

5 BETTER FOOD GOALS *FOR BETTER MILES*

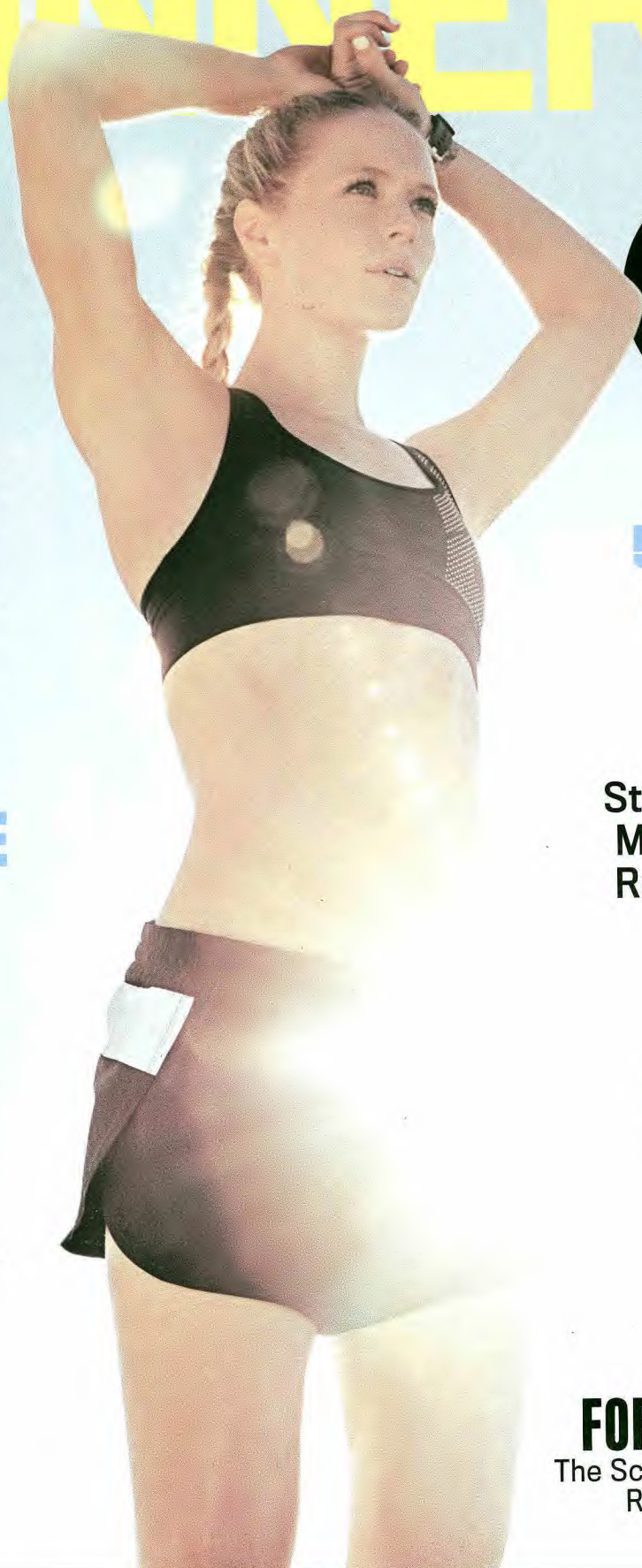
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The Science-Backed Ways
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NIGHT MOVES

COULD RUNNING IN THE DARK BE THE SECRET TO HITTING A FASTER PACE?

BY EMILY ABBATE

► **I WAS IN THE MIDDLE** of six pitch-black miles at 2 a.m., decked out in reflective gear and a safety vest for the second leg of my Ragnar Relay. With my stride guided by a headlamp and my breath providing a steady downbeat, I felt strong. While I was aware of the risks—inattentive drivers and unseen potholes—the dark enveloped me, pushed me to stay in the zone, and helped me cruise at a pace that made me feel like Superwoman.

So I had to wonder: Was the dark *actually* making me move faster?

Maybe, says Angie Fifer, Ph.D., executive board

member of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology in Philadelphia. “When you run at night, there is nothing to do but pay attention to your surroundings,” she explains. “It can make us more aware and focused, which provides a freeing sensation that can help us pick up the pace.”

Abandoned streets can also encourage you to unleash your inner speed. “No one is looking and judging, so in your mind you think, ‘I can just go, without inhibitions,’” says Fifer.

However, there is no research that shows exercising in the dark actually makes you run faster, even if it feels that way.

In one study, researchers examined cyclists through four 20-kilometer time trials, paying attention to how visual cues influenced how hard and fast they thought they were moving. The scientists realized that performing in a setting where you can only see things right before you approach them (like when it’s dark out) yielded a greater sense of speed and effort. Despite the higher sensation of exertion, however, there was no difference in heart rate or cadence.

There are other worthwhile benefits to tackling dimly lit miles over sun-soaked ones, though, says Danny Mackey, head coach for the Brooks Beasts Track Club in Seattle. “Night runs can be advantageous on days you want to go slow,” Mackey says. “Turn off the GPS and focus on having your run feel good, and you’ll be set up for the next pace-breaking workout.”

SAFETY CHECK

USE THESE SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO LOG SHADOWED RUNS UNSCATHED.

Get techy.

Leave the 'buds, but bring your phone: Having the bSafe app handy means a simple button push can alert friends of your location and that you're in trouble if things go awry.

Stick to known trails.

The dangers of unexpected turns or a technical route outweigh the benefits of being one with nature. Save adventuring on new trails for well-lit weekend outings.

Light the night.

Now's not the time for black zip-ups and matching tights. Layer on bright items with reflective hits, like a BSeen LED Slap Band (\$10).



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