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Less Dreckery, More Creativity

These guys I sort of know asked me to write a foreword for their new book. Flattered? Of course. But why me? Well, their book and my latest book, *Running That Doesn't Suck: How to Love Running (Even if You Think You Hate It)*, aren't completely unrelated. Both set out to mix some literal and figurative color into the conventional running book bookshelves.

I've been in the running industry a long time. About 100 years ago, I was an editor at *Trail Runner* magazine. After that I co-founded *Adventure Sports* magazine. And after that, I was a contributing editor to *Runner's World* and freelance writer. Along the way, I blogged about being a pregnant runner, managed a trail running website, wrote a shoes and gear blog, and sweated out a lot of gear reviews, profiles, race stories, and so on. I currently write about running for a range of publications, including *Outside*. All to say that I've written and edited a lot of running content over the years. If you're not careful, running stories and advice (like running, like anything!) can get repetitive.

Then these two guys—John Zilly and Scott Tucker—shared a book concept with me. I thought, “Hmm, maybe interesting.” When they shared the illustrations, title, and some write-ups for the workouts, surely I cracked a sly grin. I was actually sold by just the illustrations ... the fact that there even *are* illustrations, and artistic, ridiculously conceptual ones at that. My books are conceptually illustrated too, but these got me.

I was inspired and fired up. Not just by a running book with great workouts that will make us all as fast as cheetahs, but with the sheer creativity that went into it. The workouts are creative. The storytelling is creative. The illustrations are, insanely and undeniably, creative. In a world where way too much information is thrown at us in exponentially more boring and conventional ways, TRUE CREATIVITY IS A FANTASTIC THING. This book inspires me to not only get out to the track more often for good, fun, ass-kicking interval workouts, it has inspired me to push boundaries of creative thinking in all parts of my life. To me, that is the definition of inspiration.

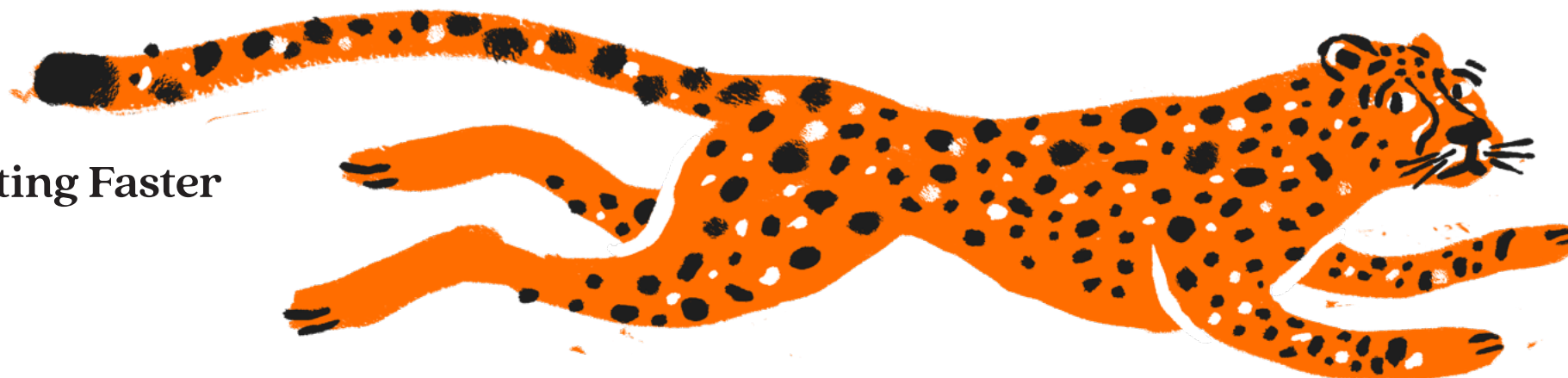
So, enjoy this collection of “Sciency, Gamey, Head-Scratchy Track Workouts.” And may your running—along with every other aspect of your life—be inspired.

LISA JHUNG

Author of *Running That Doesn't Suck: How to Love Running (Even If You Think You Hate It)* and *Trailhead: The Dirt on All Things Trail Running*



Have Fun Getting Faster



HAVE FUN

We've held weekly 5:45 a.m. Vimazi Track Club interval workouts for a long time. To keep them engaging and memorable, we come up with a theme that animates each session. Why? Track workouts have a reputation for being tedious, repetitive, boring, and dull. We think life should be tasty and full of curiosities, and track workouts shouldn't be any different. You might as well enjoy a story, a puzzle, or a sciencey confection while you run your guts out.

