

A MARATHONER FOR ONE YEAR

By Matthew Weinstein

As a runner in elementary school, junior high and high school (competing in sprints, cross country and, my favorite event, the long jump), I was always intrigued by the marathon, but it was not until college that my piqued interest led to any type of action. As a freshman (in August no less) I decided I wanted to run the New York City Marathon. Unfortunately the race was closed for that year. Sophomore year I got mono and abandoned training. Junior year I never even bothered trying. I started training for two weeks as a senior but quickly lost interest.

For two years in New York City as a paralegal, I ran “sprint” distances. Five- and 10-kilometer races were as far as I dared go. I was young. I enjoyed the speed. I still had a chance to break personal bests.

The law school years were dark times. My first and second years were physical atrocities. I was in terrible shape and anything over four miles was not even a consideration. But in my third year, I amazingly had some free time even though our first child arrived. I took up long-distance running and actually ran the Broad Street Run in Philadelphia for the first time. It was 98 degrees that day, and though I was in good shape, the heat took its toll. I finished in 1 hour, 23 minutes. Even the elite runners had difficulty that day.

But that was it for eight years. I never went further than six miles for eight years. I still ran for pleasure (I made sure to run the Philadelphia Bar Association 5K every year). Some years I was in good shape, some years I was not. I finished those 5K runs in the 21-minute range several times and had some 24-minute days as well. Cycling became a larger part of my life during that time. I rode indoors in the winter on my stationary bike in the basement and on my low-end hybrid in the summer. I never missed an American Cancer Ride City to Shore ride for nearly seven years.

But in late 2008, things changed. As a real estate attorney, I saw the professional world around me crumbling. Bear Stearns and Lehman collapsed. LandAmerica, a title industry giant, vanished. The capital markets simply shut down. Work dried up fast and I found myself home for dinner regularly on weeknights.

So, I decided to start running again. I had some free time and I wanted to get in good shape for the 2009 Bar 5K in May. By March 2009, however, my former law firm had closed its doors and I needed a real distraction and a new goal. So

I decided to kick my training up a notch and start training for the November 2009 Philadelphia Marathon which was scheduled the day before my 36th birthday. I’d either give myself a birthday gift of a marathon or die trying.

And so I started training. The goal was to get in good enough shape by mid July that I could start training. The marathon, as I found out, was different than any other athletic endeavor I ever trained for in the past. I bicycle, ski, run, walk, hike, climb mountains, river raft and do all sorts of other events involving some degree of stamina but never had experienced what the marathon had to offer.

The first thing I found out was that I needed new clothes. Mesh shorts, cotton shirts and cotton socks were great for any distance less than six miles, but anything more with that type of clothing caused all sorts of skin issues (blisters, chafing, etc). The winter months also required more than cotton sweats which got very wet and then very cold. I had to invest in the right gear.

Then there was the time commitment. When you train for a 5K, there is not much to it for a relatively athletic individual. You run three to four miles a day four or five times a week and you are going to be fine. That doesn’t cut it for the marathon. Marathon training is a full-time job. You have to run at least 35 to 45 miles per week if you plan to finish the race. In addition, you have to run at least five days a week and one of those has to be a long run. Long, especially in the real marathon training months, means 15 to 20 miles on a Sunday morning.

This is a lifestyle change. If you are an average marathoner who runs 8- to 10-minute miles, that means that your average weekday run will last between 45 and 75 minutes. Add in changing, stretching and showering and that is almost two hours a day, four days a week. The Sunday long run lasts two to three hours, which means you cannot really go out on



Matthew Weinstein (in orange) runs through Manayunk.

Saturday night (and if you do, you certainly are not drinking). You need to make sure your weekdays have two-hour blocks of time to work out for a four-month period and you need to make sure you get enough sleep.

Oh, and you need to get your work done.

For me, the real estate market was in shambles, little work was occurring and I had some free time, so naturally, I decided to run a marathon. Most of the training was solitary weeknight runs – five- and seven-mile runs in the dark (and sometimes rain) by myself. What I looked forward to the most were the Sunday runs. I found a wonderful group that did the long runs together. The group consisted of doctors, lawyers, dentists, business people, grandparents, parents and most importantly, folks that were my speed.

But about 10 days before the marathon, I got a pain in my left hip. I figured it would go away. It did not. The Thursday before the marathon I was noticeably limping. I tried to run and could not. Most folks told me I should not run for fear of major injury. My brother-in-law said if I ran I wouldn't walk properly for three months (he was right). But I ran anyway. After several Advil and some deep penetrating Ben-Gay I was at the start line... still limping.

I figured I would try to run and if I couldn't take the pain, I would head back at the half marathon. The first five miles were sheer agony. I was way off my pace and the pain in my leg was searing. But then around mile six or so, Mayor Nutter gave me a high five and my leg started loosening up. By mile eight, I was back on pace and running fairly comfortably. By the half marathon I decided to go for it. By the time I hit the Manayunk grade, my high school heel injury had resurfaced (probably from the limping during the first five miles), one of my toenails felt like it was going to fall off and I hit my own personal wall at about mile 18. I knew my wife and girls were at mile 20 so I had that as a goal. I decided to walk through

the water stops and properly rehydrate and eat. That ended up being my saving grace.

By the time I hit mile 20, I had pressed through the wall and though I was running slowly, I knew I would finish. With tears in my eyes I came running around the Philadelphia Art Museum. At 4 hours, 37 seconds, I crossed the finish line.

I walked with a limp for the next three months. I could not put full pressure on my leg for six weeks after the race and did not start running until two months after the race. And when I did start, I suffered a minor foot injury. By March 2010, one year after I started training in earnest for marathon number one, I was training for marathon number 2, the Philadelphia Marathon.

I guess my heart was not in it the second time around. I wanted to do the marathon twice, but between the injury (in retrospect I never fully healed when I started back and that hurt my runs during the first few months) and some increased workload over the summer and particularly in September, I could not stay on my training schedule.

I did run the Philly half marathon in November 2010 with a personal best of 1 hour, 49 minutes. I had actually run faster in a training session for the marathon a year earlier but that time wasn't official. And so ended my quest as a marathoner for one year.

I look at my year of training as one of the most fulfilling of my life. I rediscovered my love of running and felt like I was aging in reverse.

For all those lawyers out there, the marathon is doable even with our schedules (and certainly the half marathon is achievable). What is most important is to run, have fun and enjoy. ■

Matthew Weinstein (MatthewWeinstein@cozen.com) is a member of Cozen O'Connor.

Strategic Legal Solutions.

Courtesy of Fox Rothschild's Pennsylvania Team.



250 Pennsylvania attorneys | 5 Pennsylvania offices
600+ attorneys | 20 offices nationwide



Fox Rothschild LLP
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Blue Bell | Exton | Philadelphia | Pittsburgh | Warrington

California Colorado Connecticut Delaware District of Columbia Florida Nevada New Jersey New York Pennsylvania Texas

Attorney Advertising