

## RUNNING SHORTS

### Lessons learned in failing to finish

By Niki Bellnoski

“I do it because it’s not supposed to be easy; I like to be challenged. It is an adrenaline rush, a roller coaster of high and low emotional and physical states. One minute you’re high and mighty and the next minute you’re shot back down to reality with humility. Ultras are practice rounds or *scrimmages* for learning real life lessons. Most of all, it is a spiritual journey in God’s playground. I begin each race with the intention of finishing with new insight. Every start line provokes me to ask, ‘God, what will you teach me today?’ I eagerly wait to see what it will be this time!”

These are the words that I spoke after being asked why I would run 50 miles. I meant every word of what I said and expected this year’s race to present similar experiences. However, the roller coaster in this race was only headed in one direction; down. There were no highs, only lows. The lessons learned were definitely those of humility and the new insight would not be waiting for me at the finish line.

I started the race with what I later found out to be a ruptured cyst. Needless to say, my stomach was more than talking to me. After completing one loop (12.5 miles) I felt like I had been chewed up and spit out. My legs were cooked, my stomach was churning, and the broiling sun left me parched. Determined to get over the hump, I continued. The second loop only proved to leave me burnt to a crisp rather than lightly battered and fried. At mile 22 I turned off the timer, and said I was done!

DNFed (did not finish), dropped, abandoned, resigned or whatever sugar coated term you want use; the truth of the matter is that I failed, I quit.

These are two words that many will tell you don’t belong in any vocabulary of my own. I refuse to fail and despise quitters, yet here I stand with my first DNF. “Hypocrite” is my first reaction. My second is the gag reflex caused by the swallowing of my own pride. The third, and thankfully there is a third, is reconciliation. I know a God who lives inside of me whose spirit never ceases. Because of this, I will gather myself and my lesson of humility and will keep *running* forward. Isaiah 40:31 says, “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Though I would have rather learned a different lesson at a different time, I will accept this one. It is obviously one I needed. I hope that I will continue to learn from this race for days and months to come.

We all find ourselves in this situation at one point or another. No matter the sincerity of our effort, we do what we say we will not. We boastfully foam at the mouth with pride only to find ourselves choking it back down. We not only fall, but fall hard. However, we also have a savior, Jesus Christ, who is our only reconciliation. Because of Him, we have hope that calls us to stand back up and put one foot in front of the other. The only failure is to lose faith and hope; to fall and deny our weakness; to refuse to move forward with perseverance. If you have not begun the walk or have walked and fallen, I encourage you to join the race. Go Run!

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**Upcoming Events:**

New Years Resolution Run 5k/1m, 2pm, Veterans Memorial

**Race Results:**

Jingle Bell Run, 5 Miles, Houston, Dec. 9

Caitlin McCollock, 51:50  
Hannah Monroe 53:49

Williams Ranch 30K, Sugar Land, Dec. 9

Norman Langwell, Jr. 2:49:55.7

White Rock Marathon, Dec. 9

Mark Rudis, 3:29:33  
Jerry Flanagan 4:15:56  
Willard Oliver 4:36:51  
Katy Lampson 4:32:10

White Rock Half Marathon, Dec. 9

Abraham Korah 2:09:10  
Keelie Hughes 2:40:34

Sunmart, Huntsville, Dec. 8

50 Miles

J. C. Guzman 10:34:07  
Felix Montelongo 10:45:10

50K

Robert Duncan 5:47:38  
Chris Wilson 6:17:11  
John Slate 6:26:40  
Phillip Clark 6:29:21  
Gerald Peters 7:12:38  
John Loftus 7:37:18  
Ken Johnson 8:33:55

Jingle Bell Run, 3.2 miles, The Woodlands, Dec. 13

(Untimed)

James Spencer  
Colleen Spencer  
Mary Sweeten  
Ken Johnson

Willis Wildkat 5K, Willis, Dec. 15

John Slate 21:04 (1st age group)  
Ken Johnson 32:28 (1<sup>st</sup> age group)

