

*This book is dedicated to  
Samantha Cole Mislinski and Sophia Rose Baker-Boulbol,  
two girls who are sure to keep us on the run for years.*

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This is only a guidebook. Although trail running techniques and training tips are given, it is not an instructional book on trail running or intended to be used as a substitute for the user's judgment. Trail running can be a dangerous sport, and the user of this book is ultimately responsible for his or her safety. Neither the authors nor the publisher assume responsibility for any bodily injury, damage to property, or violation of the law that may result from use of this book.

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Sample file

I have alpine ski racing to thank for eighteen broken bones and my passion for trail running. I began running in earnest in the early 1970s while training for the upcoming ski seasons. My first real running race of any distance was a complete fiasco, if not utterly stupid. At a college party around eleven at night, a friend said that he was going to run the Denver Marathon the next morning for which he had been training. I too was training (for ski racing) and thought fast 4- to 8-mile trail runs three times a week would do just fine. I began tapering immediately by reducing my beer intake to a reasonable level until about 1:30 A.M. when I went home to carbo-load on a bowl of leftover mac 'n' cheese, a stale doughnut, and a dozen cookies. I was ready, but still not convinced I had made any real commitment. To my dismay, my friend actually did show up at 6:30 A.M., crawling through my apartment window like all my friends did during that time.

Good fortune had it that the race was full so I thought we could go home. That's when I learned the meaning of "running a race renegade." With 7,000 of my closest friends, I stormed off down the asphalt and concrete course in my disintegrating Nike Waffle Trainers. I took my usual 8-mile run pace and blazed along. By mile 20, I might as well have been wearing metal braces on my legs since my own joints barely bent anymore. I was running on

youthful stupidity and pride alone. I hobbled across the finish line in 3 hours 12 minutes, curled up into a ball, and didn't walk upright for two weeks. You would think this would have cured me from distance running forever. Wrong. I liked it, but I got smarter—I adopted the "Trails Only" credo.

I began running more steadily, just for the sake of running, and almost exclusively on trails. Meanwhile, a national running craze was sweeping the country. While living in Boulder at the time, along with my close friend Kevin Cooney, I started an event that would become wildly popular ... and illegal. In 1984 the first Basic Boulder Mountain Marathon was run from the doorstep of the house I rented on Spruce Street. I turned my alarm clock around in the window for the timing, we poured organic whole wheat flour across the sidewalk to form a start line, a roommate played a Jimi Hendrix version of the "Star Spangled Banner" on his electric guitar, and off we went. The "race" guaranteed the distance to be more than 20 and less than 50 miles with a "whole lot of vertical" followed by a mandatory potluck party. It lived up to its billing and then some. The true winner was the one who had completed the run and was still standing after the hours of wild dancing that broke out at the party. The BBMM became a celebration as well as a cult ritual.

The BBMM went on “officially” for 10 consecutive years until the “federales” finally shut us down. It took rangers, cops, and the city attorney, but they got us. We never obtained a single permit, permission slip, or bureaucratic approval for our event that had swelled from 22 to some 250 participants. We also never advertised, collected fees (other than for the party), or did anything materially destructive other than run on the beautiful trails and dirt roads in the Boulder Flatirons. I guess the bureaucrats had a (small) point—at 250 runners, the race was getting to be a little big. (The current allowable group size is precisely seven.) But really, the only thing the demolition of the event accomplished was to cement countless friendships among participants, make fanatical trail activists out of previously ambivalent bystanders, and galvanize what has become so important to me about running—and especially trail running—which is the personal freedom it embodies.

Few sports offer so simply the enormous freedoms and rewards that running can. Shoes, shorts, shirt, a trail heading off in some interesting direction, and you’re set. I can still pack all the running gear I need for summer

and winter in a small day pack. Over the years, I have run countless trail races, including numerous Pikes Peak Marathons, 50-milers, a couple Wasatch 100s, and a ton of adventure races. But they, too, are just excuses—excuses to get out by myself or with friends, to train and run on the trails. Trail running is more than just a passion. It’s a remedy for anything that’s wrong. It’s a forum for solving the world’s problems by yourself or with a group. It’s an energy source for a mind and body needing nourishment. It’s a celebration of motion and life.

