

The state of AI in running

October 2026 edition

24 developments from April 2025 to September 2026, each dated and each with its source.

→ Coaching apps: Runna, Strava and plan safety	6
→ Watches and wearables: AI coaching from the hardware makers	9
→ Research: what the evidence says about load, injury and AI plans	4
→ Business, litigation and regulation	5
→ What to watch next	5

In short

Most AI in running is now owned by the companies that make the watches and hold your data. Strava bought Runna, and Garmin bought TrainingPeaks. Google, Samsung and Apple have added coaching to their wearables, and COROS now lets ChatGPT and Claude read your training history. What has not kept pace is evidence. No peer-reviewed study shows whether app-adapted plans injure runners more or less often than a static plan or a human coach. The best new research suggests that the weekly load ratios many tools rely on predict injury less well than a simple check of each run against your longest recent run. The Big Tech coaches are mostly still in preview, scaled back or thin. For now, checking whether a plan's progression is safe is still your job.

-
- ➔ Platform owners now control the leading running-coaching products: Strava bought Runna in April 2025, and Garmin bought TrainingPeaks and TrainHeroic in July 2026.
-
- ➔ No peer-reviewed study has yet compared injury rates on adaptive app plans with traditional plans, and Runna's own lower injury-rate claim is self-reported and has not been checked against a published benchmark.
-
- ➔ In a 5,205-runner Garmin cohort, a single run more than 10% longer than the longest run of the previous 30 days was linked to higher injury risk, while the week-to-week load ratio showed no relationship.
-
- ➔ Machine-learning models trained on Strava logs and surveys predicted injury poorly in runners who were not already injured (AUPRC 8%), so software 'injury risk' warnings should be treated as rough guides.
-
- ➔ The general-purpose AI health coaches from Google, Apple and Garmin are still in preview, scaled back, or described by reviewers as thin, more than a year after launch.
-
- ➔ US regulators loosened, rather than tightened, oversight of wellness wearables in January 2026, so no regulator checks whether an AI training plan's progression is safe.
-

Runna is the app most readers will be using, and since April 2025 it has belonged to Strava. The past year brought a bundle price, new adaptive features and, after critical press coverage of injuries, an academic review of how its plans progress load. Runna is also now careful to say its plans are coach-written and adapted by an algorithm, not generated by AI.

28 Sep 2026

Runna says its plans are coach-designed, not AI-generated

The 5K Runner reports Runna's position that experienced coaches design its plans and an algorithm then tailors and adapts them to each runner, with AI features layered on top. Pace targets change only after repeated misses or beats, and outlier reps are ignored. Runna has not published how its algorithm works. It costs \$119.99 a year on its own, or \$149.99 (£119.99) bundled with Strava.

Why it matters Because the adaptation logic is not published, you cannot check how the app decides to raise your paces or volume. You have to judge the progression from your own data.

Source: [The 5K Runner](https://the5krunner.com) the5krunner.com

25 Aug 2026

Loughborough University to review how Runna plans progress load and recovery

Loughborough University announced a partnership with Runna under which Dr Richard Blagrove will lead a review of how Runna's plans progress pace and distance and build in recovery. The plans will be measured against current research on training load, intensity distribution and recovery protocols. The university calls it the first step in a long-term collaboration with Runna and Strava.

Why it matters This is the first independent academic look at a mainstream app's progression rules. It has only just started, though, and no findings have been published.

Source: [Loughborough University](https://lboro.ac.uk) lboro.ac.uk

29 Jul 2026

Runna adjusts pace targets automatically for heat and humidity

Runna launched Adapt for Heat. It uses local forecasts of feels-like temperature, together with session length and type, to lower pace targets and to show a colour-coded hourly forecast of better times to run. Runna says its own research found 80% of its community adapt or skip runs because of hot weather.

Why it matters Slowing paces in heat is sensible, but the feature works from the forecast alone. It cannot see how your heart rate or body is actually responding on the day.

Source: [9to5Mac](https://9to5Mac.com) 9to5mac.com

4 Dec 2025

Strava's Year in Sport report shows appetite for AI coaching

Strava's 2025 Year in Sport report, based on its activity data and a survey of more than 30,000 people, found 46% of respondents said they would use AI as a smart coach for sports. Runna data in the report showed 86% of Runna-connected runners set a personal best in 2025, and users mostly rated themselves beginner (26%) or intermediate (34%).

Why it matters Many app users are relatively inexperienced, which is the group most exposed to badly judged load increases. The personal-best figure is the company's own and is not an injury measure.

