

The Guide to Running Track
By Frederick William Schroeder IV

Equipment

- Don't bother buying a good quality brand of running shoes. If Dad wants you to run track so badly then he can buy you new shoes himself. Since he's such a cheap bastard, though, you'll be on your own. You're going to want to save money by grabbing a stylish pair of Starters, just twenty dollars at your local Walmart! If you're really thrifty, you can train in your old Vans. The idea is to give your feet the least support possible, so that you can complain to Coach about your shin splints later on. (see **Training**)
- If your team has a uniform, refuse to wear it. You are not a conformist! That's why you went to public school in the first place, to avoid the dorky looking dress codes of the private schools. Instead of looking like everyone else, make your own uniform. Be creative. Coach won't appreciate your free-spirited creativity, but you can tell him that nothing intimidates the other team quite like a custom wife-beater bedazzled in pink rhinestones with the name "Bonesaw" scribbled on the back in black Sharpie.
- Don't let anyone convince you to wear the short shorts. That shit's for the Freshman Stars and the foot-fairies on the soccer team that like to have their shorts riding up on their junk. Instead, rock the baggy basketball shorts. They should cover at least halfway down your shins, just like how the Hispanic Groundskeeper wears 'em. Where he's from, he'll tell you, they call it "saggin'". You like that he doesn't give a crap what his boss thinks about him, and that he won't sacrifice style for some job.
- While saggin', make sure your underwear is visible at all times.
- Alternatively, just free-ball it. You'll never feel more liberated. Plus, it makes it even easier to

moon other runners, spectators, or Coach. The look on his wrinkly, garden gnome face when he sees the dimples on your hairy white ass will be priceless.

- A pair of aviators are a must. With all of the time you'll be spending out in the sun, you'll want to make sure your eyes are protected. Plus, if you get a pair with mirrored lenses (highly recommended), then you'll be able to check out all of the fine track girl ass around you without repercussions.
- Leave your aviators on at all times, even during races. It's a great way to make your every move unpredictable.
- Be sure to fully participate in "Mustache March". The tasteful, manly strip of fuzz you'll (eventually) grow will make the girls swoon and the underclassmen dudes jealous that they can't pull it off like you can.
- To complete this badass ensemble, shave your hair into a mohawk. If you feel ambitious, get some sick designs cut into the side, like a lightning bolt or racing stripes. Dad won't pay for it, but Buddy will do it in his garage for a couple of beers. That's what friends are for.

Diet

- A healthy diet is important for any runner. You'll need to eat enough before each training session to stay fully energized. Scour the cafeteria for only the finest foods. Things like nachos, buffalo chicken sandwiches (with extra bacon), BBQ pulled pork, chili fries, and pepperoni pizza are all fantastic choices that you will in no way regret a few hours later.
- Stay away from salads and fruits. You aren't a woman. Eat like a man, man.
- Bring snacks to every practice and track meet. You never know when hunger will strike, or you need a sugar rush. That's when Snickers or mini donuts will come in handy. Plus, when you're hanging out around the Hispanic Groundskeeper listening to his stories of hardship, he always

appreciates when you share.

- Invite Buddy to binge drink with you the night before any important meets. Tell him it calms the nerves, and the beer will keep you hydrated. For some reason, he doesn't seem to buy that logic, and will politely pass. He must not have read The Guide.
- You can play the track drinking game with or without Buddy. The rules are simple: drink for every time Dad or Coach got on your case that day.
- Show up to the traditional team pasta dinners late and inappropriately drunk. Don't give a single fuck. Make racy jokes and take potshots at your Rival School. As one of the few seniors, lead the team in your school's fight song. In other words, be the life of the party. Take advantage of the free food so generously provided by the parents of the Freshman Star. Thank his parents as you stuff your face with garlic bread and dribble tomato sauce on their tablecloth. Don't worry if you drop anything on the floor. His dog will clean it up later.
- Keep a bottle of aspirin with you at all times. You'll need it to fend off the natural companion of the track drinking game: brutal fucking hangovers. The hot sun at the meets and Coach's constant nagging certainly doesn't help.
- When the hangover kicks into full gear and you need to vomit, make your way over to the shot putters, and unleash the tidal wave of regurgitated beer and greasy snacks that has been stewing in your gut all morning. Get as much of it as you can on their cement throwing ring. You'll give an embarrassed shrug when the Hispanic Groundskeeper has to clean up the mess, in addition to all of his other tasks. At least it'll be hilarious to watch the meathead shot putters grow irate with the delay in their throwing. They'll get in your face and talk smack, but they'll back off before long, afraid you'll puke on them and their balls of steel.
- When the heat gets to be too much, refresh yourself with an extra-thick peanut butter milkshake

from the snack stand. When Coach throws his clipboard down and yells at you to put that sugary shit away, chug it. You'll get brain freeze, but you wouldn't want to waste a perfectly good milkshake, would you?

