DNA of marathoning: Can knowing our genetics improve performance?

A few weeks ago, a press release hit the wires with a curiosity-provoking title and subtitle: “Are your muscles genetically prepared to run a marathon? The way is open for the use of genetics in training.”

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The study followed 67 runners at the Rock ’n’ Roll Madrid Marathon, who gave blood samples and completed some simple tests immediately before and after the race. In particular, they measured levels of two proteins—creatine kinase (CK) and myoglobin—that leak into the blood when muscles are damaged.

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Some sample headlines: “Maybe you just weren’t born to run a marathon, says science,” according to Metro.

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So a better headline would have been “That Explains Nothing.” I don’t doubt that the genes identified are indeed linked to how much levels of CK increase, and that this increase is in some way related to muscle damage. But these subtle differences, in this study at least, have absolutely zero predictive power for how fast you run or how sore you feel.

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In a sense, you can take this as a broader cautionary tale about the dubious practical value of many of the genetic tests that are currently being marketed to athletes and everyone else. Even when the effects are real, the resulting differences are subtle.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: Is Post-Marathon Muscle Soreness in your Genes?

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read GLP on Wikipedia