Source: [Endurance Business](#) endurance.biz

3 Jul 2025

Strava and Runna launch a combined annual subscription

Strava and Runna introduced a joint annual subscription covering the paid tiers of both apps. Most outlets give the price as \$149.99 a year in the US and £119.99 in the UK. The two apps continue to run separately, and Runna is not included in Strava's Family Plan.

Why it matters The bundle makes an adaptive plan an add-on for many Strava subscribers. That widens access, and with it the number of runners following algorithmic progressions.

Source: [Stuff](#) stuff.co.za

17 Apr 2025

Strava agrees to buy London running-coach app Runna

Strava signed a definitive agreement to acquire Runna, a London start-up that had raised around £10m. Terms were not disclosed. Dealroom estimated Runna's value at more than \$40m, and The Times reported a multimillion-pound payout for the founders. Strava CEO Michael Martin said running was booming worldwide.

Why it matters The most widely used adaptive plan app now belongs to the platform that already holds most runners' training histories.

Source: [UKTN](#) uktech.news

Watches and wearables: AI coaching from the hardware makers

9 developments

Watch and phone makers have added AI coaches, voice prompts and new load metrics, but much of it is in preview or reviewed as shallow. The more useful changes are often non-generative: adaptive plans that respond to recovery data, and metrics that cap weekly mileage. Data access is also opening up, with COROS letting general chatbots read your account.

1 Sep 2026

Garmin adds low-volume and run-walk Run Coach plans in Q3 update

Garmin's Q3 2026 software update added lower-volume and run-walk Run Coach plans that adjust day to day using recovery and health data. It also widened Quick Workout, which proposes a run from the time and intensity you choose. Feature availability varies by watch, and the Forerunner 265, 965 and Fenix 7 range were not in the Q3 feature table.

Why it matters Runners coming back from injury or training on low mileage now have a built-in adaptive option. Check which features your model actually gets.

Source: [The 5K Runner](#) the5krunner.com

13 May 2026

COROS lets ChatGPT and Claude read your training data

COROS released an official Model Context Protocol server that lets AI assistants read 15 data types from a COROS account, including workouts, sleep, HRV, training load, VO2max and race predictions. It is read-only, so AI-written plans must be entered by hand. It does not expose GPS routes, per-second heart rate and pace, lap splits or power. The reviewer's queries all returned 'temporarily unavailable' errors during testing.

Why it matters A chatbot can now see your real load data instead of guessing. It sees COROS's summary figures rather than the raw inputs, and you are sharing health data with a third party.

Source: [The 5K Runner](#) the5krunner.com

20 Apr 2026

A year on, Garmin's Active Intelligence is judged thin

A one-year review of Garmin Connect+ found that its headline AI feature, Active Intelligence, 'continues to restate thin insights' drawn from sleep, HRV, training load and stress. The only AI-related addition since launch noted was image recognition for nutrition logging, added in January 2026. Connect+ costs £6.99 a month or £69.99 a year in the UK.

Why it matters Paying for Garmin's AI layer does not currently give you meaningfully better judgement on plan safety than the free metrics already on your watch.

Source: [The 5K Runner](#) [the5krunner.com](#)

10 Feb 2026

Fitbit's Gemini coach preview reaches the UK and iPhone

Google opened its Gemini-powered Fitbit personal health coach preview to Premium users in the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, and added iOS support. It requires Fitbit Premium and a recent Fitbit or Pixel Watch, and works only in English. It remains a public preview.

Why it matters UK runners on Fitbit or Pixel Watch can now try a conversational coach that builds plans. Google still labels it a preview with gaps.

Source: [9to5Google](#) [9to5google.com](#)

5 Feb 2026

Apple reportedly scales back its planned AI health coach

Bloomberg reported, via 9to5Mac, that Apple had scaled back Project Mulberry, an AI health coach planned for a revamped Health app, after oversight of health moved to services chief Eddy Cue. Some features, including a wellbeing chatbot and camera-based gait analysis, may still appear individually in the Health app. Apple declined to comment.

Why it matters Apple Watch runners should not expect an Apple-built training coach soon, and will keep relying on third-party apps for plans.

Source: [9to5Mac](#) [9to5mac.com](#)

27 Oct 2025

Google launches Gemini-powered Fitbit coach in US public preview

Google began rolling out a personal health coach to eligible US Fitbit Premium users on Android. It can build multi-week fitness plans towards goals such as a 10K in three months, create workouts based on readiness and recent activity, and adjust the schedule after an injury. Google said there 'will be some gaps' in the preview.

Why it matters This was the first major wearable maker to offer a generative coach that writes and rewrites a running plan. No independent safety evaluation of its plans has been published.

