

RUNNING SHORTS

Running past the pain opens up new opportunities

By Niki Swearingen

I hope by now a few of you that have been following this column have taken to the trails or raided the roads for at least a quick little jaunt. I wish for all and am sure that for some, it was rejuvenating. However, I don't doubt, that for a few of you, it was a dreadful, defeating experience.

Perhaps you are one of those who have dug your tennis shoes from the rubble in the back of your closet, but have yet to put them to the test. I don't know the source of your hesitation and can only be sure of one thing, you are missing out!

For those of you who gave running a whirl and found yourselves in the midst of some discomfort or possibly down right pain, I urge you to keep going! You might have found your lungs laboring loudly, your heart hollering and your legs laughing at you as you plodded along. Don't give in to the pressures of discomfort. Take the advice from the book, *Running Within*- Embrace the pain. Invite it in for a short stay. Then confront it. Talk to it like a friend. Tell it that you hear it, feel it and you know that it's there. Promise it that you are not ignoring it, but at the moment you are busy and will get back with it as soon as you possibly can. When you've completed your run, keep your word. Take the time to talk to your pleading pains. Reassure them that you know what is best and that they will soon see for themselves as they reap the benefits of running.

I have been told by a friend, on numerous occasions, that I have a floating brain cell. Where she thinks it is, I don't know, but she insists that something just isn't quite right. Why in the world would someone continuously pay money to run distances that inevitably will inflict pain and break down the body both physically and mentally? My response: "Because it's fun!" You too, maybe scratching your head wondering how pain can be fun, but please hear me out on this one.

The human body is the masterpiece of our Creator. The systems and mechanisms by which our physical bodies operate are truly amazing. The body is capable of withstanding far more physical stress than you and I would ever like to endure.

In my running experience, I have dealt with twinges that are nothing short of a real nuisance. Maybe it's my foot that is wreaking havoc after jamming it into a root. The pain so intense I am nearly brought to my knees. Perhaps it's the pain in my hip that is quick to shoot down the side of my leg and into my toes. It throbs to the point that I am unsure of what exactly it is that aches. All I know is that I hurt! Or maybe, it's my toes that seem to have a mind of their own as they involuntarily curl under my feet mid-stride making it almost impossible to maintain balance. Whatever obstacle it maybe, it will often prompt my mind to give up and to say, "That's it, I quit!" Thankfully, after a brief chat with God, the heart counteracts and inspires me to keep pressing forward. The way I see it, when God thinks I've had enough, He will allow my body to shut down and collapse. Until that point, I continue to put one foot in front of the other, deciding that every negative thought and perceived pain is simply the mind and weakness of the flesh. Giving up is no decision of my own! I will persevere until my task is complete.

How is this fun? I find pleasure in pain knowing that growth will follow. When I am broken physically and mentally while running, I am forced to rely on God. Reaching

this point is a humbling experience as it allows for spiritual growth. Being spiritual is way more than being rational!

The running experience is even greater when you begin to notice the learned perseverance spill over into other aspects of your life. I am amazed at the parallels existing between running 30, 40 or 50 miles and the Christian walk. They are both journeys that are sure to have obstacles. How we handle these set backs is vital. If we seek God, we will come away with wisdom and profound spirituality. If we fail to challenge ourselves, give up or if we remain “comfortable”, we will never grow. I rejoice when I am struggling with one of life’s curveballs, just as I rejoice with the onset of a new ache or pain while running. I know that if I will go to God in either of the situations, that no struggle is too great. With fortitude and persistence I will be delivered to a realm where the rewards out weigh the pain or strife of any obstacle.

I refuse to believe that anyone does not find learning to be fun. Some of the best lessons are learned through our toughest struggles. Whether it is life itself or running, continue to press forward. Don’t let the nagging pains discourage you. Lace up your shoes, head out the door and run past the pain. Just beyond the border of discomfort is a wonderful world full of fun! Go run!

Race Results

Armadillo Dash Half Marathon, College Station, March 4

James Spencer	1:37:12
John Cook	2:07:43
Candis Smith	2:16:16

Southwestern U.SIRA 5K, Georgetown, March 7

James Spencer	19:58 (2 nd AG)
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Bayou City Classic, 10K, Houston, March 10

Ben Harvie	40:44 (1 st AG)
Mary Patterson	1:15:50

YMCA Triathlon, Athens, March 10

(300-meter swim, 14-mile bike, 5K run)

Marvin Dittfurth	1:30:33
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Webster Bicycle Duathlon, Houston, March 11

(2-mile run, 10-mile bike, 2-mile run)

Ben Harvie	1:00:54 (1 st AG)
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Lone Star Trail 25k, Coldspring, March 17

Curtis Barton	2:40:05
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Prickly Pear 50k, San Antonio, March 17

Niki Swearingen	4:58:00(2 nd AG)
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