

# STRENGTH RUNNING

by Jason Fitzgerald

A week ago, I had my VO2 Max tested. And I was incredibly surprised!

VO2 Max is one of the pillars of athletic performance. It shows how much oxygen you can utilize during hard exercise. The more you can use, the faster you can run.

But it's not everything. In fact, Eliud Kipchoge did not have the highest VO2 Max during his Breaking 2 attempt in the marathon. Other marathoners in his training group had a higher max... but he still beat them in the race.

That's because there are two other aspects of fitness that contribute to your eventual performance in a race:

- Lactate threshold (the boundary between aerobic and anaerobic running - often targeted with [tempo runs](#))
- Running economy (how efficient your [running form](#) is)

So while VO2 Max is important (higher is better), it's not truly indicative of your potential.

Nevertheless, it's been getting a lot of attention lately largely due to Peter Attia's book [Outlive](#) (VO2 Max is an important marker for Peter Attia's book [Outlive](#) (VO2 Max is an important marker for longevity)). More and more runners are testing this metric because it can give you insights on your physiology.

## My VO2 Max Results

Back in 2008, I had my VO2 Max tested at 69. This was when I ran 85+ miles per week and was capable of racing a 4:33 mile. I was fit. I was fast. And my score showed that.

Now, I'm 40! While I still run almost every day, I'm not as capable as I once was. I fully expected my VO2 Max to have declined substantially, especially considering that it does decline about 10% per decade from your peak.

Honestly, I would have loved any score of 60 or higher. But I was very surprised to see that it hasn't declined much in the last 16 years... **My Vo2 Max is 66!**

Besides bragging rights and the fun of knowing the number, this won't impact my approach to running at all. Here's why...

## VO2 Max and Training

Most elite runners aren't testing their VO2 Max. And if you get yours tested, the number won't have any impact on your training.

At a certain level, *it just does not matter.*

I consider it a "vanity metric." Fun to know, but kind of useless for a few major reasons:

- Hard workouts are run by focusing on a certain pace, not by running at some pre-determined percentage of VO2 Max
- VO2 Max does not tell you how fast you're going to race
- VO2 Max is largely set by genetics and is only trainable to a certain point

There are other metrics we should care a LOT more about:

- **Threshold:** are you running consistent workouts at or close to your lactate threshold?
- **Volume:** are you building mileage and/or cross-training volume to continuously build the aerobic system?
- **Strength:** are you getting stronger so you can then train more consistently (and at higher volumes)?

[channel](#) and publishing a conversation about it with ex-NFL sport scientist Jonah Rosner (he administered my VO2 Max test) on the [Strength Running Podcast](#).

But until then, I want to reassure you that VO2 Max is interesting to know, but unnecessary.

You're far better off getting started with strength training, gradually running more overall mileage, and running smart workouts.

Run strong,  
- Jason.

PS. Want to get started?

[Join our free course on strength training:](#)

- How to save time with your strength workouts
- Movements that build power - not just strength
- Why heavy weight isn't always necessary
- Common types of strength training that mostly waste your time
- Why weightlifting is "coordination training under resistance"