Source: [Google](#) [blog.google](#)

16 Jun 2025

Samsung adds Running Coach to Galaxy Watch in One UI 8 Watch

Samsung's One UI 8 Watch beta introduced Running Coach, which analyses a runner's performance and builds a training programme for events from 5K to marathon. Samsung describes it as 'injury-preventive', without published evidence. At beta it was limited to Galaxy Watch 7 series or later.

Why it matters Another default-installed plan generator is reaching beginners. Its injury-prevention claim is marketing, not a tested result.

Source: [Droid Life](https://droid-life.com) droid-life.com

9 Jun 2025

Apple announces Workout Buddy spoken AI motivation for watchOS 26

Apple previewed Workout Buddy, an Apple Intelligence feature that gives spoken, personalised encouragement during runs, walks, rides and strength sessions, drawing on heart rate, pace, distance and milestones. It needs Bluetooth headphones and a nearby Apple Intelligence-capable iPhone, and launched in English.

Why it matters This is motivation, not coaching. It does not change your plan or warn you about load.

Source: [Apple Newsroom](https://apple.newsroom) apple.com

16 May 2025

Garmin Forerunner 970 debuts Running Tolerance weekly mileage cap

Garmin launched the Forerunner 970 at \$749.99 (£629.99) with Running Tolerance, a metric that shows how training load affects you and recommends a weekly maximum mileage to help avoid injury. Running Economy and Step Speed Loss need the new HRM 600 strap, but Running Tolerance does not.

Why it matters It gives you a direct ceiling to compare against an AI plan's weekly volume. Garmin has not published validation showing it reduces injuries.

Source: [Advnture](https://advnture.com) advnture.com

Research: what the evidence says about load, injury and AI plans

4 developments

The research is more useful for checking a plan than any vendor claim. Large cohort data has challenged the 10% rule and weekly load ratios. Machine-learning injury prediction remains weak, and expert ratings of chatbot-written plans keep finding them mediocre without expert refinement.

29 Mar 2026

Strava-based models predict marathon training injuries poorly in healthy runners

A study in PM&R followed 643 runners training for the 2022 New York City Marathon, using weekly surveys and Strava logs across 9,002 runner-weeks. 48% had at least one injury that forced them to modify training. A model using all weeks scored AUROC 87%, largely because injuries persisted from week to week. For runners not already injured it scored AUROC 67% and AUPRC 8%, which the authors called poor.

Why it matters Even with your full Strava history, current models cannot reliably tell you a new injury is coming. Treat any app's risk score with scepticism.

Source: [PM&R \(via Weill Cornell Medicine VIVO\)](#) vivo.weill.cornell.edu

21 Feb 2026

WSJ report of Runna-linked injuries prompts scrutiny of adaptive plans

The 5K Runner summarised a February 2026 Wall Street Journal report that physical therapists were seeing multiple Runna-related injury cases a week, including stress fractures, shin splints and Achilles tendinopathy. Runna responded by adding ways for users to reduce plan intensity. No peer-reviewed study has established that Runna users are injured more often than runners on other plans.

Why it matters Those injuries are classic signs of load rising too fast. Use the intensity controls, and watch pace and distance progression yourself.

Source: [The 5K Runner](#) the5krunner.com

26 Aug 2025

Coaches rate chatbot-written strength plans as only moderate

In *Biology of Sport*, ten coaches rated 16-week hypertrophy and maximal-strength plans from GPT-3.5 via ChatGPT, GPT-3.5 via Copilot, and Gemini against 27 criteria. Overall quality was moderate, with most ratings below 4 out of 5. The plans lacked detailed intensity guidance such as load prescription and proximity to failure. The authors said the plans need expert refinement, and the results apply only to April 2024 model versions.

Why it matters If your AI plan includes strength sessions, expect a sensible outline but vague loading. That is the part to fill in or check.

Source: [Biology of Sport \(PMC\)](#) [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

7 Jul 2025

5,205-runner Garmin study links single-run spikes, not weekly ratios, to injury

Aarhus University's Garmin-RunSafe study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, followed 5,205 runners from 87 countries over 18 months and 588,071 sessions. 35% were injured. Compared with the longest run in the previous 30 days, a 10–30% longer run was linked to 64% higher injury risk, 30–100% to 52%, and over 100% to 128%. No relationship was found for the week-to-week ratio. The study is observational.

Why it matters This gives you a concrete check on any AI plan: compare each scheduled long run with your longest run in the past month, not only the weekly total.

