

PERSONALTRAINER /Pradeep Paul

You run. You sweat. You burn calories. You feel great.

But have you ever paid attention to what your feet are doing as you lope along, especially if you move from one terrain to another during the course of a run?

Most of the 6,600 participants at last week's New Balance Real Run hadn't given it much thought either. They knew the 10km route comprised road, sand and trail. But judging from the visible drop in pace when they hit Sentosa's Tanjong and Palawan beaches, they hadn't prepared much for it.

Still, most completed their Sunday morning run with a smile on their face.

"The Real Run is the only one in the local calendar that lets runners experience the different facets of running," said Arthur Ang, who heads New Balance in Asia. "And it's all done while being with nature and its beauty."

For those looking to introduce some variety in their running regime, Dr Patrick Goh, a consultant sports physician at Gleneagles Medical Centre, offers the following advice on what you should remember about different terrain.

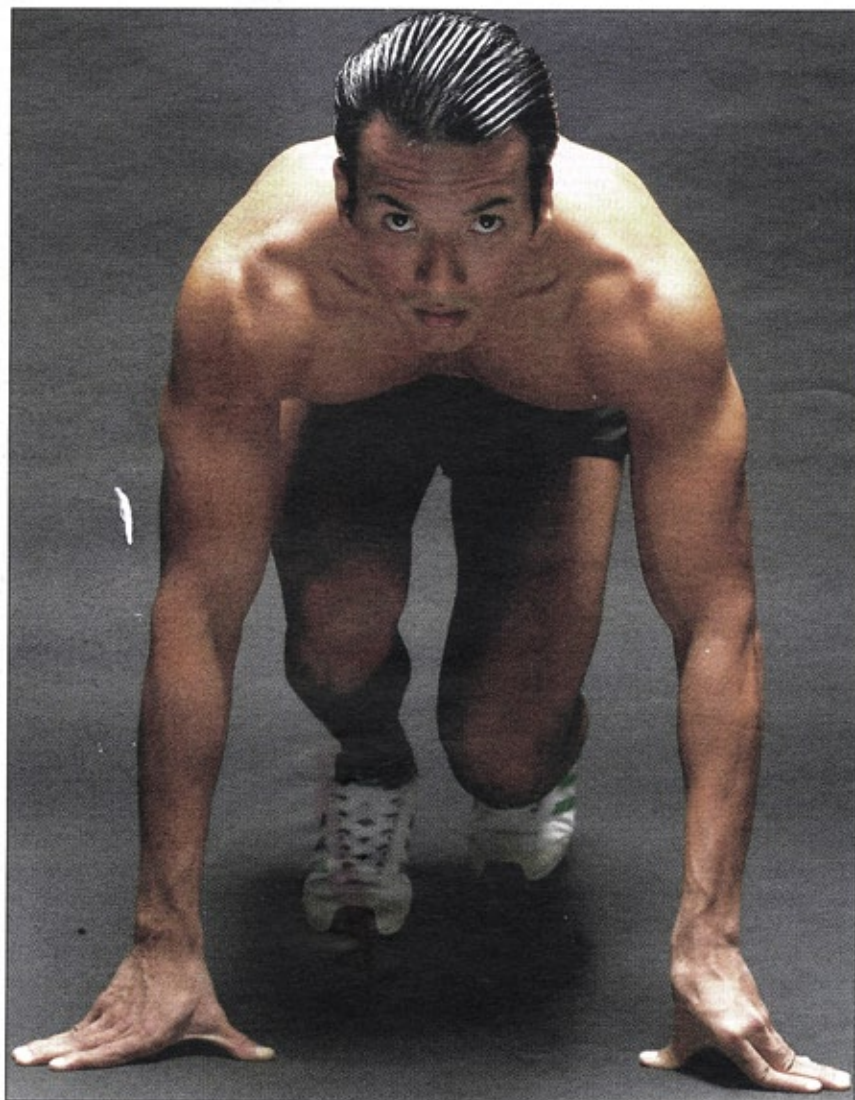
Hard surface (road, pavement, walking/cycling/skating tracks):

Let's use this as our benchmark because most people run on this type of terrain. We know the impact on the legs is high because of the unyielding surface. But the overall smoothness prevents unexpected twists of the ankle. The hamstrings, quadriceps, calves, feet, back and achilles tendon are mainly in use.

Sand: It's soft, so there's less impact. But the heels sink into the sand when you land, forcing the achilles tendon to take more load. It stretches as the heel sinks and contracts as you push off. If you haven't trained for running in the sand, you could get injured. But training on sand is tough on the legs and the amount of time you spend doing this should be in proportion to the sand sector of your race.

Trail: Uneven and possibly slippery. Can be more forgiving on impact but the ankles are prone to injury if you land awkwardly. As most trail runners tend to lift their toes a little higher than normal to avoid tripping on stones, shrubs or exposed roots, the stress is transferred to the front of the shin.

Uphill: Puts more load on the hip, knee and ankle joints if you're not used to it. Most trainers recommend that you "attack" a hill, but that makes your glutes, quads and achil-



GET SET,
GO

Different terrains pose different challenges when you run

les tendon work even harder. If you prefer, you could just slow down a little and chug up the slope so that you don't run out of steam. Try and stretch your IT band, a tendon which runs from the hip to the side of the knee, before the run as it gets strained when you go uphill.

Downhill: It's easier but the heel strike force is higher. Therefore, the chance for injury is greater. The area in front of the knee takes the load when doing downhill, with the tendon in that region being prone to injury.

Camber: This happens when you're running on a slanted surface like a beach. If you are close to the waterline, the camber means one leg is forced to be shorter than the other. Not much you can do, but stick to a consistent heel-to-toe gait and lift the knees a little more. This, however, places more strain on the hip flexors and quads as you toe off.

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