The authors of this guide, wily veterans of many BBMMs themselves, have traveled throughout Colorado selecting a wonderful representative set of trail runs that showcase the beauty and diversity of Colorado trail running. The guide offers the right amount of information to get you there and running with the right provisions and expectations of the route. Most importantly, the book’s appealing, humorous descriptions will spark your interest in exploring beyond the listed runs. The authors have made a point of not revealing all the gems, which remain for you to discover and run on your own. See you on the trails.

—Neal J. Beidleman

Three years of research and labor have gone into this book. We are deeply grateful to the family and friends who helped us along the way. Our little families patiently tagged along on adventures: Kathy Baker, Scott's wife, and Samantha Cole Mislinski and Sophia Rose Baker-Boulbol, our two daughters born during the process of writing this book.

Neal Beidleman, a great friend, inspired us to hit the trails in the first place and provided his spectacular photographs for the book. Neal, his wife Amy, and their daughter Nina also acted as trail guides in Aspen and Grand Junction. Several other runners, old and new friends, proved to be great regional tour guides: Matt Carpenter, Kirk Apt, Virgil Best, Rob Rysavy and Ed Boggress. We'd also like to thank Kate Lapides for her contribution of photography and her input on responsible trail use. Paul "Hairbag" Cristina provided an invaluable "fresh eye" toward the end of the writing process, and lots of laughs on our trail runs. The great people at Boulder's Photo Craft Laboratories performed excellent pro-

cessing of miles of film and provided necessary comic relief. We can't forget Tony Cash and his wonderful flying machine.

All regulars at our "Happy Hour Runs," the following runners have provided inspiration, company, the occasional free beer, and photo models: Jean-François Lamarque, Chris Meyer, Elizabeth Sulzman, Dennis "The Terminator" Coombs, Kevin Cooper, Stephanie Ehret, Peter Backwin, Ted Brown, "Uncle" Larry Brewer, Larry "Wrong Way" Preston, Bruce Allen, Rob Chesher, Adam Chase, Anissa Dorschner, Charlie Hoffman, Jim Franklin, Jim Ham, Ellen de Money, Kay Miloshevich, Michael Maison-pierre, Kurt Blumberg, Buzz Burrell, Bruce Penner, Steve McCormick, and Norm Andrews, the original "Norm"al Guy.

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“Does anybody have any foood?” I heard someone moan from 50 feet behind me as I slowly climbed up Shadow Canyon during my first marathon, the infamous Basic Boulder Mountain Marathon. Luckily for the half-starved, somewhat delirious runner behind me, I was as clueless as he, but in the opposite extreme. Not knowing what to expect on my first outing beyond 20 miles, I had brought several Power Bars

and three bottles of water. I handed the guy a Power Bar as we trudged on together for the remaining climb to the summit of Bear Mountain. We’ve been running buddies ever since. When asked, I still insist that Scott’s being a bar manager has absolutely nothing to do with why I still run with him. Everybody else points out that he doesn’t really have much else going for him other than his girlish figure and a quick wit.

—Phil Mislinski

OK, I confess, Phil saved my hide on that fateful day in October 1993. It was my first marathon too, and I had no idea what to expect. Having run long distances only in road races before this, I was used to having aid stations every few miles, not to mention first-aid tents. But this was, of course, the dreaded Basic Boulder, and all I had was one 16-ounce bottle of water. Obviously I had never read a book like this before the race. I will never forget that Power Bar, or the guy who had about twenty of them, chugging along behind me (of course, Phil will tell you

that I was behind him). We have been running trails together ever since, even if he does tend to hold me back a little. But his uncanny knack for embellishment is the real reason I still let him tag along. A 30-minute jog on a cinder bike path becomes a life-threatening adventure and a slight drizzle sounds like a monsoon when he tells about it. One thing is for sure, though, he knows the trails around Boulder, and all over Colorado, as well as anyone, and I’ll surely be running them alongside him (or more likely in front of him) as long as my body will allow.

—Scott Boulbol

“Real Men Marry Athletes” proclaimed a T-shirt I wore to my first running date with a guy named Phil. I should have known better. He decided to see if I could walk the walk ... or run the run. I was in decent shape from back-

packing and mountain biking but this was to be my first trail run up Flagstaff Trail. Now I knew nothing of the trail, but the road by the same name is the type of mountain road that makes rental car brake pads beg for mercy.