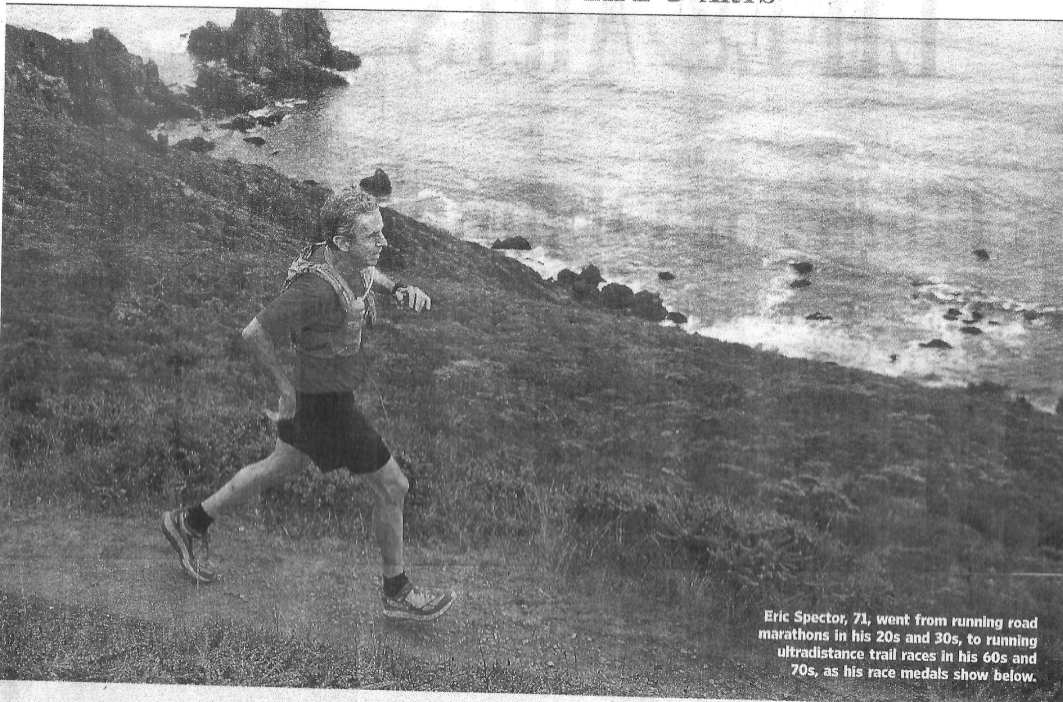


LIFE & ARTS



Eric Spector, 71, went from running road marathons in his 20s and 30s, to running ultradistance trail races in his 60s and 70s, as his race medals show below.

Quality Over Quantity

Most people think they should do less as they age, which means fewer miles for runners. But it is the quality of those miles that matter, says David Roche, coach of the Some Work, All Play running team in Boulder, Colo.

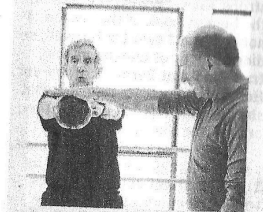
"The body doesn't know miles, it knows stress," he says. "Aging athletes need to think in terms of how much stress they are accumulating with training and life. Ten miles on gently rolling, soft trails is less stress than 10 miles of pavement pounding. The usual rule for aging runners is to focus on frequency of runs over duration of runs, ideally supplemented by cross-training."

A 2016 study done by Harvard Medical School and the National Running Center at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital showed that athletes can reduce the amount of impact forces their bodies absorb over time by focusing on a light footfall.

"Emphasizing softer, quicker strides could reduce injury risk, and it will likely make you more efficient on the trails," says Mr. Roche.

With all the roots, rocks and undulations on the trails, runners will typically have a slower pace and a faster cadence, improving a runner's foot fall, says Rich Airey, a Leadville, Colo.-based ultra runner and owner of BlackSheep Endurance. "Faster cadence leads to a shorter stride length, allowing the foot to fall under the hip, which

took to run under the hips, taking the stress off the knees and ankles," he says. Strength training is key as we age, he adds.



tries to consume an energy gel every 20 minutes and drink 30 ounces of water per hour. He grazes on Fig Newtons, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and boiled salted potatoes at aid stations.

