

THE EXECUTIVE TRACK

A world champion runner brings his experience to Newton Running

By Lou Dzierzak

Ian Adamson was born to run. Literally. "I have a fortunate genetic advantage over most people. You are either bio-mechanically adept to running or you're not. If you are bio-mechanically proficient at running it makes it much easier. I was blessed," he says.

Running for as long as he can remember, Adamson's abilities began to emerge in high school when he set several middle distance running records. Running has remained the focus of his career ever since.

In 1995, Adamson won the first of three Eco-Challenge adventure races. His competitive resume includes seven world championship wins and 17 international adventure race championships.

Adamson augmented his physical proficiency with a degree in mechanical engineering from Sydney University and a Masters in Sports Medicine from the Chapman University in California. His professional resume includes working in the implantable

medical device industry and launching Reflex Medical Products, Inc., a successful manufacturing business.

After thousands of hours of training and competition in environments from hot desert sands to slogging through

knee deep swamps, Adamson has an intimate personal understanding of what does and doesn't work in footwear design. At the height of his career as a professional athlete, Adamson worked on shoe designs with major footwear manufacturers like Salomon and Nike.

In January 2008, Adamson joined Boulder, CO—based Newton Running as a technical advisor. As with any small start-up company his contributions ranged from answering the phones, addressing customer service questions, and shipping products to retailers, to working with chief designer and vice president Danny Abshire on shoe design and product development. He offers, "My job is to be a generalist. I have a background in sports medicine, mechanical engineering, manufacturing, R&D, project management and as a professional athlete. It happens to work very well with what a company like Newton needs."

Translating the intangibles of hard-earned race experience into rational decisions about engineering, materials and manufacturing processes presents challenges. Adamson reports, "After 38 years of running experience you get all this input in your brain that gets stuck away in little corners and then you drag something out."

He continues, "The challenge is the limitless possibilities in how you go about adapting real life practical applications like running on a trail and converting material options in densities and temperature response and all these technical things engineers talk about. The challenge is really not the actual adaptation, but the amount of



Ian Adamson has won seventeen international adventure race championship titles.

choices that you have. It's a matter of refining down what you know at the time is the best technology and materials to the beauty of running on a trail with uneven terrain and different surfaces. It's not a problem challenge, but an opportunity challenge." Adamson notes that the "aha" moments come when cutting edge design concepts are matched with new construction materials.

At Newton, Adamson is working to build on the company's patented Newton Active Membrane Technology with trail running models. "There's such an enormous potential to do so many things here, we have to remain focused on which one we pick."

Although Adamson has retired from competitive racing, running still fills every aspect of his life. In addition to his position at Newton Running, Adamson is the event producer for the annual 24 Hours of Triathlon and is the race director for the Terra Traverse adventure race that debuts this fall. He says, "Life time fitness is my lifestyle, so I incorporate everything I do in that direction. It's not a challenge to fit running into my life since that's part of how I balance my life."

No longer running to capture titles, Adamson finds the mental aspects of running also brings benefits. He explains, "In my early career I focused on competitive aspects. Now my running is more meditative. I do have a much higher spiritual balance in my running. I use it as a place to go think and be creative."

Rather than following a strict schedule of time and distance, Adamson's runs follow the flow of each day. He comments, "The preferred run time is what I prefer at the time. That's all over the show. If I feel like going out and running to one of the 13,000 foot peaks in my backyard I'll spend 4-5 hours doing that. Sometimes its 30 minutes in the morning on a treadmill that's exactly perfect."

Over his long competitive and professional career, Adamson has worn shoes from several different brands. Each played a role in his success, but he finds it difficult to quickly identify his favorite shoe. With a glimpse of what's to come, he says, "Right now, my favorite shoe is one that's not available. A new Newton shoe is on the horizon."

Editor's note: If you would like to nominate an executive to be featured in this column, please email Specialty@SportsOneSource.com with your suggestion.

