

Distance running might be addicting

By Bill Shaw

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Happy Labor Day! Though summer does not officially end until the autumnal equinox Sept. 23, today marks the end of our summer frolic in the sun.

Congratulations to Mary Lee Stotler, Main Street director,

and to the Freeport police and employees who made the second annual Summertime Blues Triathlon a success. I know firsthand how hard everyone worked.

I was at a loss for a column subject until the last mile in a 4-mile run Thursday morning until I remembered Mary Openshaw's article on marathoners in last Wednesday's paper. (Mary is a former journalism student and student editor of the Brazosport College newspaper I advised. I am personally proud when a former student is successful.)

I started and finished 10 marathons, nine in Houston and one in New York City. My best marathon was the 1989 Houston Marathon; I finished in 4:15:30, a 9:45 mile pace. I never finished a marathon fast enough to qualify for the prestigious Boston Marathon.



Daryl Beatty, who Mary featured in her article, planted the seed of my being able to finish the 26.2-mile distance. He and a group of runners sat on a table in the shade of the old Dow Park after the 1986 Brazosport Relay Triathlon. I ran the 6.2-mile leg of the contest on that hot Labor Day weekend. Daryl said something like, "A marathon is not hard to finish if you train and increase your distance gradually up to 20 or so miles."

On Jan. 17, 1988, at age 48, I finished the Houston Marathon in 4:18:29. I had tears of joy and exhaustion in my eyes as I met my wife at the chain-link

fence at the finish line and, almost hyperventilating, I told her, "I'll never do that again." But I was hooked.

I began my training in the summer of 1987 with the program published by Jeff Galloway in the first edition of "Galloway's Book on Running" (Shelter Press, 1984.) Galloway's 71?2-month training program increases the longest weekend run 10 percent every two weeks up to a 26-mile training run three weeks before the marathon and wraps up with a couple of weeks of tapering with the longest weekend run of 13 miles before the event. I began the program in the fifth week because I had a sound running base and a long weekend run of more than 6 miles.

I followed Galloway's program rain or shine, hot or cold. In October, November and

December, I hit the road after church for a three- or four-hour run.

A training program requires discipline and a no-excuses attitude. I am a solitary and self-motivated runner. However, some runners need the support of a running partner or a group, like the one Kelly Colosimo mentioned in Mary's article. I know runners who cannot train alone and their marathon aspirations fall silently on the empty roads they don't run.

If you can exercise the discipline to train and go the distance only once, you will forever be a marathoner and be proud of that finish. You might vow never to go through the ordeal of training for and running a marathon, and end up running 10 or more as I did before I decided to tackle what I thought was another impossible task, my becoming a triathlete at 61.

Despite your limitations, believe in yourself, train hard and what you once thought impossible is attainable.

Footnote: Registration for the Brazosport Relay Triathlon on Saturday remains open through 8 p.m. Friday at the Lake Jackson Recreation Center. See www.brazosportrelaytriathlon.org for additional information or pick up a registration form at the recreation center.

Bill Shaw's running column appears in *The Facts* every other Monday.