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Once A Runner: A Novel



Synopsis

Originally self-published in 1978, *Once a Runner* captures the essence of competitive running and of athletic competition in general and has become one of the most beloved sports novels ever published. Inspired by the author's experience as a collegiate champion, the story focuses on Quenton Cassidy, a competitive runner at fictional Southeastern University whose lifelong dream is to run a four-minute mile. He is less than a second away when the turmoil of the Vietnam War era intrudes into the staid recesses of his school's athletic department. After he becomes involved in an athletes' protest, Cassidy is suspended from his track team. Under the tutelage of his friend and mentor, Bruce Denton, a graduate student and former Olympic gold medalist, Cassidy gives up his scholarship, his girlfriend, and possibly his future to withdraw to a monastic retreat in the countryside and begin training for the race of his life against the greatest miler in history. A rare insider's account of the incredibly intense lives of elite distance runners, *Once a Runner* is an inspiring, funny, and spot-on tale of one man's quest to become a champion.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Part training manual, part religious tract, part love story, and all about running, *Once a Runner* is so inspiring it could be banned as a performance-enhancing drug."

Benjamin Cheever, author of *Strides* "By far the most accurate fictional portrayal of the world of the serious runner—a marvelous description of the way it really is."

Kenny Moore, *Sports Illustrated* "The best piece of running fiction around. Beg,

borrow, or buy a copy, and you'll never need another motivator. • Dave Langlais, *Runner's World* "The best novel ever written about running."--*Runner's World*

Truly a cult classic. Now in its 8th Printing! --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I did not enjoy this book as much as everyone claimed. There is a huge focus on college track and talking about the practices and such with that. I am just a normal runner so that elite level talk wasn't really for me. The latter half of the book picked up speed & excitement a bit which helped with my rating.

As you would probably have guess, this is a book about running. I'm a runner so I can't distance myself from that mindset to properly judge if a non-runner would enjoy the book. This is a story of a runner who is trying to get somewhere with his running, even though this somewhere is just as vague as you would expect it to be. Despite this, his drive is immense and he overcomes many obstacles to run just seconds faster over the length of a mile. As I said, a runner can probably appreciate this more than a non-runner. Many thoughts and happenings in this book will instantly bring a nod or a smile to a runner as they read about them. The quest for a slightly faster time, the loneliness of the run, the hard work and dedication required, the camaraderie with fellow runners, and the adrenaline before a race; we all know these as well as many others that Mr. Parker touches on and this is why I loved the book. It made me realize why I love to run as well as helped me reflect on why I run. It was a damn good book and I'd recommend anyone, runner or non runner, to check it out.

Once a Runner has been described as the best running novel of all time - and I can't argue with that. However it is also so much more than just a running book. As a middle of the pack weekend warrior I've never experienced the elite levels of success described in the book, however it gives a great insight into what that would take, the complete engulfment of life by running and the highs and lows experienced along the way. Parker however does a wonderful job in developing characters that are easily related to and understood so that even non-runners would be absorbed by the story. At points it was a little predictable however I still had more than enough times reading "just one more page..." to find out what happened next. A classic for all the right reasons.

First I want to acknowledge that the plot, on the surface, is about running. So, perhaps only runners will appreciate it. That said, I enjoyed this book so much I've re-read it (which is not something I do) and I've given it as a gift to many folks. Parker is gifted in his ability to describe people and scenes in such a way that that you are drawn in at an emotional level, pulled into the page. I said the book is about running on the surface, but it is about so much more. It is about dreams, aspirations, human transitions, aging, and yes, running. Parker takes you back to the era when running was not a "thing" that many of us did - pre-rocknroll marathons, pre-10k's for every charity under the sun. Training was an ungodly amount of miles per week, true runners lived and breathed running. But, the saving grace of running is that it ends up being an analogy for life for many of us, and Parker capitalizes on that in an exceptional way. Take a chance, you won't be disappointed.

For anyone that misses the glory of competition (which is hard for most adults to reclaim after high school and college are over) this book will transport you right back there. This book tells the story of Quenton Cassidy, a college miler, who trains throughout the book to run a sub-four minute mile and compete against one of the world's greatest runners. The author magically evokes the pain and glory of Cassidy's training, and even the lap-by-lap pain and glory of a mile race. The reader gets to know Cassidy's loyal friend and supporter, former Olympian, Bruce Denton. We become familiar with his girlfriend Andrea and her inability to understand Cassidy's desire to torment himself with rigorous training all in the name of glory. The author of this book is one talented individual: character description made all the characters seem like kids we went to college with, and the agony and glory of running were perfectly recaptured through the author's skilled writing. I found this book to be very easy to read. While I wouldn't call it a page turner until Cassidy's last race, I enjoyed reading the whole book.

One of the true great running novels. This read should be on the bucket list of every competitive middle distance runner.

... beautifully done, phenomenal story, I would watch the movie if there was one, but as always, it wouldn't rival the book in any capacity. I felt a strange contradiction of understanding the runner's feeling and being very aware that I would probably never be able to understand. As a runner myself (far less-so than our friend Cassidy) this is a book that I will read at least three more times, because when there is doubt about why we subject ourselves to such pain, this book provides the answer. A must read for any runner, runner-enthusiast or anyone who's ever attempted to be a runner.

Really nice easy read. I think that it is a good book for those who are beginning to run. For all those who enjoy running. I enjoyed the book. The main story line is quite basic. A runner tries hard to set a new record. But there are obstacles. Outer obstacles and inner ones. When he totally devotes himself to the task he gets the power to break the record and set a new record. I would say that the book is a good illustration of the process of achievement. Set a goal. Totally devote yourself to its attainment. Make it a priority. Then and only then you will achieve it. And that is totally great. I am just starting to run regularly. So I think to do this I should not only run but also read on the subject. To try to understand how other people resolve typical questions. Like why should I run in the first place? In this book I liked the answer to the above question. You should run because you decided to run. Your decision is the reason. Period. And that is one way of answering this question. You first sit and think whether you really want to do it. You look at what benefits you will get. What the dark side of the activity will be. But once you have decided - follow your decision however tough it will be. To sum up, I would really recommend this book.

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