



Older, Faster, Stronger: One runner's quest to find out how women are running into their 50s, 60s and beyond, and what that can teach us all about living younger, longer

Margaret Webb

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One part personal quest to discover running greatness after age 50, one part investigation into what the women's running boom can teach athletes about becoming fitter, stronger, and faster as we age, *Older, Faster, Stronger* is an engrossing narrative sure to inspire women of all ages. A former overweight smoker turned marathoner, Margaret Webb runs with elite older women, follows a high-performance training plan devised by experts, and examines research that shows how endurance training can stall aging. She then tests herself against the world's best older runners at the world masters games in Torino, Italy.

Millions of women have taken up running in recent decades--the first generation of women to train in great numbers. Women are qualifying for the Olympic marathon in their 50s, running 100-mile ultra marathons in their 60s, completing Ironmans in their 80s, competing for world masters records in their 90s. What are the secrets of these ageless wonders? How do they get stronger and faster long after their "athletic prime"? Is there an evolutionary reason women can maintain endurance into advanced years? Webb immerses herself in these questions as she as she trains to see just how fast she can get after 50.

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Details

Date : Published October 7th 2014 by Rodale Books

ISBN : 9781623361693

Author : Margaret Webb

Format : Paperback 304 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Sports and Games, Sports

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From Reader Review Older, Faster, Stronger: One runner's quest to find out how women are running into their 50s, 60s and beyond, and what that can teach us all about living younger, longer for online ebook

Wendy says

I'm a runner, so this book spoke to me. I wrote a full review for my blog, which you can find here:
<http://oldrunningmom.blogspot.com/201...>

Yodamom says

The author did some serious research into the benefits of exercise over 50. The results are amazing. You don't have to be young to change your future, 50, 60, 70 and even 80 is a perfect time to rebuild yourself. It is all about believing in you, not what others think you are or should do. You are never too old, never give up, never give in. Read this book follow your heart and be better for it.

Where did my athletic hyper me go ? That was the question I asked myself on my 50th birthday. I had been almost maniacal about exercise, I have to move, to push myself farther until everything burned. I was competitive plus, and had the endurance to keep going. I had problems keeping weight on. So what happened ? Here at 50 I was overweight, sitting on the couch for hours a night watching others exercise on TV feeling like complete trash. I was miserable in my own skin. I got off the couch and started running, at first I could only make it 20 yards but I did this everyday and added more distance and started feeling better. I stopped getting sickening headaches and started sleeping better. I began to find my clothes too big, and my attitude more positive.. This book was a wake up call to get moving for me I hope it works for you as well.

Rebecca says

The book was good, the author was grating. Her focus on weight really spoiled the earlier sections. At 140 pounds, she referred to herself as obese, but given that this results in a BMI of 26.1, she was barely overweight. She refers to "larding on the pounds" at ~130.

I also did not appreciate the sex and gender differences that she repeatedly hammered on. I understand the physical differences: larger muscles and lungs on men, increased angle of femur in women. But the psychosocial differences? These can be explained by socialization. This is especially disconcerting from a woman who looks to running as an egalitarian sport, who wants to break down gender barriers.

I found the portraits of older masters runners the best part of this book.

Elizabeth A says

Book blurb: One part personal quest to discover running greatness after age 50, one part investigation into

what the women's running boom can teach athletes about becoming fitter, stronger, and faster as we age.

This book is part memoir, part research reporting, and in many ways so inspiring. I loved learning about some of the older elite runners - some in their 90s! And while I have no plans to become an elite runner, I found some nuggets that were very useful to me.

Jessica says

Margaret Webb turns 50 and embarks on a quest for her "fittest year ever." As part of her quest, she does extensive research into aging athletes and especially aging female athletes. This book presents both her personal story and her research.

The research itself is fascinating. (Spoiler alert: exercise more.) Webb adroitly handles quite technical data--the composition of muscle fibers, what happens to our lung function as we age, biomechanics. She interviews some amazing older female athletes.

Webb's personal narrative suffers somewhat in comparison. It was an interesting story in its own right, to the kind of person who would read a book like this, and she sells it somewhat short. Because Webb uses her own story largely to transition from one research study to the next, the chronology is extremely jumpy.