- You'll inevitably need to take a dump in the middle of a practice or race, so don't hesitate to find the nearest Port-o-potty/tree/plastic bag. Ignore Coach's calls for you to get back on the damn track. When nature calls, the race can wait.
- Treat yourself to ice cream after practice every once and a while. You've been working hard, so you deserve this. Bring Buddy along, if only because no one eats ice cream alone except depressed women.

Training

- Coach will try to make you do something called stretching before and after every practice. Don't waste your time. No one has ever gotten injured from not stretching. Instead, right after school grab Buddy and hotbox a bowl or two in your car in the parking lot. Contemplate quietly why you even run track if you hate it so much. Can Dad really force you to play a sport you don't like? What would he realistically do if you just quit? Would you even have to tell him, necessarily? Think about what you could be doing with all of the time you spend running track...or rather, avoiding it. Wonder if your grades would improve because you'd have more time to study. Wonder if you'd be able to have a real relationship with a girl, and not just a fling with someone you picked up at a track meet.
- Ask Buddy why he runs track, and let out a smoky laugh when he says he thinks it can be fun, sometimes. Give him a Dead Arm and tell him he needs to get a life. He'll let out a yelp, but he won't be hurt *that* much.
- Suddenly realize that the team has finished stretching and is now ready to start practicing. Exit

your car in a faint cloud of bluish smoke and attempt to blend in with the rest of the team as they get ready to go out on the roads for the day's run.

- When Coach calls you out for missing stretches, tell him you were meeting with a teacher for extra help, or making up a quiz. He has a feeling, based on your slightly bloodshot eyes and his long experience with troublemakers, that academics weren't quite what you were up to, but there is nothing he can do.
- Enjoy the fact that Coach won't kick you off the team. He can't afford to lose any runners. He has enough trouble as it is competing with all of the wealthy private schools in the division, and the last thing he needs is to lose one of his few seniors, no matter how much of a dick you are. Still, the old geezer must see something in you to have kept you on the team for so long, so maybe you can repay him for his trouble with a nice end of the year giftcard to Subway.
- Instead of running a Woods Loop or any of those other long, exhausting routes that Coach expects everybody to run, cut off to a side street with Buddy and a few other slackers. Watch the rest of the team run by for a minute, noticing that the Freshman Star is leading the pack as usual. Shrug it off as him being a try-hard cock. His parents must be soooo proud.
- Whip out your trusty hacky sack and kick it around your circle of slackers for a half hour or so. The goal is to keep the sack up as long as you can manage. This is the only workout you'll ever need. If you like, throw some tricks into the mix, like the The Rainbow or The Elephant Swing. If you can master those, your peers will view you as a golden god.
- When you head back from your “custom” route, sprint the last 200 meters so that your fellow hacky sackers and yourself will be out of breath by the time you reach Coach up at the track. This way, it appears to Coach that you are working just as hard as the rest of the team, including the Freshman Star.

- Coach will try to make you run a workout on the track, like intervals or Russian cone drills, just so that he can keep an eye on you. While Buddy and the others will just do it and get it over with, you should complain about a pain in your shins. Coach will say something about a pain in his ass before pointing out that your chronic shin splints probably have something to do with those shitty sneakers of yours. Promise you'll get new sneakers just as soon as you can find the time in between practice and studying. He'll say that you say that every time, but you can barely hear him, as you're already halfway to the Trainer's office. By now, you and the Trainer are well acquainted, and he gives you a nod of acknowledgment as you head straight for the ice chest in his office.
- On days when Coach makes the whole team train in the weight room, make a beeline for the stationary bikes in the way back. Ignore the girls complaining that they wanted to use the bikes that day. Who gives a shit? The girls track team has been a joke for years. Yeah they probably win just as many meets as the boys, but when it all comes down to it, this is a man's world.
- Drown out the girls' whining with your headphones, and listen to some punk rock to get pumped up. Not so pumped up, though, that you actually begin to pedal the bike.
- If Coach tells you to get off the bike and do a different exercise for once, pretend you can't hear him because of the headphones. When he reaches out his bony hand to grab the headphones and rip them from your ears, try to look shocked. Tell him you were just so in the zone that you didn't notice him there.
- When Coach tells you that you need to do 3 sets of squats, tell him of course you will...right after you go to the bathroom. You wouldn't want to shit yourself while dipping down low!
- As soon as you exit the weight room, make a mad dash for the locker room, grab your stuff, say adios to the Hispanic Groundskeeper, and get the hell out of there. There's no way you are going

to *actually* lift.

