

That's torn it

(Just to mention, Mr. Wright asked me to write this for the new web page and it's about an injury – these words will be a cure for rising readership and insomnia!)

I'm convinced that it's judgment on me that caused my injury. Runners often give sage advice to the lame and incapacitated and I had the temerity to suggest a cure for a nasty groin injury that Chris Illman suffered back in November and my suggestion did absolutely nothing to help him recover. In turn I listened to runners tales about taking time off; I rested and after three weeks I set out again full of vim and vigour and pulled something in my right calf. (Please forgive the medical jargon.) I'll try never to give, or take, advice again.

I'd looked forward to starting training as we got into the Florida sunshine and this injury came without any sort of warning during my second short run. Having lived in the States for a few years I had little trust in going to see a doctor as they get to treat few running injuries as there are very few runners; but you're out here, with a very painful leg so you start asking around for the sort of advice that I described in the first paragraph. I was hobbling badly (well, I was actually hobbling rather well and eliciting lots of sympathetic comments) when an ex-nurse, with a background in massage offered to help. I'd tried RICE: rest, ice, compress and elevate and I'd thrown in heat as well but this bit of experienced massage did help, a bit.

Next piece of good fortune was to meet an old friend, a retired physical therapist. She must have been good because she had just bought her husband a brand new Bentley for his birthday. Maybe I was jumping to conclusions here but being a good physical therapist, earning lots of money and Bentleys seemed to go together so I hung on to her every word and winced and groaned as she prodded, poked and massaged my calf. At this juncture I was relieved that I didn't have the Illman injury. She confirmed that our treatment so far was on the right track, that no gangrene had set in and that an amputation, if necessary, was a long way down the road, which is more than you could say for me.

By now this had been going on for three weeks and in a moment of desperation I emailed David Wright who kindly asked Bob Ferris to offer help. Now it is tough taking advice from Bob, as for the entire first year I knew him, he was injured, had flu, had pulled muscles, had fallen off his bike, had nursed cracked ribs and so forth, so he really was a last resort; but, there again, he did crank out a few successful triathlons in '08 so maybe he was worth a shot. Got a very informative email and some great advice so thank you Bob, I owe you a pint or two. The basic premise was, once you can run without pain go out and do a minute slow jog and walk a minute and gently, gently increase it from there and a bit more massage won't do any harm either.

Here we are now in Clewiston, on Lake Okeechobee and today we went out and did some walking along the huge canal that takes the Inter Coastal waterway across Florida. We saw dozens of large catfish feeding off the rocks along the sides of the waterway and, amazingly, a family of manatees cruising gently past. I ran along the sandy track, without discomfort for the first time and was delighted that I can possibly start cranking out the miles again. Patience has been the real problem throughout. The last time an injury stopped me running was about eight years ago so taking these last seven weeks off has been torture. This whole episode though has helped me write a New Years running resolution. Never take a *complete* rest from running, at least do a little to keep your muscles flexible; and always remember, running is not just a life and death issue, it's more important than that.