

PELLERIN RACING FOR A GREATER CAUSE

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

Not too long ago, Keith Pellerin was an undisciplined, out of shape, cigarette smoker in his mid 30's when he began walking to get some exercise. A few years later, his friend Marc Fauxbel convinced him to give running a try. He did, struggling at first but soon sensing some progress. That next spring, Pellerin found himself on the starting line of his near-hometown Danielson 5K road race. He finished in 18th place overall that afternoon, running 18:52 for the 3.1 mile loop. He bonded with the running crowd in attendance, joined the Mohegan Striders Association, and made running a part of his everyday routine. He hasn't looked back since.

Although Pellerin is still a 5K runner at heart, all runners are enticed by longer distances, and the lure of the marathon soon takes hold. Pellerin followed these traditional footsteps, and this April, he will be tackling his 5th consecutive B.A.A. Boston Marathon. Not bad for someone who, just 10 years earlier, viewed going for a walk as an exhausting aerobic task. This year, he will also be racing for a greater cause; he will be training and racing to help the American Stroke Association. "Three years ago, I lost my Mom to a stroke," said Pellerin, 44. And last year, Pellerin's brother Donald also suffered a stroke. "I made a decision to look into the Tedy Bruschi Foundation," explained Pellerin. Through his association with the "Tedy's Team" program, Pellerin receives the benefit of a coach, a team, training schedules, and special clinics. He is also hoping to raise thousands of dollars for stroke research and education programs. According to the site's information, someone suffers a stroke every 45 seconds and someone dies of a stroke every 3.1 minutes. 29 percent of people who have strokes are under the age 65. Pellerin looks at this year's Boston Marathon as an opportunity to do something worthwhile for the cause. "You reach a point that you no longer have the urge to run just for yourself anymore," explains Pellerin of his motivation.

The Boston Marathon is one of the few races that require a qualifying time standard to be met, although the race makes a formal exception for runners that coordinate with a certified charitable organizing and meet fundraising target amounts. Boston is glad to have Pellerin on the starting line this year because he has met both criteria. Pellerin first tackled the 26.2 mile distance at the 2004 Hartford Marathon, finishing in a time of 3 hours, 17 minutes and 27 seconds, succeeding in his goal to earn an official entry at Boston. He has successfully re-qualified at Boston each year since, running a personal best of 3:11:37 (7:18 per mile pace for 26.2 miles) in 2006. Although he enjoys competing, Pellerin hopes to continue with his schedule of sticking with just 1 marathon per year. "I hope to continue to qualify at Boston," said Pellerin of his race goal each spring. "A marathon takes a lot out of you, and I enjoy running a 5K or a 5 miler. I like to race all day".

The former Brooklyn, CT resident has recently relocated to Northborough, Massachusetts. His training regime is impressive, especially factoring in a busy day in his job as the Logistics Manager at Impact Plastics in Putnam, CT. He consistently rises at 5:00am to train daily and logs 30-60 miles weekly on a year-round basis, with longer weekend runs early in his marathon preparation weeks and some days even adding a second run later in the day. Pellerin sometimes trains with Chris Benestad, a 2:35 marathoner who competes for the Boston Athletic Association. And he also combats New England' winter weather by adjusting his surrounds when necessary. "I've run a 20 miler on the treadmill two weeks in a row now," said Pellerin of his recent training efforts. "I like to front load the 20 milers so I know I have the base mileage to do well (at Boston)." Pellerin, whose normal racing style is to go out fast and push himself hard, takes a less risky approach in the marathon. "My goal at Boston has always been to finish and to continue to qualify for next year," explained Pellerin. "Maybe one day I will take a different approach, but I guess my fear of not finishing is more than a goal of trying to race faster".

Pellerin is grateful for his decision to become a member of the running community and will head to the starting line in Hopkinton this April fully prepared, motivated, and with a positive outlook. "My main reason for running Boston is to raise money," said Pellerin. He also thanked his friend Marc Fauxbel for convincing him to give retuning a try. "Had I not been pushed in this direction, I would never have met 90% of the people I have been able to meet and that are my friends now," said Pellerin. "Running has truly changed my life around".

The 113th Annual B.A.A. Boston marathon takes place on Monday, April 20th, 2009. Anyone interested in assisting Keith Pellerin in his fundraising goals can make a tax deductible contribution to the American Stroke Association by going to the web site <http://tedysteam2009.kintera.org/boston/pellerin?faf=1&e=1998468390>.

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