Intervals can make your lungs burn and your muscles quiver, and there's something darkly, runnerishly funny about that. So in addition to a think-and-run-at-the-same-time theme, we've tried to tap into a small keg of rogue humor. We hope these workouts are as entertaining to peruse and select as they are energizing to run. Each has been scientifically informed by current best practices, has its own sugary rhythm, and has been fully track-tested.

GET FAST

Whatever you think about intervals, there's zero question about their efficacy. They'll make you a faster runner. You'll also improve your form and learn how to push harder during a race. Getting faster takes some time, but the results of track work will surprise you. We recommend one

interval workout a week, especially during the buildup to a race.

Track intervals that work on speed are one of the four basic elements of any good training program.

Endurance builds a bigger fuel tank so you can run farther. **Economy** builds a more fuel-efficient engine so you can maintain a pace with less effort. **Resilience** builds your entire body's ability to handle training without breaking down. **Speed** builds horsepower so you can run faster over longer distances.

SELECT A WORKOUT

We run distance at Vimazi Track Club, so these workouts are intended to help improve race times at distances of 5k and farther. Especially farther.

We've separated this book into three sections—longish, mediumish, and shortish (a somewhat loose classification system). Selecting a workout is all about your training objective. Early in your race buildup, you probably want to focus on longish intervals. They'll help with consistent pacing and maintaining speed during a race. Move to mediumish and shortish intervals as your event gets closer. These will help increase your anaerobic threshold and get you more comfortable with a quick turnover. Both will lead to a faster pace and a better finish time.

Don't let longish, mediumish, and shortish designations give you the wrong idea. Each of these workouts is essentially the same length, give or take a few hundred meters. They all include about 8000 meters of intensity running (20 laps on a 400m track or essentially 5 miles). Why 8000 meters? That's the sweet spot for most serious runners. Pros and sub-elites may occasionally run longer; free spirits may want to run a shorter total distance. We didn't think total length should be an added decision variable when selecting a workout.

Be sure to note the difficulty rating. We've calculated it using the flaming lung methodology. The Lung Burn for each workout is measured from one to five, five being complete immolation. The shortish intervals tend to be the toughest because they have the most fast-paced running.

RUN THE WORKOUT

We've based most of the interval speeds on your 5k and 10k race paces. Find your corresponding lap and multi-lap paces on the pacing cheat sheet, page 12. If you don't have a recent race time to work from, think of it this way: 10K pace is hard, 5K pace is very hard, and a sprint leaves you breathless.

Warming up for at least 15–20 minutes is the best way to hit your target interval paces (don't forget a 10–20 minutes of cool down). Note that running

injuries are common, so stretch, warm up, and if you're new to intervals don't overdo your first day on the track. Strides are a nice warmup: Alternate 20–30 seconds of high cadence running with 30 seconds of easy jogging over 800m. Strides should make you feel light and agile.

Almost all the rest periods should be active, which means you jog them. No hands-on-knees gasping! Some of the rests are only 10 seconds or simply a change of pace.

If your training plan calls for 10 miles on track day, work the additional 5 miles into a warmup and cool down. Or run two separate workouts. If your plan calls for fewer than 6 miles, keep the workout's rhythm and objective by removing intervals rather than decreasing interval distances. Don't skimp on the warmup or cool down.

FIND YOUR PACE

These workouts are meant to help you reach your optimal pace. In distance running, pace is your superpower, so tap into it. While you might decide to take our commentary—the hurt, the pain, the soul-crushing piles of quivering Jell-O—with a grain of salt, we're pretty sure we mean every word, in a runner's dark humor sort of way. Our hope is that these intervals will inspire a love for track workouts and a thirst to run faster.

Memorizing Pi

PIE! PIE! PIE!

DISTANCES: 1200, 400, 1600, 400, 2000, 2400

LUNG BURN: 

Pi is what's called an irrational number, meaning it can't be written as a fraction. In simple terms, it's defined as the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. But you'll find pi in all sorts of complex mathematical formulas and physics equations. Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, and Indian mathematicians all developed fairly accurate ways to calculate pi, mostly so buildings and bridges wouldn't fall down.

