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## If the shoe fits

Choosing the right footwear can help prevent injury

By PAUL COSTANZO  
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If Nathan Hawley shows up at the [basketball court](#) with only his running shoes, he might not even join the game.

"I don't suggest (playing in your running shoes) at all," the 27-year-old Fort Gratiot man said. "You don't feel the ankle stability at all.

"I'll either stop playing or go home and get my [basketball shoes](#)."

There's a shoe for everything, and Hawley, a physical therapy technician at Orthopedic Associates in Port Huron, has a lot of them. A former standout [athlete](#) at Port Huron Northern High School and college baseball player, Hawley has all the cleats one could need -- football, baseball and golf -- but he also has basketball shoes, water/trail shoes, and a handful of running shoes and cross trainers.

"A lot of birthdays and Christmases," Hawley said of his collection.

But do you really need all of those shoes?

That all depends on how serious you're going to get about what you're doing.

## The right fit

While shoes don't make you run faster or jump higher, experts said the right shoe can go a long way toward keeping you healthy.

"You want to look at your sport and then look at the type of shoe," said Dr. David Touchton, a podiatrist at Port Huron Outpatient Foot clinic. "(For example) if you're a sprinter, you want a light shoe that's flexible in the toe. If you're running a marathon, you want a straight shoe. If you're going to play football on the line, you probably want a high top."

Different shoes are built for different activities. A good running shoe keeps your foot stable while moving straight forward. A good court shoe, for use in sports such as tennis or volleyball, stabilizes your foot as you move side to side.

"One of the things we worry about is people that are wearing running shoes (during court activities) that are meant to be running forward and backward, and not side to side," said Maureen Muzzarelli, a physical therapist and director of physical therapy at Orthopedic Associates.

One person who knows that well is Steve Pillon, the area's top tennis player who also has taken up running.

"Running shoes for tennis don't really provide the stability," Pillon said. "And also the durability. Tennis shoes have a little bit more ankle support for when you're stopping and starting and changing direction. Also, there's more rubber on the sole. Hard courts take quite a toll on the shoes."

Pillon has run in marathons and said he runs in

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about three road races a year. But he spends most of his time as a tennis pro at the Port Huron Tennis House giving lessons.

He said he has two or three pairs of tennis shoes he wears on a rotation, but he doesn't go through them as quickly as he did while playing. He said a serious tennis player could go through a pair of shoes every month.

As for crisscrossing shoes and sports, he doesn't recommend it.

"Sometimes I teach in my running shoes, and it's scary," he said. "I can feel the ankle starting to turn.

"... We had a kid that ran (track) in his tennis shoes, and he ended up getting shin splints."

## Watch your mileage

Pillon said he doesn't run consistently enough to track his miles, but he can tell when it's time to get a new shoe.

"I go until I feel like I'm not getting the cushion I need," he said. "As soon as I feel like the cushion isn't there and I'm starting to feel it in my knees, then I'll switch. A lot of people will have two pairs of running shoes to allow the cushion to (recover) if you're running every day.

"(His wife, Kristen) knows when she feels like that cushion is gone (in her shoes), or when the newest thing comes out. But she doesn't really have a set monthly thing."

Pillon said he's gone to Hansons Running Shop, which has four locations in metro Detroit, including Utica, where they can put you in the best shoe to fit your foot and running style.

"They watch you just walk and they'll fit you in a shoe," he said.

Daneille Fowler of Emmett, who is a regular atop the standings in local road races, has done the same. Muzzarelli, the physical therapist, also recommends it.

Fowler said she rotates her shoes to help them last longer but tries to change them every 500 miles.

Muzzarelli said a shoe change is recommended every 300 to 500 miles.

But that can get expensive, Fowler said. Training shoes retail at about \$80 to \$100. Fowler said she's found Brooks to be the brand that best fits her foot. Hawley prefers Asics.

## Fit, not fashion

Touchton said there really is no difference between a \$150 Nike and a \$50 no-name shoe when it comes to durability.

"They did a study at Penn State University ... ran tennis shoes against one another -- they have machines that ran 250,000 miles," he said. "The conclusion was that the JC Penney's shoe was as good as the Nike.

"If you buy a cheap shoe, and wear them a couple of months and throw them away, you're really better off than buying a \$150 Nike and wearing it for two years."

However, if you find a shoe you feel best fits your foot, it's not a bad idea to stock up, Touchton said, as it could change when the new model comes out.

Another option, which he highly recommends, is investing in orthotic insoles, which help stabilize the foot in the shoe. They also can help support the arch in your foot, which will flatten out in an

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average running shoe. That, Touchton said, can hinder performance.

The inserts can be anything from Dr. Scholl's at your corner drug store to prescription insoles.

So when looking for an athletic shoe, fit is always more important than fashion.

"If you don't have the proper footwear, you can get achy in your feet and knees," Fowler said. "It's probably related to your shoe."

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