

# RUNNERS WORLD

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## HEALTH

WATCH

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### ORTHOTICS UPDATE

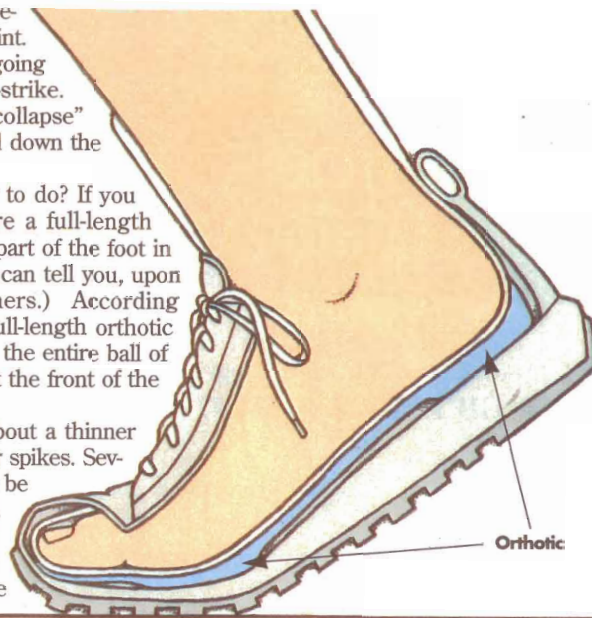
### LONG MAY YOU RUN

More often than we might think, a runner's biomechanical problems can arise at the foot's push-off point. This happens because there can be as much force going through the foot during push-off as during heel-strike. Imbalances, such as a tendency of the feet to "collapse" inward at push-off, can cause chronic injuries up and down the leg.

So what's a biomechanically imperfect runner to do? If you have push-off-related problems, you may require a full-length orthotic, which will support and stabilize the front part of the foot in a way the half-length orthotic cannot. (A podiatrist can tell you, upon examination, if you are one of these runners.) According to sports podiatrist Richard T. Braver, D.P.M., a full-length orthotic does two things for you: "It enables you to push off the entire ball of the foot evenly, and it increases shock absorption at the front of the foot."

New fiberglass technology has also brought about a thinner full-length orthotic that can be worn in racing flats or spikes. Several laboratories now make these new orthotics, but be sure to have your podiatrist customize them for you.

Remember: not everyone with a biomechanical imbalance needs orthotics. But if you suffer from chronic injuries—especially of the knee—you may be a candidate for them. If so, see a podiatrist, and ask him or her about full-length orthotics.



NEIL O. HARDY

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