If you took geometry and were exceedingly lucky, you may have been required to memorize just the first few digits of pi. 3.14159 sound familiar? More than likely, knowing those six digits has had zero impact on your life other than taking up neural space that could have been used for something important, like actual pie recipes. May we suggest strawberry rhubarb?

HOW TO RUN IT

Starting with the 3, each digit in pi represents an interval. The numeral determines the number of laps in each interval. Therefore, for the first interval, you'll run a 1200 because $3 \times 400 = 1200$. Don't worry, you're only running six digits out, and we'll cheat a bit by changing the 9 to a 6 (the ancients would certainly object!) to limit this workout to our self-imposed 8000 meters. For pacing, run the 400s faster than your 5k pace, and run the longer intervals at your 10k pace.

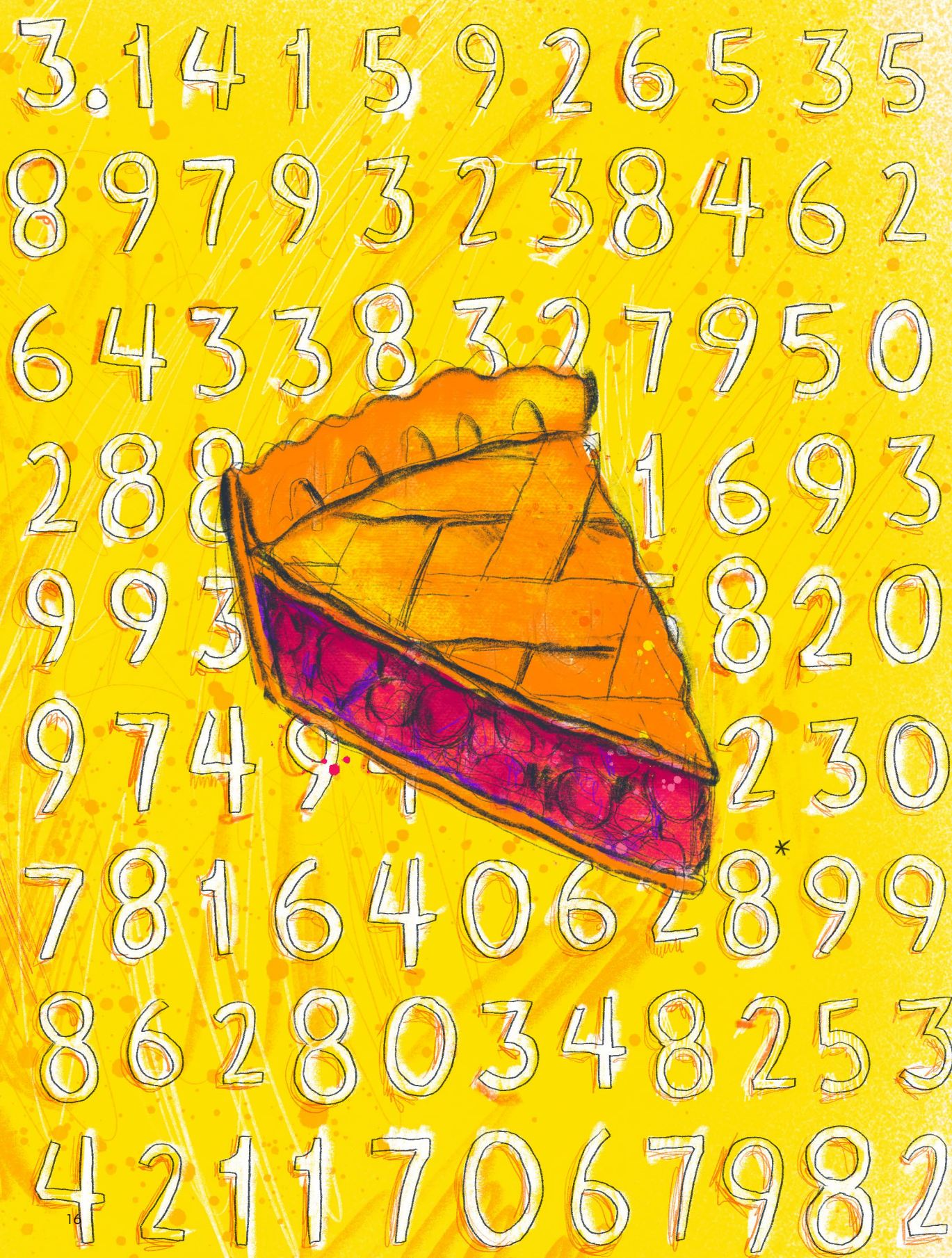
REST INTERVAL

60-second active rest between intervals

HERE'S WHERE IT HURTS

If you're not sufficiently warmed up, it may be tough to catch your breath during the first 400. But maintaining focus during the fourth and fifth laps of the final interval will likely be where you start choking on numbers.

