

The Emperor's New Trainers

by John Farrow

Many, many years ago lived an emperor who loved to run. In fact, he spent most of his waking moments training for the next race; his only ambition was to always be the best runner that he could possibly be. He did not care for his soldiers and the theatre did not amuse him; the only thing, in fact, he thought anything of was to go out for a long run to show off his fine physique. He even had a different pair of running shoes for each part of the day.

And the emperor loved running so much that he refused to appoint anyone to a position of authority who was not a runner. As one could say of a king "He is in his cabinet," so one could say of him, "The emperor and his cabinet are in their training session."

The great city where he resided was very gay and every day many strangers from all parts of the world arrived. One day two swindlers came to the city. They made people believe that they were trainers of great renown and declared that they could make anyone a champion runner without the least bit of exertion. And any such runner who trained with them, they said, would not only become exceptionally swift, but they would be possessed of the wonderful quality of being able to out-run any man who was unfit for his office or unparadonably stupid.

"They must be wonderful trainers," thought the emperor. "If I were to train with them, I would not only become the swiftest in the land but I should be able to find out which men in my empire were unfit for their places. I must engage them without delay." And he gave a large sum of money to the swindlers in advance of his first workout. He also gave them the finest suite of rooms in the palace in which to work and was most pleased to see that the lights in the rooms burned late into the night.

Soon it was time for the first workout with the new trainers, and the emperor was very nervous. "What if I am not good enough for them," he worried. "I shall send my honest old minister to the trainers," thought the emperor. "He can judge best their plans for he is intelligent, and nobody

understands his office better than he."

The good minister dutifully went to the room where the swindlers worked. "The emperor is busy," he said "and has asked me to attend the first workout in his stead."

"Very well," said the swindlers. "You must lie down on this bed with your eyes closed and imagine yourself as fleet as a gazelle."

The minister did as he was told, but soon fell fast asleep on the bed. When he awoke, the sun was setting and the swindlers were nowhere to be found. "Oh dear," he thought, "What shall I tell the emperor? I cannot tell him that the workout involved simply lying on the bed. Otherwise, he will surely judge me unfit for my office. I must tell him that they have devised a most wonderful training program."

Soon it was time to give his report. The minister hesitated. "Well, have you got nothing to say?" asked the emperor.

"Oh, they are most ingenious," replied the old minister looking through his glasses. "What a wonderful program they have devised, what brilliance!"

"I am most pleased to hear that," said the emperor. "Tell them that I should like to begin my training in the morning." And this the minister did.

At the appointed time, the emperor appeared at the palace track in his best racing singlet and newest shoes and nervously warmed up. But the new trainers did not appear. Instead, they sent a messenger who informed the emperor that the trainers did not wish for their training methods to be observed by anyone and that the emperor must come to a secret location deep in the forest. And this the emperor did, guided by the messenger to the place.

For his first workout, the swindlers had the emperor lie down and imagine only the muscles of his left calf becoming more developed and swift. The following day, it was the same but for the muscles of his right calf, and so on until he had contemplated each muscle in his body.

In the meantime, everyone in town had heard about the emperor's new trainers and all were anxious to see the results and how stupid their neighbors were. Even the ministers were beginning to talk among themselves about the upcoming race where the emperor would judge them, and they redoubled their training efforts. Where they previously ran 30 miles in a week, now they ran 50

with fartleks every third day; where their previous track sessions lasted an hour, now they lasted two hours or more. And they added hill repeats and altitude training in the mountains, they ran up stairs and they rode their bicycles and still they worried that it would not be enough.

Soon the swindlers asked for more money. The emperor sent a messenger from his secret training place deep in the forest bearing a letter for the Exchequer to pay his trainers the gold coins that they demanded. And this was done.

The emperor's workouts continued at an increasing pace, with one in the morning focusing on the legs, another at mid-day on the upper body, and a third in the late afternoon for the respiratory system. The emperor spent a minimum of seven hours a day in training, lying in bed.

Soon it was the night before the great race. None of the other men in the land were able to sleep, such was their nervousness. They had trained as hard as they ever had in their lives, but they had not had the benefit of the revolutionary new training theories of the emperor's new trainers.

"Your Majesty must have mercy on those of us who have not benefitted from the new methods of the trainers," said one minister at the pre-race pasta party, clearly worried about the outcome of the race which might cost him his job. But the emperor simply smiled.

"What is this?" thought the minister. "He does not look as if he has run a step since he began training deep in the forest. And if I am unable to outrun the emperor tomorrow, I will be judged unfit for my job! That would indeed be the most dreadful thing that could happen to me."

"You are looking great, your Majesty!" said the emperor's servants, although they were clearly worried, too. They could see no improvement in the emperor's conditioning. Quite the contrary. But before the emperor retired for the evening, he appointed the two swindlers "Imperial Court Trainers" and paid them double the remainder of their fee.

The next day, the emperor and all his barons came to the starting line, where the emperor acknowledged his trainers and their revolutionary training methods. "The secret as taught to me by my trainers is to simply imagine what you wish to be, and it shall be so!" the emperor cried.

"Indeed!" said all the courtiers, but they were

clearly skeptical, for the proof was in the pudding and the emperor appeared to have become the pudding.

The chamberlain was the official starter of the race, and he asked the emperor if he was ready for the race to begin. "I am ready," said the emperor, glancing about smugly. The chamberlain cried "On your mark!" and the race was on.

The emperor set off but to his surprise soon found himself far behind even the slowest runner in the kingdom. What was wrong, he wondered? Had he not followed the instructions of his trainers explicitly? Surely he did not need more training?

All along the course the townspeople cheered the runners and asked one another if they had seen the emperor. "No," was the common reply, "but perhaps we missed him when the leaders went by."

Finally, the emperor came into view down the lane, but he was moving very slowly with an unsteady gait, his breath heavy and labored. The crowd dutifully cheered their emperor and urged him on. "You will catch them, sire!" cried one. "Don't give up," cried another. Nobody wished to let others know his true feelings and be thought stupid.

"But he hasn't trained at all," said a little child at last. "Good heavens! Just listen to the voice of an innocent child," said the father, and one whispered to the other what the child had said. "But he hasn't trained at all," cried all of the people. That made a deep impression upon the emperor, for it seemed to him that they were right. He thought to himself, "Now I must bear up to the end." And he ran on with still greater dignity and vowed to redouble his old training on the morrow. *(Adapted from The Emperor's New Clothes, a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, as well as current research by Dr. Guang Yue of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation.)*□

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