What I found the most deeply irritating, though, to the extent that I almost docked my fourth star, was the *ceaseless* gender stereotyping. On one hand, Webb presents scientific data about things like the role of estrogen in fat storage. On the other hand, she trots out an endless variety of truisms like "women are afraid of competition" or "women are better at group activities" or (cue retching noises) "women like to hug before races." This mixture made me extremely uncomfortable, because I'm somewhat afraid that Webb's science will lend credence to her cardboard cutout version of Women Who Run.

Megan says

Are you over 40? Then you're a master athlete. Webb is a marathoner who decides to spend her 49th year training to run at a professional level. This book is her journey. She loses weight, switches diet, trains with many coaches and takes up meditation. She becomes a big fan of cross training, rather than increasing mileage. She interviews many very mature athletes to learn their secrets. I liked this book and will read it again.

Janet Gardner says

I was excited by the idea of a book specifically about women runners over 50, but it turned out this is not the book I had hoped for. If you're a highly driven and competitive performance athlete like Webb, you'll probably love this. If you're a casual, recreational runner like me, it's more intimidating than inspirational.

You can read my full review on my fitness blog, here: <http://www.theoldbroadruns.com/?p=374>

Debi Lantzer says

As a 54 year old runner, I was hoping I'd find a book to motivate or encourage me. Mostly this book seems to be about the author versus helping me in my own running. What ended up happening instead, was that I felt "less than" after reading this book. She talks about her "snail pace" being 10 – I'm coming back from a near-fatal car accident and I've shaved it down to 13! Then there's the section on food – she rants about "Big Food" way too long, it seemed almost weird.

I then got to the part of the book that talks about the less you weigh it's better for runner due to the impact on your knees. As I noticed another reviewer said, the author states that she "larded on 8 pounds". I am one of those overweight menopausal women who continues to struggle daily with how the scale isn't moving despite clean eating and exercise.

She quoted someone in the book who said if you run over 8 minute miles you have a 30% likelihood of dying. Really? So now I'm fat and slow, and I'm damaging my knees and I'm going to die soon. Geez!

I stopped reading the book because it certainly did not motivate me or encourage me, and in fact, it did the opposite.

I received a digital copy of this book from NetGalley without cost in exchange for my honest review and unbiased opinion.

Maria Losee says

If you are interested in living into your 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, or even 90's while continuing to enjoy physical fitness and competing as a master's level runner, this is a must read. I have marked up this book as if it were my college bio textbook the week before finals. Webb shared not only her personal story, but practical tips for training as a master's runner. As icing on the cake, she's a gifted writer. She's a smart, humorous, kind, humble, and courageous woman. I'd like to meet her someday. For now, I'll have to settle for hearing her words through her book. Highly recommend to any woman forty or over.

Sandy Andry says

This book was a good motivator and would have been especially inspiring for a runner. It's a good read to find out how someone is exercising and what it's doing for them.

Angela says

It took me forever to get through this book. The last third of the book earns the 3 stars. The first 2 thirds felt like a vague personal diary that repeated over-and-over "I'm faster than most, but I want one last hoorah." The practical advice is near the end, but did not really redeem the book. This would have made a great

Monica says

Expectations are a funny thing. I purchased this book to gain some knowledge and some motivation. I am a lifelong athlete over 50 who is not fond of running. Like my reading, my athletic excursions are calculated and planned sometimes up to a year in advance or more. Next year I'm embarking on a quest to run 21 miles at Big Sur. It's going to take a tremendous amount of self-discipline and self-motivation to train for this. I've got the self-discipline when it's something that I enjoy. With running, the best thing I can generally muster is "I don't mind doing it" and that is after a month or two of running 4 times a week. Getting to the "I don't mind " stage is not sustainable for the amount of training it will take to train for Big Sur. If you are asking why do it? My answer is take a look at the vistas. It's breathtaking and even if I am a "one and done" (and I will be); I have to do it once. I need to find ways to enjoy running. This is the expectation with which I purchased *Older, Faster, Stronger*.

