

Don't Give Up

This month's column will be a little different, a little more introspective, and a little more personal. Although it may look like it is about me, I am expecting that it also may also be about you. Although this month's column may look like it is about running, I am thinking it also may be about life.

Running and life do have a lot in common. I have always found personally that running is a great teacher of life's lessons, even if its teachings may not reveal what it is we want to hear. To fully prepare for running's lessons, you have to tune in and listen starting with the first step. Every run I do, my intention is to be inspired by some kind of revelation which will then make the rest of the day better than it would have been without the run.

And just as life has its many ups and downs, so does running, in both a literal and figurative sense. This fact is a given, and the real answers lie in how you handle them. There are always going to be peaks, and valleys, highs and lows, times of bright sunshine, and times of total darkness. Times that we wish could last forever, and times when all we want to do is curl up in a ball and wait for the darkness to pass.

I spent most of this month feeling like I would have nothing to write about. I developed Plantar Fasciitis back sometime in April, and May was my first month in almost 3 years that I didn't hit 100 miles for the month. As a numbers kind of a guy, it was a really hard pill to swallow. The truth is I could have probably made it, but the cost would have been too high, so I gave a deep sigh, took the last few days of the month off, and ended up with around 90 miles for the month.

I was going to take the first half of June off too, but the lure of Global Running Day sucked me in, so on June 2nd, I ran a little over 4 miles to celebrate the day, and that was about it for the month. My PF was too painful to run on, and at the same time, I started traveling for work again. So, except for a half-hearted race on June 12, I didn't run at all until another race on June 26th. I had flown home from a work assignment in Montana the night before, and got home late, then got up early for the race.

It could have been the travel through time zones and not getting enough sleep. It could have simply been my lack of recent running. I knew I was not nearly in race shape, so I started VERY conservatively, running my first mile in around 9:45, more of a fast training pace than an actual race pace. My form was good and I thought this would just be a fun run. I would be happy with 30 minutes



Around 2 miles in, something started to go very wrong. I suddenly found myself drifting almost uncontrollably to the right, having a hard time staying to the left of the cones lining Peachtree Industrial Blvd. I had never experienced anything like that before. The whole last mile, I struggled to keep within the race boundaries, and I had to walk almost as much as I ran. I ended up with an 11:30 last mile, and the photos of me crossing the finish line were very disturbing when I saw them. I had no idea how badly I was leaning.



A most sincere thank you goes out to my running angel friends (you know who you are) who were there at the finish line to make sure I didn't fall as I struggled to keep my balance. I have no explanation for what happened, but it was upsetting, to say the least. A couple minutes after the finish, I felt better, and anyone who didn't see me during the race would never know anything happened.

Of course, an experience like this meant an immediate trip to my doctor, where tests were done, and more are coming in the coming weeks. If nothing else, it was a clear message that nothing is guaranteed and that running is something we can never take for granted. It can be gone in an instant, and every run is a gift that we should embrace. It was also a reminder of how important it is to not just take care of ourselves in our day to day lives, but to also not disregard what are referred to as health maintenance plans, especially routine screenings that become more important to not overlook with age.

Some of us are very fortunate to still be able to run in our 60s, 70s and even 80s, but with every new age group, the numbers dwindle as more and more runners decide to choose something other than running as their preferred activity, or, for a variety of reasons, they have to stop all together. There have been a few times in my nearly 40 years of running that I thought that running would not be a part of my future, but each time, I have fought my way back. Some people would call me stubborn, but I prefer to refer to myself as tenacious.

These past 2 months have been rough for me, as I have had to once again entertain the idea that my running days may be numbered. But like every other time, I won't go down without a fight, and I will keep on fighting until all my options have been exhausted. And this is where this month's column becomes less about me and more about you. If you are struggling and going through a rough time with your running right now, do what you need to do to take care of yourself, but whatever you do, don't give up. If you have stopped running already, entertain the thought of giving it one more shot. You CAN come back. Just be smart and go about it methodically. Have a plan and then execute it. I am rooting for you.

Please feel free to e-mail me at durunner@yahoo.com with any comments.