long run – my favourite is a custard slice from Woolies."

## WHY SHE STRENGTH TRAINS

"In 2015 I only did one or two strength

training sessions per week. However, I realised that if I wanted to improve I didn't need to run more but rather had to increase my strength. I started doing three strength sessions per week from July 2015 which has made a huge difference to my running."

## QUICK FACTS

**Sponsors:** Nedbank, Nike, Biogen, Futurelife, Nike Vision and HPC

**Coach:** Lindsey Parry, High Performance Centre at University of Pretoria

**Strength and conditioning coach:** Candice Attree  
(www.sportsrehab.co.za)

## PERSONAL BESTS:

**10km:** 33:41

(Spar ladies race – Durban 1999)

**21.1km:** 74:59 (2013)

**42.2km:** 2h39 (4th place – Amsterdam marathon 2005)

**Two Oceans:** 3h40 (2nd place in 2013)

**Comrades:** 6h33 (2nd place in 2015)



## SINGLE-LEG STABILITY BALL ROLL-IN

This advanced movement helps to isolate and strengthen the hamstrings, with the stability ball engaging important stabiliser muscles also used in running such as the glutes. It is also a unilateral exercise which helps to develop balanced strength on both sides of the body.

**How to do it:** Lie on your back, with the heel of one foot on top of the exercise ball. Keep your legs and back straight. Roll the exercise ball towards you by bending your knee and pulling the ball in toward your body. Extend your knee and slowly return the ball back to the starting position under control.



## SINGLE-LEG GLUTE BRIDGE

Your glutes are the power generators during running – if you're doing it properly. This exercise will ensure that your glutes become stronger and also start to fire properly during the loading and transition phases of your gait cycle.

**How to do it:** Lie on your back, on a mat with both legs bent. Push up through your feet to raise your hips and lower back off the floor, until the hip joint is fully extended. Stabilise your core and contract your glutes as you extend one leg up. Keep your hips aligned as you do so, and hold for a count of 30-45 seconds per side.



## 3-POINT PLANK

Your core is what provides your main source of stability when you run. If you lack adequate strength in this area your body will start to compensate and other muscle groups will be used to help stabilise your body during the foot strike and transition phases of your gait. These muscles will soon tire which leads to poor form, compromised movement efficiency, and increases the likelihood of injury.

**How to do it:** Lie face down with your forearms on a mat, with your elbows under your shoulders. Place your legs together with your forefeet on the floor. Raise your body up by engaging your core and straightening your body and legs. Lift one leg up and hold this position for 30-45 seconds before swapping sides. 