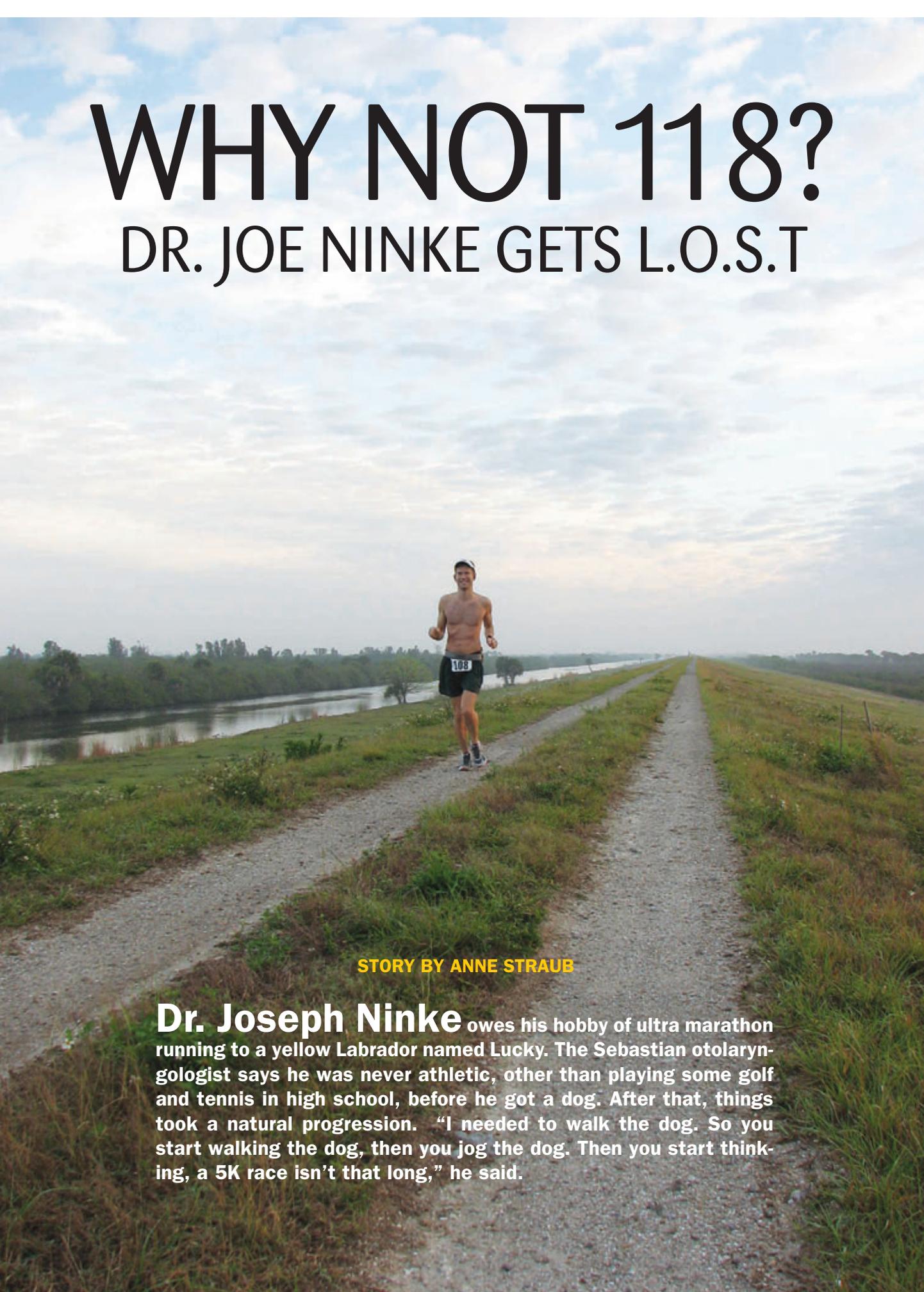


WHY NOT 118?