The Gear & Cost

Mr. Spector goes through a pair of sneakers every five to six weeks. He looks for a model with "good cushion and lots of tread to grip rocks and loose sand." He's currently running in Hoka One One Stinson ATR 4 trail shoes (\$160). He's obsessive about socks. "The fit can't be too tight and I need a wool blend so if my feet get wet they don't get cold," he says. He wears a Nathan VaporKrar 4-liter hydration vest (\$150). He uses a Garmin Forerunner 935 watch (\$500) to track his metrics and sets an alarm on an old Timex Ironman watch to remind him to take electrolytes.

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT? | By Jen Murphy

An Ultramarathon Runner at 71

Wanting to run farther than a marathon, a former CEO trained to run for 50 to 100 miles instead

WHILE MOST SENIORS battle arthritic joints and low back pain, Eric Spector is combating blistered feet and missing toenails. At 71 years old, his idea of a short race isn't a 5K, but a 50K.

Mr. Spector completed his first ultramarathon, any race greater in distance than a marathon or 26.2 miles, when he was 60, an age when most people think they should be slowing down. He has since completed nearly 20 ultradistance races, some as long as 100 miles.

Mr. Spector says he got hooked on distance after completing his first New York City Marathon in 1979. When he moved from Manhattan to Marin County, Calif., in 1988, he discovered trail running and has rarely pounded pavement since.

Intrigued by the idea of running farther than a marathon, he showed up for a 50K at age 60 without training. "I paid for my lack of preparation, but made it to the end," he says. "Ignorant grit can get you through a 50K but I knew if I wanted to run 100 miles, it was a whole other ballgame."

Trail running comes with hazards. In his mid-60s, distracted by an ocean view, he face-planted over a rock and fractured his fibula. While healing, he re-evaluated his goals. "With ultras, especially at my age, it isn't about grinding through miles or going fast," he says. "My goal is to avoid injuries from falling and overuse."

Mr. Spector lives in Palo Alto,



Calif., and is semiretired. Until 2014, he worked as CEO of OneRoof, Inc., a social enterprise that opened internet centers in rural Mexico and India. He still consults pro bono for nonprofits and startups. He jokes that he often wins his age group by default. "There aren't many 70-year-olds doing this," he says. But every race is a challenge. During the 2016 Javelina Jundred 100 in Fountain Hills, Ariz., he quit at mile 91 due to heat and cramping. And at the 2017 Miwok 100K in Marin County, he took a spill at mile 55. "It cost me a critical 5 minutes awkwardly extracting myself from a bramble of bushes," he says.

On November 3, he completed the Rio Del Lago 100-mile trail run in the Sierra Foothills in a time of 29:15:43, winning the 70+ age group. The course has 13,500 feet of

elevation gain and 29% of the 354 racers who started didn't finish.

The Workout

Mr. Spector warms up with a foam roller, then performs bicycle crunches and squats with a stability ball between his back and a wall. He says balance and ankle strength are key for trail running. In one exercise, he mimics a runner's stride and balances on his left leg, rising up to his toes, and brings his right knee into his chest and then switches legs. He builds ankle strength by standing one foot on a small balance board and rolling the board at different angles.

Depending on what he is training for, he typically does a long run of 15 to 20 miles once a week,

a moderate run of 10 to 15 miles twice a week and an easy run of 5 to 7 miles at least twice a week. He always gives himself a recovery day after the long run and between the moderate runs. Mr. Spector says he pays more attention to time spent on his feet versus his pace. Leading up to the Rio Del Lago run, he logged a 31-miler, which took 11 hours to complete.

To train for elevation, he integrates power walking into his training. "If I push off my thighs with my hands as I take each step, I can almost go as fast as I would if I were to run up the steep parts," he says.

He goes to a gym in San Rafael, Calif., two days a week. He might swim for an hour and then use weight machines to work his core and upper body. One day a week, he joins a group workout focused on strength and flexibility which might include plank poses, exercises on the rings, and kettlebell drills.

The Diet

Breakfast is typically coffee and nonfat yogurt or nonfat cottage cheese, topped with berries and sprouted sunflower seeds. He avoids meat. Wild-caught fish, salads and healthy fats like avocado and nuts comprise lunch and dinner. "My long runs are an excuse to indulge my bad food habits," he jokes. He carb-loads with pasta, bread, cookies and cheese, and will have a Guinness after his weekly group runs. During an ultramarathon,