- Be happy with your body, and see no need to change it by becoming like those hulking-out meatheads on the throwing team. Consider that if you put half the effort into your homework as you did thinking of ways to get out of workouts, the Ivy Leagues would be begging you to grace them with your enrollment. Fuck it, State School can't be *that* bad. And plenty of people start their higher education with Community College, too.

Transportation

- For away meets, you'll want to grab the Freshman Star and make him carry your bags onto the team bus, telling him some bullshit about paying dues if he wants to contribute to the team.
- Take your time in making sure you have all of the track meet essentials with you. Coach will have the bus driver honk the horn because you're always late, but as much as he threatens, Coach's balls are too old and shriveled to ever actually leave without you.
- When the bus starts to drive away, run after it waving your arms around wildly. Luckily you won't have to run for long before the bus stops. Just Coach trying to scare you. Get on the bus before he decides to try some other funny business. He'll sneer at you and say something like, "Next time, we won't stop for you." Yeah, right.
- Even though everyone else on the bus is doubling and tripling up on sharing a seat, you can expect to get a two-seater all to yourself. If there isn't one available for whatever reason, toss a freshman or two aside to clear some room. Seniority rules.
- Draw the obligatory penis through the fog on your window (and encourage others to do the same). Write "[Rival School] Sucks Major Chode" mirrored on it so that everyone your bus passes knows just how much those losers fucking suck.
- Stretch out and enjoy the extra leg room you have. Even if the meet is only ten minutes away,

you should bring a pillow so that you can sleep like the prince you are.

- Your sleep is likely to be interrupted by the Female Asian Bus Driver's questionable driving abilities. It'll seem like she goes out of her way to hit every single bump and pothole. Maybe seeing a bunch of loud teenagers flailing perilously around in the rearview mirror makes her tedious job just a bit more bearable.
- When you give up on getting some shut eye, lead your teammates in a raucous chorus of "99 Bottles of Beer". See if you can keep it up the entire way to the meet. By the end of the ride, you can tell by the gritting of his teeth and dark bags under his eyes that Coach wishes that he drove up in his own car. Every bus ride with you seems to take a year off of his life.

Meets

- The first thing you must do at any track meet, home or away, is to scout the area and see which teams have the most attractive runners. Hint: It's usually one of the all-girls Catholic schools.
- See if Buddy wants to join you in the pursuit of sexiness. He'll usually say he has to warm up for his race, but he'll thank you for the offer. It just means that much more ass for you.
- Stride up to the girls confidently, showing off your fabulous custom uniform. Ask them where they got their shoes. Say you were thinking about getting a new pair. Ask about what races they run and if they ever get bored attending a school without any dudes. Get mad digits.
- When Coach tells you to stop socializing and focus, he's probably right. You've got your digits. Now it's time to get in the zone. If the sun is out, it's a good time to catch some rays. Find a nice quiet patch of grass and soak up that sweet, sweet, Vitamin D.
- Thanks to the fine work done by the Hispanic Groundskeeper, you'll be able to get very comfortable lying on the grass. Your first race doesn't start for an hour, so you might as well take a nap. Put on your headphones and drift away to the summery sounds of The Beach Boys.

Think about how much you need a vacation. Think about how you just want the pressure to end. Think about how the coming summer will be the last few months you have before getting shipped away to some college you don't even care about. It would be nice if Dad gave you any input on where you would go.

- Dream that you are in college, and you're happy. There's girls, and booze, and the only responsibility you have is to yourself. You go out to crazy parties every night, and can sleep in as long as you like the next day. Whenever you get hungry, there is a fully stocked, All-You-Can-Eat buffet in the school cafeteria. You just swipe in and gorge yourself on all of the foods you love until you're energized enough to party again.
- Accidentally sleep through the 100 Meter Dash. You won't hear the Cranky Official call your heat over the dreamy voice of Brian Wilson. Lower your aviators and check your skin to make sure you are bronzing evenly.
- When Coach asks where the hell you were during that race, explain that you got confused and thought you were in a different heat. He calls your bullshit and tells you that you missed every heat. His grip on his clipboard is so tight that his hands lose their color. He points out that if you ever actually ran in the races he put you in, you could put up points for your team and keep him from being the joke of the division.
- Coach thanks God that the Freshman Star is keeping your team alive in the meet, but says you sure as hell better not miss your relay, or he'll have your ass on a silver platter. You tell Coach that you wouldn't miss it for the world, that 400 Meter Relays are your favorite. Wonder if he notices that you are looking suspiciously tanner.
- Notice that the underclassmen are in awe of how you constantly manage to just barely avoid getting in any real trouble. You bet even the Freshman Star wants to be just like you one day,

even if he doesn't say so outright. He's got a long way to go, anyway.

