

Personal Record: A Love Affair With Running

A mass of fresh-off-the-presses running books has arrived just in time to take them out to the tree swing and read them while sipping some beer . . . er . . . lemonade. This time we managed to get through five of 'em.

Rachel Toor has written extensively for this magazine, and she is also a senior writer for *Running Times*. Her stories are always insightful and well written, and she has unique “takes” on the sport. She’s one of those runners we often talk about who didn’t know she had a talent for running until she tried it, which she did after her high school and college careers were well behind her. She took up the sport, found she had some talent for it, and besides wallowing in the joys it brings to her personally, she also gives of herself both with the Clif Bar Pacing Teams and as a volunteer pacer for folks running ultras such as the Western States 100.

Rachel has put together 26.2 short pieces about running into a book, *Personal Record: A Love Affair With Running* (University of Nebraska Press, 176 pages, \$24.95 clothbound), which will be released October 8. Some of the pieces have appeared (in different form) in *Running Times* and in *Marathon & Beyond*. Some of the pieces are seeing daylight for the first time. The pieces are fashioned together in a logical, pleasant sequence so that the reader can grow in the sport as Rachel does. Each piece gives a reader new insight into some profound or mundane aspect of the sport and lifestyle. Every once in a while there is an “aha!” moment of insight that comes when a good writer takes a seemingly simple topic between the teeth and shakes it as a dog does a bone. There are quite a few “aha!” moments here. And there are some very moving moments, and we don’t mean where you put one foot in front of another. One of our favorite Rachel stories is of her pacing Ralph at Western States; even on rereading, it is still moving. In her new book, the chapter is titled simply “The Western State.”

We are currently witnessing an onslaught of running books, some good, some dull, and some surprising. Rachel’s is both good and surprising. It makes a good read for hard-core runners who enjoy sharing the running experience, but it is well suited to give to a nonrunner who is always asking you, “What do you get out of running? I just don’t understand.” Rachel will help bridge the understanding gap. —*Rich Benyo*