Webb has written a book that has caused me to resurrect the term "Humble Brag". Marketed as a motivational book to convince older women that running is not beyond their reach. But in reality this book attempts to motivate readers with memoir-ish passages about how awesome Webb is at running and how she excelled after 50. Chapter after chapter of how Webb overcame adversities after she had "larded" on weight and overcame her ginormousness of 140 lbs (her heaviest weight) and the advice she followed to get where she is. Some of the advice is questionable and even downright incorrect (according to my medical friends). But what is most annoying is that none of this is aimed at an average runner. Webb is obviously a gifted runner who has built her life around it. This is a book that would appeal to women who enjoy running, probably have some talent and have come to the knowledge of their gifts later in life. My subtitle on Strava (a social media website for athletes) is "Middle-aged, mediocre athlete". I'm probably not going to train hard enough to ever exceed a 12 minute mile and I will never give up cheesecake. The book did contain some golden nuggets near the end. In her chapters *Older* and *Legacy* she chronicles the activities of a few female octogenarian athletes still running amazing times. What!?! Is it possible to not respect an 85 year old woman who competes in ironman triathlons in between ministering to the community, known as "The Iron Nun"? Or the 94 year old that coaches track and teaches yoga in between her races. To be sure, I would have loved more information about those spectacular women.

Webb's book seems to have targeted her equally or slightly less talented running friends. There are many moments in her book intending to be self-deprecating that come across as condescending. Her assumption seems to be that any woman choosing to run after 50 must be a driven, talented athlete who only seeks to get faster. She does not connect with the mediocre athlete who is simply trying not to get injured, wants to be challenged but doesn't intend to be anywhere near a podium and is actually doing things for the experience. Athletes like me who have to train hard just to attain a 12 minute mile (which according to Webb's findings makes me 30% more likely to have heart disease as I age). Since I'm not in love with running, it's a chore to train. I'd like it to not be. Reading Webb's book has not helped me much on my journey. I applaud Webb's ability and drive and talent, but this book is not written for me nor frankly, anyone I know.

3 iffy Stars

Webb is a good writer and I think her intent was earnest and parts of the book were truly inspirational; but some of the information imparted appears inaccurate and/or misinterpreted and potentially harmful.

Read on kindle.

Teri-K says

This is a quick read that's part memoir, part science, about a woman who reaches 50 and decides to see if training harder can make her as fit as she was in her athletic 20s. The book suffered from some repetition and also a few out of sequence bits that I didn't think were necessary. If you're telling the story of a year in your life, it's probably better to keep things sequential rather than always saying, "Two months ago when I was preparing for a different race..."

I felt the book also lacked cohesion. Is it the personal tale of one woman's struggle to fitness or a scientific look at the little we know about aging and exercise? The balance seemed off to me. I'd get very interested in the scientific side of things only to find myself reading page after page about her self-doubt and personal demons. Then the book would skip to a fairly detailed look at mitochondria, for instance. It felt a bit like running a trail blindfolded - I never was quite sure where I was or what was coming next.

To be honest I would have liked a deeper look at the science. I was surprised to find no footnotes or appendix, and the author happily assumes cause and effect when the evidence for her conclusions seems lacking.

Still there aren't many books out there looking closely at women 60 and beyond, and this is a good start. The stories of many women Master athletes were often inspiring, and at other times reminded me of why I'll never be one. :) But that's OK, too. I can recommend this to people interested in learning more about the links of exercise and aging as well as those who like to contemplate pushing the boundaries of how were "supposed" to age. And if you're an older person or a woman thinking about taking up running you'll probably find some good motivation in this book.

Jody says

An interesting combination of memoir, exercise and aging science, and profiles of older athletes. I feel like I should have liked this more, but the author's tone just really didn't do it for me. From the extremely self-critical way she talked about weight ("larding on" extra pounds) to the way she talked about swilling wine, to the incredible amounts of free time and money she seemed to have available to follow her pursuits - it just didn't resonate with what I was looking for.

Holly says

I found this motivating, emotional, accurate, and surprisingly well-written. I'm already a runner so I enjoyed poring over all the data here. The book is packed with descriptions of VO2, endurance measurements, the latest research about aging. At the same time Webb tells her own story of discovering running as she was approaching fifty and of how she becomes a pretty serious athlete defying stereotypes about women and aging. She's especially good at describing racing events, running practices, the physical experiences of her

own body. An inspiring read after all the books about aging and dying I seem to have read this season (e.g. eldercare, Roz Chast's graphic memoir, and Gawande's important but oh how depressing *Being Mortal*).
