

## ANATOMY OF A SHOE

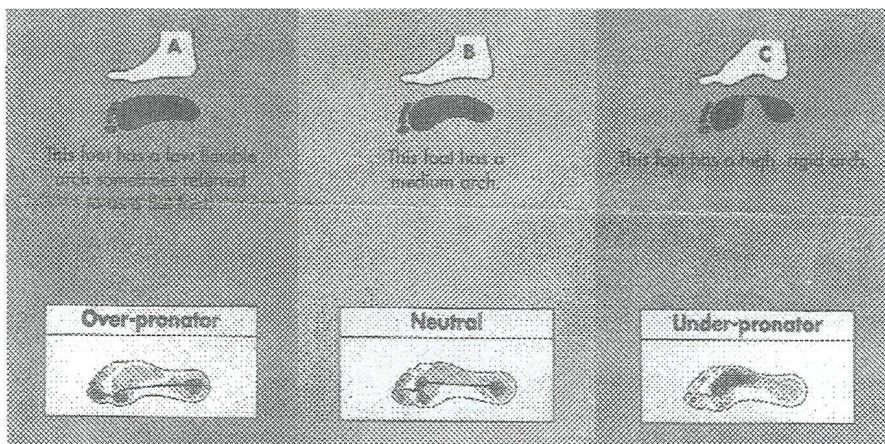
Did you know your foot has its own personality? Well, it does! And here's some basic information to equip you with the knowledge to make better footwear choices for racewalking. Since we all have different feet, it's only logical we need different shoes. Here are some basic guidelines.

### Foot Types

Most people have one of four basic foot types:

1. neutral – meaning you basically have a problem-free foot plant
2. overpronator – you have a low arch and a tendency to roll inward on your shoe and the heel counter may break down more quickly
3. underpronator – you have a high, rigid arch
4. supinator – you roll outward on your shoe and show excessive wear on the outer heel area and the heel counter may break down more quickly

Foot types #3-4 should be looking for shoes with different levels of correction for motion control, stability and cushioning.



### Shapes and Lasts

You probably have no idea what either of these terms mean, but you're going to learn! All shoes fall into one of two categories:

1. Semi-curved shape with a combination or slip last
2. Straight shape with a board or combination last

Most racing flats do not come with removable insoles, so you can't really determine its last. But just for the heck of it, take a look at a running shoe, and you'll be pretty amazed at what the inside looks like WITHOUT the insole. First, the shape will tell you if it's straight, curved or semi-curved. Next, if it's slip lasted, there will be stitching up the

center of the shoe. If it's board lasted, there will be something resembling cardboard inside the shoe. Some shoes have a bit of each. Neat, huh?

### The Heel Counter

No, it doesn't actually add up the number of steps you're taking, but it performs an awfully important function. You see, it keeps your heel stable in the shoe so it doesn't shift around. If the heel counter ever breaks down, you will physically be able to move it to and fro. This means it's time to get a new pair of shoes!

Now that you have all this information, how does it go together to insure a good fitting shoe?

### The Old Shoe Test

Take off your shoes and give your feet a chance to air out. Look at the bottom of your shoes. Is the heel worn down unevenly? If so, is it the inside or outside of the heel? Is one shoe worn out more than the other? Is the heel compressed more on one shoe? Put them up on the countertop. Are they leaning outward or inward? Any areas wearing thin on the soles? Is the fabric still intact or are your toes peeking through? It may be time for a new pair of shoes.

### Why Racewalkers Wear Running Flats

You've walked the walk so you realize the importance of having a shoe that is not only flexible but also light weight. No other sport will have you taking 150-200 steps per minute. No other sport will give you such a great total body and cardiovascular workout. We've all been talked into buying the more supportive, hot leather-like healthwalking shoe that is great for a stroll in the park, but they do not have enough forefoot flexion to be comfortable while racewalking. And besides, they're like wearing a barbecue pit on your feet – HOT, HOT, HOT!!! While racewalking, your feet work harder and require more flexibility and breathability.

Finding and wearing a proper fitting racing flat (with an additional arch support, if necessary) is all that's needed for a comfortable workout. And since these shoes are light and flexible, they should be worn for 350 miles ONLY and some styles even less depending on body weight and stride style. That means you should be replacing your shoes approximately every six months. It's also good to buy two pair and rotate them. Keep the clunkers for your evening strolls – invest in a proper pair of shoes and you'll be on the road to a great workout.

### Orthotics

Yes, many of us have them, and they do fit into most racing flats. Be sure to bring yours with you and see if they fit in the shoes you are thinking of buying. (Also, be sure to wear the socks normally worn while racewalking – something polypro or Coolmax but

NOT cotton.) Your feet will be a lot more comfortable with an arch to help support it. Flats sell themselves on their lightness, so if you want an arch support, you'll have to provide your own. There are many great brands out there including ones from Dr. Scholl's, Sorbothane, SOF brand, Second Wind, Arch Mates and Spenco. You also have a choice between  $\frac{3}{4}$  length and full-length insoles. Again, try them out in the store. They want you to be happy with your purchase!

Most of all, have fun and HAPPY WALKING!