

RUNNING SHORTS

What's the latest in running shoes?

By Ken Johnson

In an earlier column, I reported on the increase in barefoot running. When wearing typical running shoes, runners tend to strike the ground first with their heel. Some have suggested that this heel strike can result in numerous injuries, including plantar fasciitis (inflammation of the thick connective tissue on the sole of your foot).

When running barefoot, runners tend to strike the ground first with their forefoot or mid-foot. This is a more natural motion. However, injuries due to the foot striking ground debris are frequent.

Hence, minimalist shoes (toe shoes) became popular. They are like gloves for your feet. They allow the same benefits of barefoot running, but provide some protection from ground debris.

The latest is HOKAs. They look pretty much like traditional running shoes, except for very thick cushioning of the soles, particularly in the mid-foot. Technology has allowed the additional foam cushioning, without adding too much weight to the shoe. When wearing HOKAs, your foot sinks into the cushioning, rather than riding on top of it. HOKAs provide excellent shock absorption and stability.

HOKAs were initially developed for long distance trail running for protection of the feet against rocks and roots, but now there are models for road running.

HOKAs have a far less drop between the heel and forefoot than traditional running shoes. One runner reports it's like running barefoot on a padded track.

Not all is perfect. There are complaints that the toe box is small and blisters can result. Others complain that the thickness of the sole makes the shoe less flexible and this can cause stress on the ankle. Another drawback is the price – about \$170 a pair.

If you are a long-distance runner, HOKAs may be for you. For others, maybe minimalist shoes are best. For most of us, we will continue to wear traditional running shoes.

It is always best to visit a running store, talk to the professionals and see what's best for you. Much depends on factors such as your running gait, how far and on what surface you run on or not you wear custom orthotics and, of course, what you can afford.

The nearest running stores to Huntsville are Luke's Locker and Fleet Feet in The Woodlands and Brazos Running Company in College Station.

Recent race results:

Sunday Night 5K, The Woodlands, Nov. 2

Julia Buck, 29 25:17

Ken Johnson, 73 36:26

Texas 10 Series Katy, Nov. 2

10 Miles

Jose Torres, 21 1:08:10

Steve Allen, 42 1:19:27

Steve Bickford, 53 1:23:55

Dana Formon, 26 1:37:37
Ken Johnson, 73 2:06:32

5 Miles

Haley Torres, 19 1:05:30

Spartan Race Dallas, About 4 miles with obstacles, Nov. 2

Kelly Bielamowicz, 39 1:41:36

Race for Success Half Marathon, Lufkin, Nov. 1

Jan Parks, 57 2:26:21

Rocky Raccoon Trail Run, Huntsville State Park, Nov. 1

50K (31 miles)

Jacob Gautreaux, 42 5:18:06

25K (15.5 miles)

Chase Foster, 30 2:23:23

Angelina Santos, 49 2:39:26

Ken Johnson, 73 4:12:00

April Russell, 38 4:19:34

10K (6.2 miles)

Dan Byrne, 56 42:09

Monica Lopez, 32 1:00:14

Gerald Johnson, 59 1:09:59

Candace Prater, 47 1:15:11

Katy Lampson, 39 1:15:24

Haylee McCain, 20 1:15:52

Houston Half Marathon, Oct. 26

Jose Moreno, 53 1:56:03

Willis Volleyball 5K Trail Run, Willis, Oct. 25

J. C. Guzman, 42 21:05

Donna Fabian, 40 24:17

Ken Johnson, 73 37:57

Upcoming races in Huntsville:

November 14 – Freedom 5K Run, SHSU Campus

November 22 – Texas Trail Endurance Runs, 50-Mile, 50K, 20K, Huntsville State Park

November 27 – Leftover Turkey 10K, 5K, 1-Mile, Physical Therapy Associates