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A Passion to Run

by Robyn Suttor



Margaret Walker's review



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A Passion to Run by Robyn Suttor is a unique lifestyle book in which the author speaks intimately to the reader. Part autobiography, part reflection, part personal trainer session, rarely does a book appear in which one woman is able to share so many things that are important to women.

(I'm going to get into trouble here, so let's pause for a quick male side-note. It is my observation that Masters men embrace sport with great enthusiasm and very little discretion. In this book, I have scarcely ever seen so many fitness and recovery programs within easy reach. So rush out and get a copy, fellas, before you injure yourselves.)

Robyn Suttor has chosen to open her life and offer her numerous professional qualifications as a means of helping others: family situations, emotional health, parents, partners, the trials of youth and our growth into maturity, cellulite, arthritis, menopause and beyond. A school teacher and Masters athlete, she is also a personal trainer and instructor in Tai Chi, 'an intricate and subtle form of exercise'. Robyn's love of sport is intertwined with her understanding of the relationship between body, mind, spirit, and her creativity as an artist. Following this theme, in the first half of the book she uses her own experiences and her deep interest in people to construct unique programs for back injuries, depression, learning to run as an adult. What is the connection to a happy life without drugs? A connection with your body – but how can this be achieved? To what extent can our thoughts both create and overcome pain? What is important in my life? Where is my roadmap to inner peace?

Robyn's writing style is conversational, full of empathy towards her clients and love of family. The language is entirely suited to the matter, so that one feels peaceful merely by reading it.

As a Masters athlete myself, I sat up and took notice when Robyn discussed the revival of her childhood passion for athletics, and began training for Masters. For the scoffers among you, I fancy, she commences the chapter with an observation of the Men's 90+ 400m in Lahti, Finland, a favourite venue for World Masters Athletics Championships.

Following an extensive presentation of strength and speed programs, Robyn discusses the ever-present reality of injury to the Master's athlete. If you don't train you won't win, but if you over-train you'll get injured, and how does a champion solve the conundrum? This is where Robyn's reflection was a selling point for me, for I have to confess that any champion without humility is painful. Superwomen, we're not, so how do they do it? (No spoilers. You'll have to read the book to find out.)

Two things among many stood out for me, Robyn's delight in helping others achieve goals considered impossible, and the depth of her dedication to them and to her own journey. Sport for this passionate runner is a holistic experience where mind, body and spirit dwell in harmony.

'I train in the quiet so that I can immerse myself fully in the physical experience and think, cue, react, interpret, analyse, reflect, and perform.'