

WHAT I LEARNED FROM STEVE JONES

BY ALAN CULPEPPER



When I was a young professional athlete coming out of college, Steve Jones became a mentor and role model I wanted to emulate. Growing up in Wales, Steve discovered running later than many other world-beaters and took more of a meandering path to greatness. He spent time in the military and even admitted to smoking his fair share of cigarettes before molding himself into a world record-holder and winner of the Chicago, London and New York City marathons.

Steve spent the bulk of his professional career living and training in Boulder, Colo., where I went to school and also lived as a professional. I was fortunate to spend time with Steve, and learned some valuable lessons that I added to my own toolbox. These elements transcend ability and can help you as well.

THE POWER OF SIMPLICITY

Steve's training was simplistic, with very little variety from week to week. His small repertoire of workouts included hill repeats, harder tempo efforts and fartleks. He also ran fewer miles than many of his competitors. Steve's secret was in his consistency and emphasis of quality over quantity. He taught me the benefit of running easy days at a more moderate pace and focusing on effort over fancy workouts with hard-to-follow instructions.

THE POWER OF RACING

Steve did not shy away from racing. He raced often and was able to blend racing into his training. Since he didn't put in very high mileage compared to others, he was able to back off just slightly and include a race into his schedule without having to completely alter his normal routine. Steve would sometimes run a half marathon in place of a long run and be back to training right away, but he never compromised his long-term focus.

THE POWER OF COURAGE

Steve's courage is what made him one of the all-time greats. Racing can create a level of fear in all of us—the greater the expectation, the more we fear failure or disappointment. One of Steve's distinguishing qualities was that he faced fear with courage head on. In races, he would push the pace from the onset. This is not to say that we should all go out fast and try to hang on, but we all can learn to race with a boldness that leads to amazing performances.



Two-time U.S. Olympian Alan Culpepper won national titles from the 5K to the marathon. His first book, "Run Like a Champion," is available at VeloPress.com.