Source: [Aarhus University](#) health.medarbejdere.au.dk

Money and lawyers have moved faster than the science. The two biggest platforms bought coaching businesses, Strava prepared to list, and a brief patent fight showed how dependent the apps are on each other. Regulators have stepped back from wellness wearables.

22 Jul 2026

Garmin buys TrainingPeaks and TrainHeroic

Garmin acquired the endurance platform TrainingPeaks and the strength platform TrainHeroic from Peaksware Holdings, adding about 120 staff based in Louisville, Colorado. Financial terms were not disclosed. Garmin said the deal expands its coaching offerings for endurance, strength and performance-focused athletes.

Why it matters Garmin now owns the platform many human coaches use to plan training. How it combines that with its own adaptive plans will shape what Garmin runners are offered.

Source: [Garmin](https://garmin.com) garmin.com

12 Jan 2026

Strava files confidentially for a stock market listing

Strava, with about 150 million users, filed confidentially for an IPO, with reports pointing to a spring 2026 target and a possible valuation above \$2.2bn. Its last funding round, in May 2025, valued it at \$2.2bn.

Why it matters A public listing would require Strava to disclose figures such as subscription revenue, and possibly Runna's performance, that are currently private.

Source: [SGI Europe](https://sgieurope.com) sgieurope.com

6 Jan 2026

FDA relaxes its general wellness policy for wearables

The US Food and Drug Administration issued revised final general wellness guidance without a comment period, superseding its 2019 version. Non-invasive wearables estimating values such as blood pressure can now qualify as wellness products if their use is strictly wellness-focused. Covington notes the revisions do not directly address AI or chatbots.

Why it matters AI coaching built on watch data stays outside medical-device rules in the US, so no regulator assesses whether a plan's progression is safe.

Source: [Covington & Burling](https://covington.com) [cov.com](https://covington.com)

21 Oct 2025

Strava drops its patent lawsuit against Garmin after 21 days

Strava voluntarily dismissed, without prejudice, its suit against Garmin over Segments and heatmaps, 21 days after filing. Strava's chief product officer had linked the dispute to new Garmin developer guidelines for API partners. Strava said it was 'glad to put this behind us' but gave no details of any resolution.

Why it matters Most Runna and Strava users depend on Garmin data flowing to Strava. The dispute showed that link rests on commercial terms that can change.

Source: [BikeRadar](https://www.bikeradar.com) [bikeradar.com](https://www.bikeradar.com)

30 Sep 2025

Strava sues Garmin and seeks to block US device sales

Strava filed a patent and contract suit against Garmin in federal court in Colorado over Segments and heatmaps. It sought a permanent injunction covering most Garmin watches and Edge computers, plus damages. Strava said Garmin devices would continue to sync with its platform.

Why it matters This was a reminder that your training data sits between companies with competing interests, which matters if your AI plan relies on it.

Source: [BikeRadar](https://www.bikeradar.com) [bikeradar.com](https://www.bikeradar.com)

What to watch next

↑ What Loughborough finds in Runna's plans

The Loughborough review will compare Runna's pace and distance progression and recovery against current research. If findings are published, they will be the first independent assessment of a mainstream adaptive plan. Watch for whether Runna changes its progression rules as a result, and whether the results are made public.

↑ What Garmin does with TrainingPeaks

Garmin now owns its own adaptive Run Coach, the paid Connect+ AI layer and TrainingPeaks. Open questions are whether TrainingPeaks stays open to other watch brands, whether it is folded into Connect+, and whether Garmin adds AI-generated plans of its own.

↑ Strava's prospectus

Strava's spring 2026 listing target has passed without a public listing. A public S-1 would disclose subscriber and revenue figures, and possibly how Runna is performing. It would be the first audited view of how many people actually pay for adaptive plans.

↑ AI that can write to your watch calendar

The COROS server is read-only for now, and COROS has said future updates could allow AI-generated plans and automated scheduling. If that arrives, a general chatbot could push sessions straight to your watch, removing the manual step where many runners currently sanity-check a plan.

↑ Whether the generative coaches leave preview

Google's Fitbit coach remains a public preview a year after launch, and Apple has reportedly scaled back its own plans. Watch for any published evaluation of the plans these coaches write, especially for injury-related adjustments. So far there is none.

How this report was made

Every development here was found in a public source dated from April 2025 to September 2026: trade press, regulators, journals and company announcements. Each one names its source, so you can read the original.

All 24 source links were checked on 12 Oct 2026; 5 of those sites do not allow automated checking, so those links were not opened by the check. Nothing here is advice; it is a record of what happened.

The next edition, and the guides behind this one, are at airunning.co.uk/report/