*6208
(00P>)



Word Games

F, M, L

DISTANCES: 400, 800, 1200, 1600, 2000, 2000

LUNG BURN: 🔥

How did language develop? Theories abound! The Pooh-Pooh Theory suggests it comes from the sounds we make in response to pain, surprise, or bad smells. Bow-Wow theorists say we like to mimic the sounds we hear. According to the Yo-He-Ho Theory, language is derived from the grunts of physical labor. The La-La Theory supposes that humming, chanting, playfulness, and love sparked language. Ancient runners likely played their roles: the stinky loincloths, the easily mimicked footstrikes, the grunting on hill repeats, and the joyous hum of easy running.

For today's Board-Game Theory, you'll build a five-letter word—letter by letter for each of the first five intervals. You get your first letter, preferably randomly selected by a teammate, after the 400. For each successive interval, carefully choose a letter to add on to the ones you've already collected. The catch: Every time you add a letter, the result must be a new word. Example: If you get a *b* for your first interval, you might build these four words: second interval—*be*, third—*bee*, fourth—*beet*, fifth—*beets*. If you get stuck building your word (and intermediate words) and need to rearrange or exchange letters, run the entire next interval faster than your 5k pace.

HOW TO RUN IT

Run your consonant laps at your 10k pace. Run your vowel laps faster than your 5k pace (vowels are handy, so they hurt a little more). Notice you add a lap for each new letter you accumulate: 400, 800, 1200, etc. The final 2000—you're done building words—is a mind-clearing speed progression. Starting in lane 5, run each lap faster than the previous one. Move inward with each lap to finish in lane 1. Be grateful the game doesn't go to six letters.

REST INTERVAL

60- to 90-second active rest between intervals

HERE'S WHERE IT HURTS

As you run, your leg muscles will gradually deprive your brain of oxygen. Spelling short words becomes labored, and coherent thoughts break into fragments. Your language will devolve from pleasant La-Las to gasping grunts.

String Theory

DISTANCES: 5 × 800, 5 × 800

LUNG BURN: 🔥🔥🔥

To be fully transparent, we've been working hard to navigate the basics of regular three-dimensional life. And we have a ways to go. That hasn't stopped know-it-all physicists from lapping us in their efforts to understand multiple other dimensions. The cosmic unfairness!

Enter superstring theory. In an effort to harmonize general relativity with quantum mechanics and, if that weren't enough, deliver the grand unified theory that explains everything, superstring theory posits a bunch of other dimensions. In this theory, tiny strings—think plucked guitar strings—vibrate at fixed frequencies. (Plus all sorts of other stuff we don't have space-time to explain.) If you run with this theory long enough, you end up in a 10-dimensional world. Let's stress test it by going out to a three-dimensional track and running ten 800s, each one in a slightly different dimension. Are we good?

HOW TO RUN IT

To run intervals in different dimensions, you need to adjust your pace based on the vibration frequency (VF). Obviously! For VF 1, run the 800 at your 10k pace. For VF 2, run half the 800 at 10k pace and half faster than 5k pace. For VF 3, divide the 800 into three parts: 10k pace, faster than 5k pace, 10k pace. Divide your VF 4 into four alternately paced parts, and your VF 5 into five parts. For the second set, run the VFs in reverse order, starting at 5. Also, reverse the way you alternate paces.

REST INTERVAL

30-second active rest between intervals;
2-minute active rest between sets

HERE'S WHERE IT HURTS

Intervals in a known dimension are hard. Switching dimensions while remembering frequencies and paces can tangle all thinking. During your second five dimensions, you'll either visualize a neat unified theory of everything or your dimensional insignificance will force you to seek shelter in the nearest porta potty.

