

# Tennessee Running

Bringing Tennessee's Distance Runners Together

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## Everyone Poops

Dave Milner / 04/29/2007

Everyone poops. It's just that most people make it to an appropriate receptacle first.

Usually, when nature calls while I am running, my digestive system gives some kind of polite 10-minute warning. If that is not heeded quickly, it then sounds a more serious 5-minute warning, perhaps with a warning shot being fired off, before going to DEFCON 3, at which point there had better be a toilet within a quarter-mile, because an explosion is imminent.

Four miles into yesterday's scheduled 9-mile run, and approximately three hours after washing down a breakfast burrito and a plate of hash browns with an iced coffee drink called a Mood Elevator, I felt a deep, seismic shift in my lower gut. But unlike on previous runs, there were no warnings. This was it. Judging by the cold sweat that had descended up on my brow, I figured I had maybe 30 seconds to find somewhere to unload the after-effects of my late lunch at a coffee shop that will – for the sake of its reputation – remain nameless.

I was almost at the end of a recently constructed section of the greenway along the Harpeth River when I realized it was, well, 'go' time. About a hundred and fifty yards away was a driving range, which I thought might have a bathroom. And just as I was entertaining the idea of a mad dash for said range, it happened.

Anal leakage. Before today, the term was confined to the side-effects of the over-consumption of non-fat potato chips with the wonder ingredient Olestra. Anal leakage was something that happened to other people, not me. But here it was, in a split second, before I had time to take evasive action, happening. To me. In my shorts. My mood was no longer elevated.

After the first leak, I knew there would be more, and I spotted a drainage tunnel wide enough for me to run in to. As fast as I could move while keeping my sphincter closed, I made for the tunnel, dropped my shorts, and finished what I had involuntarily started. I glanced to my right to see the black silhouette of what appeared to be a car seat. A moving car seat? Wait! There's someone on the seat. As he turns my way, I see the light bounce off the eyes of a heavy-set middle-aged bearded man sitting on the seat. He doesn't say anything, but surely he sees the silhouette of a skinny, shirtless guy taking a dump in what appear to be his home.

I look around me for some paper. To hell with the potential bacterial infection! I need to wipe with something. But the old man's house is remarkably free of litter and debris. Now even more embarrassed, I get up and leave the tunnel.

My run is going from very bad to worse. Anyway I slice it, I am four miles from my house, and at least 2 miles from the nearest fast-food restaurant, gas station, or other establishment at which I might be able to clean up. So, sticking to my originally planned route, I begin heading back home. Perhaps someone will have dropped some toilet roll along the way. You never know.

I pass a couple of runners along Sawyer Brown Road. Usually I make a concerted effort to make friendly eye contact

and wave to my fellow runners, but on this occasion, when they look at me and nod, I act like I don't even see them. I am too ashamed for human contact, even if it is just a visual acknowledgement. After all, I just took a shit in my shorts.

The smell is bad, but the chafing soon pushes the odor way to the back of my mind. Within three or four minutes, it feels like I am running with sandpaper and broken glass in my shorts. I try to run in a slightly bow-legged fashion in order to reduce the amount of friction in the affected area, but it is no good. My balls, ass, and inner thighs, aside from being coated in poop, are now on fire. What was a blissful early run on a picture-perfect spring evening has turned into a nightmare.

Bellevue, in my experience, has an inordinate amount of litter on its thoroughfares, especially along Highway 70, but in a sick twist of fate, for the next two miles, I cannot find a single piece of paper or cardboard with which to do some much needed cleaning-up.

I decide 'to hell with it', I'm going to 'man-up,' as much as a grown man who just soiled himself, can 'man-up' and just finish up the run. I try to think of a happy place, and picture myself on my couch, feet up, clean underwear, with a cold beer and my favorite sitcom "Two and a Half Men" about to come on. I begin losing focus after about twenty seconds and start wishing I had brought my iPod. Any distraction would, at this point, be worth its weight in gold.

I soldier on, bouncing along Highway 70, legs at 11 o'clock and 1 o'clock, and pass another couple of runners. I muster a forced smile and a 'hi,' because the woman is one I see running in my neighborhood quite often, and I don't want her thinking that faster (than her) runners are snobs. But I give her a wide berth. I don't want her thinking that faster runners stink either!

After 54 minutes of running (28 minutes of which came after the pooping), my eyes have begun watering, and I realize I am dropping F-bombs every couple of painful steps. I cannot take it any longer. I stop running, and begin walking. And it feels sooooo good. I am not so much walking as swaggering, like John Wayne in True Grit. But not because I'm wearing chaps; it's because I'm chapped.

About ten minutes (and a little over half a mile) later, I enter our subdivision, and started to fantasize about sitting on the bag of frozen peas I keep in our freezer to tend to post-track workout calf soreness.

Just as I turn on to our street, I see my ex walking our dogs. She has stopped to talk to two of our newest neighbors. They moved into the house kitty-corner from us about six weeks ago, but we haven't formally met yet. She doesn't see me, but Zola, our 55-pound Siberian Husky does and begins straining at the leash, annoying my wife, who still doesn't turn to see me. I am in my driveway and just a few feet from sneaking into the house through the open garage door, when Zola pulls at her leash hard enough to make my wife turn and see me.

"Hey! Come over here," Alisa yells.

"No! You come over here," I reply.

Slightly embarrassed, she repeats herself "Come over here, Dave. Meet our new neighbors."

"No. You come over here," I insist, through clenched teeth.

"Why?"

"Just come over here," I repeat, trying to stay calm, forcing another smile.

Our new neighbors must think I am rude and that we are a truly odd couple, but there is no way in hell I am going to be introduced to anyone over the age of two when I have no shirt on and have fresh poop in my shorts.

She comes over, finally, and asks quietly "What's wrong?"

"Trust me," I say. "I cannot meet the neighbors right now."

She catches a wiff of my shorts and then realizes exactly what the problem is.

"Did you poop in your shorts?" she asks, as if it is a regular occurrence.

"Yes. Yes, I did."

"Okaaaaay then," she says, with a roll of her eyes, and returns with the dogs to her unfinished neighborly chat.

Meanwhile, I head into the house, go upstairs, clean-up, tend to my wounds, and take the most painful shower of my life. I reflect on my run, and wonder what excuse Alisa offered the neighbors for my refusal to meet them. Dostoyevsky wrote that "suffering is the sole origin of consciousness." If he was right, between this run, the morning run tomorrow and the slated track workout tomorrow evening, I expect to be truly aware, absolutely in touch with my being. But if the

cold beer in my hand and the ice pack on my nuts begin to numb the edges of that consciousness, and a light mist develops at my mind's periphery, trust me, I won't complain a bit.

Besides, as one friend noted, it could have been so much worse. Women's world record holder, Paula Radcliffe, was forced to take a crap on the course of the London Marathon in 2005, in front of thousands of spectators, and millions of TV viewers, and with the clock ticking. At least I had my privacy, except for the homeless dude, and no one was rushing me.

DAVE MILNER IS THE PUBLISHER & EDITOR OF TR. IN 25+ YEARS OF RUNNING, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THIS HAS HAPPENED, ALTHOUGH HE HAD A CLOSE CALL AT THE 2004 HUNTSVILLE MARATHON.