

A LOOK AT MARATHON TRAINING

By DON SIKORSKI
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The ability to get out the door to go for a run, especially during New England's dark and cold winter months, can be a challenge. So what possesses someone to commit to training for a marathon, specifically a marathon that takes place in mid-April? Over the next several weeks, we will take a look at what type of training and preparation is necessary to compete in the Boston Marathon, a 26.2 mile footrace from Hopkinton to downtown Boston. The marathon takes place on Monday, April 17th, the designated "Patriots Day" holiday in Massachusetts. In now its 110th running, the Boston Marathon is the oldest and most prestigious marathon in the United States. Boston is also the only marathon other than the Olympic Games or Trials which requires runners to meet a qualifying time in a previous marathon. I spoke with four local runners that have qualified for and entered this year's Boston Marathon about their training progress.

George Adrian has been a self-employed Ophthalmologist in Groton for over twenty years now. With a full-time job requiring long hours and two young children at home, finding the time and energy to train is always a challenge. Adrian looks to improve on his first Boston Marathon attempt a year ago. As an experienced runner, Adrian had originally thought a sub 3 hour marathon was within his range for his 26.2 mile debut. However, he ran into a bit of bad luck (and ran into more than that) when he was hit by a car on a training run in Mystic. Adrian crossed in front of a car that was stopped at an intersection. The vehicle pulled out in front of him and Adrian rolled over the hood of the car. "I really didn't think it was a big deal," said Adrian of the accident. "I finished my run and didn't feel too bad, but I did a real hard run the next day and soon my hip and my whole right side really hurt". Adrian decided to wing Boston, but his injuries leading up to the race cost him valuable fitness. "At the end, I just died," recalls Adrian of last year's Boston Marathon. "I had a horrible run." Adrian bounced back from that effort to clock a 3:34:49 at last year's Mystic Places Marathon in October. He is taking a more low key approach for this year's race. "This year, it's about having fun," said Adrian. "Re-qualifying (sub 3:35 for the 50 year-old Adrian) would be wonderful. But I do dream about a sub 3 someday."

Bob Walsh of East Lyme is a Physical Education teacher at Groton Heights and Claude Chester School in Groton who does his long runs with Adrian on the weekends. Walsh began running as a high school wrestler and track athlete and moved up to long distance running years later. A veteran runner with a total of 11 marathons under his belt, Walsh is approaching this year's Boston Marathon with added enthusiasm because he will turn 50 years old this month, moving him to a new age group category. "It's the only sport I know where you look forward to aging," joked Walsh. With a personal best marathon time of 3:15 at the 2002 Green Mountain Marathon, Walsh is going into this year's Boston race with the same outlook that has worked for him in the past. "I really have several goals," explains Walsh. "The first is to re-qualify for next year's Boston (Marathon). The second is a time goal, and the third goal is just to survive". Walsh has been concentrating less on speed work and more on distance, and has had less nagging injuries as a result.

Pete Weeden of Ashaway, RI is a 4th Grade Teacher at Eastern Point School in Groton. Weeden, who also joins Adrian and Walsh on weekend long runs, will be running his 5th marathon and his 3rd Boston. "I have always promoted the sport and physical fitness," says Weeden. "I am usually a seven-day-a-week runner and if I don't get out for a run that day, I just don't feel right." Because of his consistent training base, Weeden has been fortunate in avoiding injury, and credits the camaraderie of his training partners in keeping him motivated to do the work. "Everything plays a part," says Weeden of his fitness routine. "I believe that if you find out what works for you, you will be successful".

Sue Sucholet of Norwich takes a different approach to marathoning. "I have a strong drive to do well, but I don't train as hard as a lot of other runners," Sucholet confesses, referring to her own marathon race preparation as "winging it". But that approach has worked pretty well for Sucholet to date. She began running in 1998 with a simple 1 mile run. A mere month later, she attempted her first marathon. She finished in a more than respectable time of 4:06, despite a long run of only 11 miles. Since that time, she has logged seven more marathons with a personal best of 3:45:06 in last fall's Mystic Places Marathon. That qualified her for Boston, and this will be her first visit to Hopkinton. She has some concerns about Boston's noon time start, but has been trying to run later in the morning to compensate. "I train a lot in the morning and have been doing a lot of running on the treadmill," said Sucholet. Her mileage hovers around the 35 per week mark with a long run of 15 miles to date.

How will these four runners do at Boston? We'll track their progress over the remaining weeks leading up to the marathon. Only five weeks away from race day, the majority of the hard work has already been done. Next time we'll take a look at how these runners taper their training to be rested and ready for the marathon.

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