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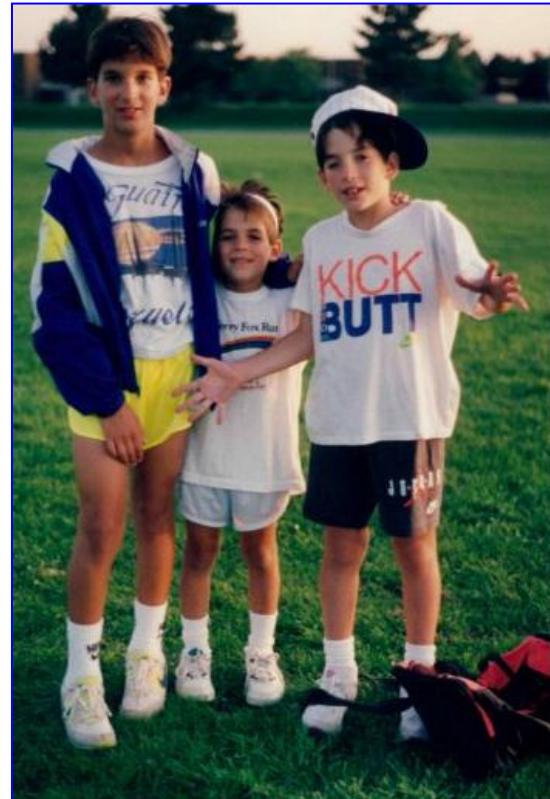
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Brotherly Runs

To help you understand who I am today I'm going to show you two pictures that are very close to my heart.

One of them was taken in 1991, when I was nine-years-old, and the other one was taken just this past spring. But it's the connection between the two pictures—taken so many years apart—that has largely contributed to who I am today.

In the older picture, I'm standing beside my younger brother, Michael, who is standing beside our older brother, Vince. We're all dressed in athletic clothing, standing in the middle of a soccer pitch near my parent's home in



Guelph. We all look happy. But so much of this day I don't remember. It was over twenty years ago.

What I do know is that we've all just run in a race. Vince won. That I remember for sure. I can't remember where I finished. I don't even remember that I'm wearing a hat, or why it's turned sideways. What I know for certain, though, is that I was happy that day. Because not only had I done the thing that I loved most—run—I was with the guys I loved most—my brothers.

My brothers and I have all had an affinity for going fast. According to popular lore—my Mom—we all walked before we crawled and were running soon after. I would run to catch up to my older brother and his buddies. I would run to get away from my younger brother sometimes. We would run to deliver our paper routes. You know when parents say to little kids, “go on, I'll time you”? Well that was our favourite game. We just loved to run. For me, it was the freest and the purest and the fastest thing in the world.

When we got older, running took on a more competitive form. We all joined a track team. We trained. Hard. And we were soon the best runners in our school, and then our city. While our friends were going to hockey and

soccer practice, we would be running the trails and country roads, usually with our Dad, and sometimes even with our Mom, in the car. Back then, our running was important to us. It was what we did. It was in our blood, actually. Our father had been a competitive distance runner—a scholarship runner!—and so I imagine we all inherited his love for running and racing. We would encourage each other, my brothers and I, to be the best athletes we could be. We never gave up on each other, always encouraging one another as we went up one hill—literally—and then the other.

Which brings me to the second picture. It's just a few months ago. Right after a local road race in the town we grew up in. I had a good race; second overall, in a lifetime personal best, I might add. My younger brother beat me. He's been beating me for a long time, so I'm ok with it. But it's not about the time, my running never has been. It's that my brothers and I are altogether...again. See, as we've gotten older, we don't get to see each other as much anymore. We all live in different cities, have our own families, and careers. But this picture reminds me of all the memories and miles we have shared together. It connects me to my roots, to where I came from, even if I don't remind that day so well.

And maybe it's a little more than that, too. Because on my shoulders is my son, Jacob. He's only a year-and-a-half old. But he's smiling. I don't know if that's because he's with the big boys for the day, or because he loves the track, but there's something happy in his wave, and maybe that's because we're all about to run.

So when I look at these pictures, decades apart, I know that I remain close to my brothers because of our shared running experience. And while I don't have as much hair now as I did back then, running with my brothers has made me who I am today.

