HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

Shoe smell: the battle rages

BY KAREN LONDON
Special to the Daily Sun

I consider myself an expert about very few things related to the sport of track and field, but dealing with the smell of shoes is something I can discuss with confidence. The members of my family collectively run, race, jump, throw, lift, and we sometimes skip wearing socks. Here's what I have learned, by necessity, about handling the smell of our own feet once it has graced our shoes with its presence.

The smell is a result of bacteria that thrive in the sweaty, warm, dark environment of our shoes. These bacteria feed on dead skin cells and sweat, breaking them down into by-products that smell more like rotting cabbage and old cheese than is ideal. Because bacteria and moisture are at the root of the smelly shoe problem, a battle against the smell necessitates a battle against these microbes and the wetness.

That means that after every wearing, it helps to dry them out, ideally in the sun. Hanging them on a line is especially effective. To facilitate the drying, remove the insoles, loosen the laces and open the shoe as much as you can. If shoes are truly soaked from rain or puddles, loosely stuff them with tissues or other absorbent paper to draw the water from the shoes. Change the paper out multiple times, replacing it once it is saturated. To keep shoes from getting and staying wet, rotating two or three pairs helps a lot. It tends to take more than 24 hours for shoes to thoroughly dry, even with Flagstaff's low humidity.

Replacing the insoles can help a lot because so much of the smell is in this part of the shoe. Tossing out old ones removes part of the problem, though not always as much as you would think. Similarly, washing them gently by hand or on the delicate cycle of a washer helps, but is no magic remedy. I do this only rarely as it is hard on the shoes, and I never put them in the dryer, which is far too damaging for the shoes to be worth it.

A solution made of witch hazel or rubbing alcohol, distilled water and drops of essential oil helps conquer shoe smells. My favorites are tea tree, eucalyptus and cinnamon because they have antibacterial properties, and clove oil because its strong scent masks odors. Using a spray bottle allows me to get the solution throughout the shoes without soaking them.

Along with some familiarity about what works, I'm a bit of an authority on what does not work. These "don't-even-bother" methods include using baby powder, vinegar, baking soda, charcoal pouches, tea bags, sneaker balls and dryer sheets. Though all of these proposed remedies can take the edge off or provide some temporary masking of bad odors, they don't help enough in the long term to justify the effort.

Though we all want to win the battle against shoe odor, remember that the bad shoe smell deserves to be a mark of pride in having trained and competed hard.

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

KAREN LONDON HAS BEEN LIVING AND RUNNING IN FLAGSTAFF SINCE 2005 ALONG WITH HER HUSBAND, RICHARD HOFSTETTER, AND THEIR SONS, BRIAN HOFSTETTER AND EVAN HOFSTETTER. RACHEL SMITH IS A MOM TO TWO WONDERFUL GIRLS, A PROFESSIONAL RUNNER, AND FEELS LUCKY TO CALL FLAGSTAFF "HOME." SHE IS ALSO THE COORDINATING EDITOR OF THIS COLUMN AND WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO IT BY SENDING YOUR RUNNING-RELATED STORY TO HER AT RACHSCHNEID18@GMAIL.COM.

EAGLES

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on the clock. He opted to go for it on fourth down instead of taking the field goal. Speer was sacked by freshman Arieona Pingry before getting off an option pitch.

Johnson said he made the play call hoping to see what the team could do on short-yardage plays.

"It was good because in practice, we haven't really had a chance with the actual clock on to sit up and run that," Johnson said. "To be able to have that in a game situation, the thing of it is, I took something that we don't normally do to see if you can take it from the whiteboard and paper to the field, and we struggled on that one."

HATTIE LOPER, ARIZONA DAILY SUN

Flagstaff's Morgan Maloney (4) carries the ball during the team's home opener against Combs on Thursday at Rick Smith Athletic Field.

Call got the second half started with her second interception, returning the ball all the way back to the Combs 5-yard line. Johnson got his chance to see what can be done in short-yardage situations. Senior Kaden Payne took a direct snap and reached across the goal line to go up 17-0.

Call, who now has at least one interception in each of the past three seasons, said plays like those get her fired up.

"It felt pretty good," Call said. "I was really proud of myself, especially getting pretty close to the end zone. I was really excited."

Flagstaff got in a similar position near the end of the third quarter. Speer found Payne in the back corner of the end zone from five yards out to grow Flagstaff's lead to 23-0.

The south side of the field finally saw some action when the field flipped to start the fourth quarter. Flagstaff moved methodically down the field to set up a second Speer-to-Carrasco Gonzalez connection, this time from two yards out, for the final scoring play.

"Her being a young quarterback, I think she also thinks a lot about distribution," Johnson said of Speer. "She wants to make sure everyone is happy and everybody's touching the ball. To be able to just fall back on somebody like Donna is huge."

Combs finally got a long drive going at the end of the game, but the Eagles shut the door on the game with an interception by senior Alexis Chavez. Flagstaff has shut out both of its opponents to start the year, starting with a 35-0 win over Westview in Avondale back on Tuesday.

"It's important, especially for a defense," Call said. "The other side of the scoreboard is kind of our scoreboard as well."

The 65 points the Eagles have put up are the third-most in the first two games of a season across the program's four-year existence. Flagstaff scored 67 in the first two games last year, including a 36-0 win at Combs. The Eagles scored 66 in the first two outings in their inaugural season in 2023.

Combs (0-2, 0-1 4A East Sky) has been outscored 36-3 in its first two games, including a season-opening 6-3 loss to ALA — Queen Creek in overtime on Tuesday. The Coyotes will play their first two home games this upcoming Tuesday against the Coronado Dons and on Thursday against the Mesquite Wildcats.

Flagstaff (2-0, 0-0 4A Grand Canyon) has won the first two games in a season in three of its four years. The Eagles will have a week to regroup before hosting the 3A Page Sand Devils for their season opener on Sept. 24.