DR. JOE NINKE GETS L.O.S.T



STORY BY ANNE STRAUB

Dr. Joseph Ninke owes his hobby of ultra marathon running to a yellow Labrador named Lucky. The Sebastian otolaryngologist says he was never athletic, other than playing some golf and tennis in high school, before he got a dog. After that, things took a natural progression. “I needed to walk the dog. So you start walking the dog, then you jog the dog. Then you start thinking, a 5K race isn’t that long,” he said.

Dr. Ninke started racing three years ago, and the principle of the natural progression kicked in again. At first, a 5K seemed like a challenge. After conquering that, he decided to run a 10K. “Then I thought, maybe I can try a half-marathon,” Ninke said.

He finished his first marathon in December 2005 in Jacksonville. So if he can run 26 miles, why not 118?

Ninke accomplished that feat in February, completing the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail endurance run in first place, with a time of 26 hours, 1 minute and 14 seconds. Fifteen contenders started the race, and five completed the course.

Protein shakes and Gatorade helped fuel the grueling run. “I think I actually slept for 14 minutes,” Ninke said. As far as the mental challenges, Ninke said he brushes them aside and focuses on the physical. “I tend to turn the brain off and turn the legs on,” he said.

This was his second year in the race. Last year, in the inaugural run, he ran 69 miles before dropping out. “I had to come back and do it,” he said.

Having completed the full Lake Okeechobee trail, the natural progression of longer races might have run its course. “This is about enough,” Ninke said.

But there are plenty of shorter races to be run. Ninke wants to return to Melbourne for the Wickham Park Marathon, held every year over Memorial Day weekend. The run qualifies as a shorter



DR. JOE NINKE practices at the Ear, Nose & Throat Center near Sebastian River Medical Center.

Photo by Anne Straub

race only because it’s done in stages: 50 miles a day over four days. Runners can choose to run a marathon or compete in races covering 50, 100 or 200 miles.

Ninke completed 100 miles last year, but was too tired and confused by the convoluted trail to continue. True to form, he plans to return and conquer the course.

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LADY LUCKY: Dr. Joseph Ninke owes his hobby of marathon running to his yellow Labrador, Lucky. The Sebastian otolaryngologist says he was never athletic, other than playing some golf and tennis in high school, before he got a dog. After that, things took a natural progression.

four times a week. Any longer, and he'll lose his running buddy. Lucky's limit is 10 miles. He has no secret super foods. "I guess I mostly try to eat healthy all the time," he said.

He did build up to the ultra marathon. In the 15 weeks before the Lake Okechobee run, he competed in 12 races of marathon length or longer. One covered 50 miles and two covered 100 miles.

Vacations are no time to put the hobby on hold. In fact, he's turned the time off into opportunities to experiment in different types of challenges. One vacation took him to California for the Big Sur International Marathon. He faced thin air and uphill climbs in Colorado, during a marathon on Pikes Peak.

He's Only Just Begun

On his dream race list: The Comrades Marathon in South Africa, a prestigious race that dates back to 1921, when it was inaugurated to honor South Africans lost in World War I. That trip will take some planning because of the time required to travel and acclimate.

Another dream race, though for a different reason: The Boston Marathon. Ninke's best marathon time is three hours and 26 minutes, and he estimates he needs to run it in three hours and 15 minutes to qualify for that race.

Judging by his track record, Ninke won't let up until he has qualified and run the race. It's his natural progression.

ON THE WEB
If you would like to start a running program, or compete in area races, please log on to www.SpaceCoastRunners.org

Dr. Ninke, 38, graduated from medical school at the University of Michigan in 1996 and completed a residency at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. He moved to Sebastian in 2002, attracted to the warm weather and proximity to water for kayaking. He practices at the Ear, Nose & Throat Center near Sebastian River Medical Center.

Photo by Anne Straub
 He chose the field because of the variety it offered, both office work and surgery. But variety is not something he craves in his hobby. He's tried a few triathlons but prefers to focus on running. "I have to think of myself as a runner dabbling in triathlons," he said.

