

Pull up your shirt and let me see those abs, I wanna make sure this works.”

From there, Yesso had his new “little buddy,” who would eventually become his partner in Yoglates.

“She brought something to the business that wasn’t there before, and she landed the LSU deal,” says Yesso.

Teaming up with the LSU Athletic Department, Yoglates has found its way to the Tiger football team. So add the names Craig Steltz, Joe Addai and Michael Clayton to the likes of the gymnasts and grandmothers that adhere to this innovative routine.

It’s no country club atmosphere, however.

“The customer is never right here,” Yesso continues. “It’s not like Burger King; you can’t have it your way.”

Described as militaristic, the regimented workout entails a series of stretches and movements done in 90-degree-plus heat. A few key no-no’s include gum, hats, music and even talking.

Those that stay see the results and come back for more, finding themselves enforcing the same strict rules they once detested.

Now, as Yesso describes, “We need a shoehorn to get people in here.”

Happy’s Running Club

“We were driving to a Hornets playoff game in New Orleans,” says Michael Lang, “then, all the sudden, Scott looked at me and said, ‘Do you want to start a running club?’”

Just like that, with one innocuous question, their idea was off and running.



Ready to run

“We read in Runner’s Digest about clubs in Orlando, Denver and Pensacola that were having success, averaging a couple hundred runners per week,” Lang explains.

Lang and crony Scott Higgins now have their own to boast about, Happy’s Running Club.

Through an agreement with Jack Warner of Happy’s Irish Pub, the two men have created a monster that continues to grow in popularity and attendance.

“We had a dream once of having a hundred people show up on Tuesday nights,” continues Higgins. “Well, in just 14 weeks we have met that goal. This week, we had 106 total runners!”

The opportunity to run and socialize are just part of the draw, the free pizza from Schlitz & Giggles along with discounts on beer afterward at Happy’s play a large role in the success, as well.

“Membership is only \$30, and that gets you a T-shirt and all the discounts to boot,” adds Lang.

The green T-shirt captures the club’s catchy slogan “Run ... Drink ... and be HAPPY!”

They meet every Tuesday at 6 p.m. and take off on their 5K run from Happy’s downtown at 6:15. There are four different routes to date, so no need to worry about monotony. As far as the crowd, call it a mixed bag.

“We’ve got a wide range,” explains Lang. “There are seniors at LSU and 50-somethings all coming together.”

Michelle Mayer has her own theory on the new local sensation.

“It’s a crowd that on the whole is more interested in fun than competitive racing. There’s only so many elites, everyone else just wants to have fun and socialize,” says Mayer, owner of Fleet Feet Baton Rouge, which helps sponsor the running club.

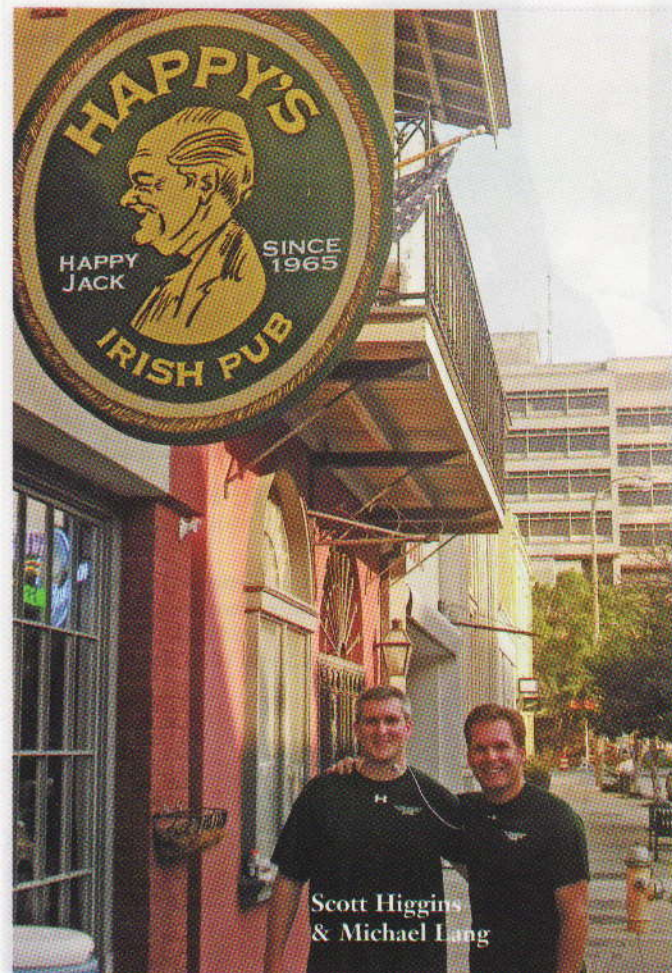
Fleet Feet and other sponsors, including Vitamin Water and Starbucks, contribute gift certificates and other exciting prizes.

If it’s a more serious pace you desire, Fleet Feet can help there, too.

Its Club South Runners meet every other Wednesday at rotating locations to run the hump-day two-miler. Locations include various BREC parks around town and the lakes at Pennington Biomedical Research Center.

And Michelle is the perfect guide to help you kick into high gear, having just completed the Boston Marathon in April.

While Tuesday at Happy’s may not be the Boston Marathon, the great deals and fun atmosphere have Baton Rouge running wild!



Scott Higgins & Michael Lang