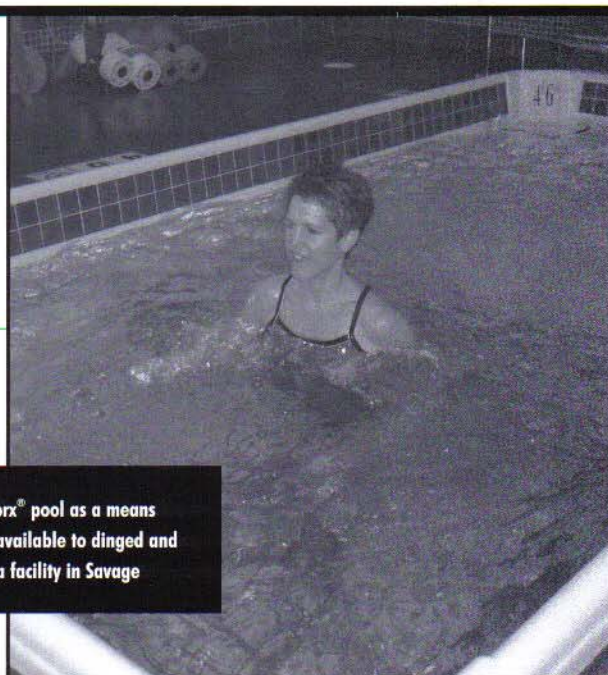


Running Strong After Injury

Next generation pool running by Robin Leali



Elite athletes have used HydroWorx® pool as a means of cross training for years. It's now available to dinged and achy runners of all abilities in a facility in Savage

"No running for four to six weeks" are the dreaded words every injured runner hates to hear. Unfortunately, I received that grim prognosis for the second time this year while training for a marathon.

I had missed Grandma's Marathon due to a bout with Achilles tendonitis and had planned to return to marathoning at the Whistlestop Marathon in Ashland, Wisconsin, in the fall. Although, I was healed by a wonderful doctor at the Institute for Athletic Medicine, the memory of too many sessions wearing an aqua jogger and sloshing across the deep end of a pool was still hauntingly fresh in my mind.

So, when the pain in my hip forced me to walk off at mile eight of the City of Lakes 25K in September, I wasn't looking forward to the outcome of my subsequent MRI. But when I received the MRI results, my fears were confirmed. A torn gluteus medius and gluteus maximus.

Luckily, Linda Muller, a friend and classmate in the Health and Exercise Program at the Minnesota School of Business, was starting in a position as a Personal Trainer with an exciting new training venue called ACCUA, which comes from the Greek word for water.

This new facility, in Savage, Minnesota, offers a fully-equipped training center staffed with certified fitness experts to work directly with athletes, or their trainers and coaches, for rehabilitation or performance improvement.

At its core is one of the most advanced fitness training and rehabilitation systems of our time, a state-of-the-art HydroWorx® pool. The pool features a motorized, in-water treadmill with water jets and adjustable water depth. The system is computer controlled,

allowing adjustment of treadmill speed and water jet pressure to the needs of each individual. The athlete gains full aerobic benefit while building speed, strength and agility with virtually no impact.

These unique characteristics make it the ideal system for individuals returning to running after injury. Numerous collegiate and professional sports teams throughout the country use the HydroWorx® pool as part of their training to help keep athletes in prime shape. And runners in the Nike Oregon Project, headed by Alberto Salazar, run up to 40 miles a week on one of two HydroWorx® pools to add miles without impact. The pool was even featured on the cover of a recent issue of *Sports Illustrated* and in a recent episode of *The Biggest Loser*.

My doctor fully supported my participation in this program, so for the next four weeks, I went to ACCUA to keep my running legs running. It felt great to put on actual running shoes and feel my feet hitting the "ground." I literally had no pain in my hip as I ran in the pool. Two in-pool cameras provided gait analysis, via front or side views of my legs. Moreover, if I were training with a coach, ACCUA could have easily recorded my sessions on a DVD for future analysis off-site.

Along with easy runs and interval training, my friend Linda, NSCA-CSCS, Personal Trainer, and Chris Kost, CPT, CES, Vice-president of Services, worked with me on balance exercises and strength training, using the pool jets and fun water toys for resistance.

Running against the jets challenged my cardiovascular system in a way no hills ever had. As a bonus, once my training sessions were over, they attached a hose to the jets, and I was able to perform a powerful hip massage with steady, controlled pressure. It felt great and aided in the healing of my torn muscles.

After four weeks, I was able to begin short runs outside. While working with my doctor, I still continued to make weekly visits to the pool. I'm convinced that my return to running was smoother due to my time spent in the ACCUA HydroWorx® pool. Other forms of cross-training helped maintain my cardiovascular fitness, but running in the pool helped lengthen my stride, aided in my flexibility and allowed for faster healing. It also played a big part in keeping me sane during rehabilitation.

As runners, we know that running provides much more than just physical fitness. It clears our head, tames our aggressions and provides a venue for dreaming big. Thus, while the leaves were turning outside and the cool, crisp fall weather beckoned, I survived by hitting the "trail" in the pool at ACCUA. No, it wasn't the same, but it certainly helped. And importantly, now I know that if injury befalls me in the future, ACCUA is there to help me heal.

You may contact ACCUA at 952-808-0300 or www.accua.net. ■

Robin Leali is a student, mom, wife and runner. She runs in the early morning hours in Plymouth before her kids and husband get up.