- Always take time to enjoy the little things during track meets: namely, the joy that is heckling the other teams during their races from the sidelines. Grab Buddy and whoever else is down to talk trash. Buddy isn't much of a trash talker but he'll go along with it, mainly standing back and listening to your brutal verbal attacks on all of the easy targets: Gingers, Mexicans, flat-chested girls, midgets, lanksters, nerds, Asians, mopheads, and, of course, anyone on that weird team whose uniform is baby blue spandex suits. Get in their heads. If you can make them break their concentration, or at least entertain your teammates with the attempt, it's a win.
- Cheer in earnest for any fat kids you see running. They have it so rough as it is. It makes you sad to watch their jiggling bodies sway side to side as they stomp their way down that last, long stretch of the track. Wonder if their dads made them do track too, though for a different reason: a vain attempt to shed some poundage. At least their dads probably came to the meets to make sure they were doing what they were supposed to.
- Make a big stink when Coach calls you over and makes you anchor the relay. Tell him you'd much prefer a spot as the second or third leg, where there is less pressure to do well. Coach will place his hand on your shoulder reassuringly and look at you with his tired eyes. He'll tell you that being the anchor forces you to take on responsibility for your team's race, a responsibility he thinks you should be able to handle as a leader. He doesn't want to put that much responsibility on the Freshman Star, not yet anyway. You pout and say you'll anchor, but you won't be happy about it.

Races

- Check in to the race with your team, which includes the Freshman Star as the third leg. Remember that Coach wants you to act as a leader. Approach the Cranky Official and tell him

that this relay is just a waste of time. Suggest that they cut the crap and just award your team first place. They can have everyone else tied for last.

- When the Cranky Official tells you just how freakin' funny you are, and that he wishes as much as you that he could just get out of there to enjoy the rest of his Saturday, attempt to make a compromise. Maybe they could just give you guys a 200 meter head start?
- When the Cranky Official gives you a firm “No”, the Freshman Star mumbles that you should probably just get over it. Tell him to pipe down and let a real leader take charge. Turn back to the Cranky Official and demand that at the very least, they should give your team the inner lane. You shouldn't have to deal with the bullshit wind on the outside lanes. At this point, the Cranky Official will likely comply, if only to get you out of his face and to finally start the relay.
- While you wait at the line to get your hand-off, take this opportunity to psych out the other relay teams. Tell the guys waiting next to you that Dad was an Olympic hero. He wasn't really, but it sounds a helluva lot more impressive than just saying he ran D1 track in college before being forced to retire due to an unfortunate drunk sledding accident. They won't be able to tell you're lying thanks to your mirrored aviators.
- As the third leg of each teams approach the final stretch, briefly lower your aviators so that you can make direct eye contact with them and lick your lips while you stick your hand down your pants. Who knows what they'll think about that, but whatever it is probably won't have much to do with winning a relay.
- When you see the Freshman Star turn onto the final stretch, it's finally time for you to warm-up. Jumping jacks are the way to go here. When you swing your hands up, don't worry about slapping your opponents in the face.
- As you warm-up, you notice that the Freshman Star seems to have his own fan section taking up

the bottom row of bleachers. You recognize his parents, as well as what seem to be his grandparents and younger siblings. Hell, even his dog is there. And they are all screaming their faces off, cheering for him to give it his very best. Meanwhile, Dad is probably enjoying Happy Hour after a long day of work.