His training regime takes him on a 4- to 6-mile run, three to

RUNNING WITH YOUR "BEST FRIEND" *By Dr. Linda Madyda*

Use Common Sense to Keep Canine Runners Safe and Happy

Your dog's love for you, and of running, may be unconditional. It will run with you in all sorts of conditions, almost always eager and never complaining. However, you are the master - or alpha person - in its life and are responsible to make critical decisions when it affects your dog's health. The weather, terrain, environment, distance and your best friend's condition are all factors to take into consideration. Here are some tips on how to keep your canine jogger happy and comfortable during his or her running years:

- Know, understand and be sensitive to your dog's limits and athletic ability. Not every dog is an endurance runner. Although greyhounds appear to be distance athletes, they are built for sprints and are not endurance dogs; neither are toy poodles. Labs are usually one of the best endurance dogs. While the larger dogs will have an easier time keeping up, some of the smaller herding breeds, such as the Corgi or Sheltie, do very well running or hiking distances.
- Just as you would with your own running program, start your dog out gradually. Begin a training regime by running or walking your dog around your neighborhood, increasing the distance as you and your dog become conditioned.
- A dog can start running at any age; however, if you can start with a puppy, it will have an easier time with the training. Puppies should not be run on hard surfaces until after 14 months of age, when their growth plates close. Puppies younger should be run shorter distances on soft ground or walked.
- Nutrition is another consideration in training your dog, and a complete and balanced diet will allow your dog to keep its energy up during a run. Try to avoid running immediately after a big meal, and make sure your dog is rested and cooled down from a run before feeding it.

- Run exclusively during the early morning or early evening hours when temperatures are usually at their coolest. Be aware that in the early evening hours the pavement is still very hot and makes your dog's running environment much hotter than yours because the majority of their bodies are close to the ground.

- Carry enough water for you and the dog(s), or run in areas where water is readily available. Teach your dog(s) how to drink from a water bottle or some sort of drinking container. ALL dogs can quickly overheat, especially if they have a dark or heavy coat. Remember, dogs need more water than humans do!

- Try to run on trails which are shaded and soft. This will not only protect your dog's joints but yours as well. The most common type of injury suffered by dogs that are running with their owners is footpad injuries. Avoid running on hot pavement as this can easily lead to burns. Running in the woods can lead to cuts and scrapes. While these are difficult to avoid, leather boots are available for those dogs that exercise on extremely rough ground or ice and snow. If your dog sustains a footpad cut or scrape, proper first aid care should be administered immediately.

- Keep your dog on a short lead (4 to 6 feet) and under control at all times. This will help your dog avoid trouble and out of the path of others. Good obedience training builds a solid foundation for the control necessary to run with your dog, but the best-trained dog can go astray. If it happens to see some furry creature cross in front of it, your best friend may become a victim. It happens all the time!

- Your dog relies on you to readily recognize the signs of fatigue or heat illness. If your dog starts to lag behind during the run, slow down and wait. It may even be necessary to cut your run short and walk if it continues to lag behind. Be very aware of signs of heatstroke or illness: panting, mouth open and gasping for air, white foaming at the mouth, distressed, often unable to stand, movement uncontrolled and agitated, and gums that are deep red. The chest or abdominal area (groin area of its hindquarters) may be blotchy-red. If your dog shows any

of these signs, cool the dog immediately by thoroughly wetting with cold water and, if available, placing it in front of a fan in a shaded area. It is important not to force feed your dog water, it will drink when ready. If your dog should start to vomit, or show no improvement within 10 minutes, seek veterinary help as quickly as possible. Heatstroke can lead to coma, brain damage and death. Always remember that dogs do not have sweat glands as we do, and they can only regulate their body temperature by panting. If you use a muzzle, make sure it can pant, and avoid the velcro kind that does not allow panting.

- Be sensitive to any change in your dog's gait. Lameness can be something as simple as muscle soreness which is gone in one to two days or as complex as arthritis which will continue to worsen as the dog ages. If lameness persists, it is important to visit your local veterinarian to determine the cause of the lameness and your dog's ability to continue exercising.

Using common sense when running with your dog will make it an activity that can be enjoyed safely for a long time. For more information contact your veterinarian.

Dr. Linda Madyda is a graduate of Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine and has been practicing in Brevard County for 20 years. She is a partner in the Viera East Veterinary Center and has an interest in K9 physical rehabilitation.



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