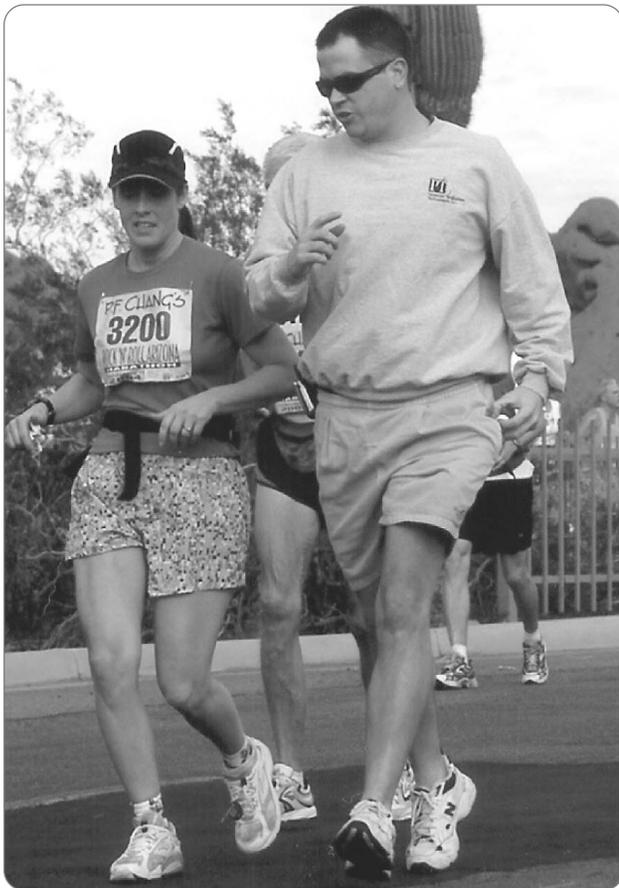


Mind & Body



Virtually anyone can run a marathon...Even you-



As we enjoy the spring season and the temperatures continue to rise, it's time to start thinking about taking your running outdoors. Moving from the treadmill to the streets and trails, it's appropriate to start setting your fitness goals for the rest of the year. If one of your life long dreams has been to run a marathon, now is the time to make the commitment and start planning for your fall marathon. If you have the desire, as long as you have no physiological problems, you just need to have the dedication and make the time for training, in order to succeed in achieving your goal of finishing a marathon.

Marathon Participation is Booming

Every year, more and more people participate in marathons, including many first timers. The Chicago Marathon had 40,000 registered runners registered last year. Is it because marathon running has gotten easier or the distance has gotten shorter? No, marathons are still incredibly challenging and have been 26 miles and 365 yards since the 1908 Olympics. Most likely, the rise in popularity has been due to the advances in training techniques and the focus on achievement in our society. Completing a 26.2 mile run is a tremendous accomplishment, yet one that is within the grasp of many people. It just takes the will, combined with proper training.

Building Your Base

You've made the commitment, you have the will, and you'll make the time. So, what's next? It's very important to start to build your base over the next month or two, before accelerating your training. If you have only been running on the treadmill, it's time to take it outdoors. While providing good aerobic exercise, treadmills make it slightly easier to run, by pulling you along. Also, start to build up your mileage, up to 5 to 8 miles at a time on the roads or trails. It is advisable to have a base of 20 miles per week before you begin to ratchet up your training regimen in preparation for the marathon. As you increase your weekly mileage, make sure that you have the proper running shoes. Go to a store that specializes in running and have them look at your feet and form. You'll pay a bit more than a general sporting goods store, but it's a sound investment. Wear clothes that 'wick away' sweat, especially important in the muggy Chicago summer. Cool Max, Dri-Fit and other man made materials are a must for your top, shorts, and socks. Pay close attention to any aches and pains. It's better to catch them early, before you start your more intensive training.

The Next Phase of Training

About four or five months before your targeted race, after you've built a proper base, the real training begins. The key to successful training is putting in the miles and avoiding injury. Increasing the number of days that you run, and adding miles to your long run, is required for the next phase. Consider running up to five days per week, with one day of rest and one day for cross training. Reserve one day for your long run. This should be done at a slow, comfortable pace, but the distance should be gradually increased. You may want to start at around eight miles and add no more than 10% each week. Ultimately, you'll want to get up to 20 miles for



one or two long runs, with the last one two or three weeks before the race. The best suggestion for beginners is to join a running club or marathon training group. There are several in the area, including CARA and Team in Training. A group helps to provide structure and motivation, as well as offers the advice of many seasoned marathon runners. It's not easy to do a 20 mile training run, but if you have companionship, it makes it less lonely. Many groups offer a specific training regimen, which can be very useful to beginning marathon runners as they struggle with what distance to run, how often, and when.

Set the Date

All of this sounds relatively easy, but the hard part is actually starting. Pick a marathon that you want to run and make your plans around it. The Chicago Marathon is scheduled for October 10. Will you be among the 40,000 runners lined up on Columbus Drive for the start? You can if you want to be, and make that commitment.

Bill Pierce is the Co-Founder of the North Shore Distance Running Club and Co-Site Coordinator for CARA's marathon training program in Libertyville.