- Join in on the cheering for the Freshman Star, telling that fresh fuck to finish strong and give you the baton, which you affectionately refer to as the Shaft.
- After getting the Shaft from him, survey your spot in the race at this point. As you accelerate, realize that you are not too far from first place, which is currently being held by your Rival School.
- Think about how the distance between you and your Rival School is not very large. Consider how great it would feel to snatch first place right from those cocky fuckers. That would win you not only the race, but would also place your school in an overall first place at the meet. That would actually be pretty cool, and the glory would belong almost entirely to you. Forget the Freshman Star, you're the anchor! You'd be a hero. Dad would love to hear about it. Plus, you'd get to see the look of utter defeat on the faces of everyone from your Rival School.
- You remember Coach telling you that the faster your arms move, the faster your legs move. He is also always threatening to “chop your goddamned arms off” if you don't tuck your elbows into your side when you run. Tuck 'em in and pump like a machine to the beat of your school's fight song.
- Surprise yourself to notice you are quickly closing the gap between yourself and the runner from your Rival School. Turns out, that when you try, you actually have some decent speed. It must be genetic or something.
- Use the cheers of the home crowd to fuel your new found speed. Buddy will be jumping up and

down, hardly believing his eyes. Even the Hispanic Groundskeeper will be wildly cheering you on, with pride in his face like he's your biggest fan. He probably sees more of your races than Dad.

- As you come up on the runner from your Rival School on the last turn of the track, accept that you might need just a little bit of an edge to pass him. Give a quick pump of your elbow and drive it swiftly into his sternum. If you do this correctly, you should hear a gasp of air escape his mouth before he drops back. Most of the time, the Cranky Official won't even notice, as he's more concerned with collecting his ten bucks an hour and going home at this point in the meet.
- Break fully past the runner from your Rival School on the final stretch of the track. Ignore the fact that your ass feels like it's cramping up and your shins are on fire. Instead make a mental recording of the deafening cheers all around you. You'll be finished in just a few seconds, and then you can fully enjoy this moment. You've earned it.

Celebrations

- When you cross the finish line to win the race, spike the Shaft onto the track. With what feels like your last bit of breath, shout, "Fuck [Rival School]!"
- Hock a fat loogie onto that asshole's lane and take delight in him stepping in it as he crosses the finish line, utterly and totally defeated.
- Feel good about yourself for once now that you've actually accomplished something. You should feel very proud. You will forever be remembered as the hero who carried your team to victory at a home meet, in a race that no one expected you to win. Not only that, but the underclassmen sluts are gonna be all over you for the rest of your short time in highschool.
- When the Cranky Official announces that your relay team has been disqualified for poor sportsmanship, realize that your accomplishment suddenly means nothing. You will forever be

remembered as the jerk who dragged his team to a heartbreaking loss at a home meet, in a race that you should have won. Not only that, but everyone is going to want to kick your ass.

- When Coach grabs you by the shoulder, his bony fingers digging into your skin, be thankful that your aviators won't let him see the tears starting to form in your eyes. Absolutely do not apologize, no matter how much you feel you need to. Apologizing shows weakness.
- When Coach reams you out in front of the whole team, don't let them know how ashamed you are of your actions. Plaster a protective smirk across your face, so that no one can know how much it hurts for you to know that even when you try your very hardest, you just can't help but to be a dick and mess everything up.
- Try not to let your teammates' disappointment or frustration with you get under your skin. Ignore the whispers and grumbles building up all around you. Avoid looking at any of them if you can help it, including Buddy. For some reason, they all expected things to turn out differently, but that's not your fault.
- Try to ignore the stunned silence that has fallen over the Freshman Star's entourage of fans. His siblings don't seem to understand why their big brother, their hero, isn't bringing home a big shiny medal that day. His grandparents probably understand the situation only slightly more. His parents, who probably had to take off early from work just to see him run in one of his first varsity races, look as though they want to kill you. Even that damn dog looks like he'd like to take a chomp out of your dumb ass. Your ass is so numb from running that you probably wouldn't even feel much.
- Don't give Coach the chance to bench you for the next meet, or make you run extra laps, or kick you off the team. Don't let him have the satisfaction of doing any of those things. Instead, tell him that you quit, because you only do things on your terms, and you're graduating in a few

months anyway.

- Walk off the track to the locker room for the last time. On the way, notice that the look of pride in the Hispanic Groundskeeper has disappeared in exchange for a sunken, over-worked and sunburned face. Wonder if he has anything to look forward to outside of highschool sporting events. Hope for his sake that repairing the school's sprinkler system is more exciting then it seems.
- Grab all of your things from your locker. Change out of your sweat-soaked uniform and stuff it into the very bottom of your backpack, where you find a squished box of mini donuts. Allow the powdery goodness of those holed treats attempt to fill the hole in your heart as you head to your car, where a pre-rolled joint is waiting for you.
- While you smoke, alone, in your car, think about how you are going to break the news to Dad. You're at a loss. Your only console is that track isn't even a real sport, and only assholes take it seriously.