

Featured Runner of the Month – January, 2007

Thomas Hale

Editor's note: This interview was conducted in November, 2006.

How long have you been a runner? Describe how you got started.

I have run off and on since high school, but I really got started on a regular program in 2001. I was 40, looked in the mirror and decided that I needed to do something about what I saw. I had gained a lot of weight when my wife was pregnant with each child. My top weight was 214 pounds. I have always been active, but I continued to eat like I was in my 20's when I hit 40! I started by running streets in my neighborhood several nights a week. A buddy joined me in the summer and we would run 3 times per week a mile or two at a time. We finally built up to three miles and decided that we should try a local race. I found out that the Hope House 5K was the next day. I signed us both up and we were at the starting line before we even had time to worry about it. I absolutely loved doing the race. I didn't care when I finished, it was just the feeling of sharing the experience with a group of people that all liked the same thing, running. Since then, I have run 55 races and lost 53 pounds. My first running partner decided that I was running too fast for him and he dropped out. I kept on running and picked up a few new partners here and there. I found it hard to find a consistent partner and I learned not to depend on anyone else. When I have a partner I do better, but I do not depend on them. It's hard to motivate yourself, but you can do it if you have the desire. I am lucky to have a great running partner now.

Why do you run? What's your motivation now?

I run now to stay in shape and for fun. My motivation is looking forward to the local races and meeting new people that have the same interests as I do. Another motivation is my running partner. We motivate and push each other. There is something motivating knowing that someone is going to meet you to run. If you don't feel up to it you go because you know they are counting on you. I will never let my running partner down.

What's your typical summer running schedule like? During the WCC Season (May through early December), how many miles/times per week do you run, during a typical week?

I like to run around 20 miles per week during the WCC season. In the

last eight days I have run 25. It varies depending on the kid's activities. My favorite training is a couple of times during the week with a long run on the weekend. Some weeks I am lucky to get a few miles in and then a longer run on the weekends. My plan is to do a short run during the week, interval training once per week and a longer run on the weekends.

Do you have a favorite WCC race? Explain.

My favorite WCC races are the Run for the Roses 5K and the Frostbite 5K. I think the races in the park are the best races that the WCC offers. The hills are challenging and the scenery is awesome. I absolutely do not like the Jubilee Days 5K. I think that run is as close to death that I have ever been. August in the middle of the afternoon, who thought that one up? I do it every year and dread it. I love to watch Cecil blast through it with a cloud of dust for the rest of us!

What's your favorite race you've ever done? Why is it your favorite?

My favorite race is by far the Indianapolis Mini Marathon. It is such an awesome experience to run with 35,000 people and another 100,000 cheering you on. It offers live music and cheerleaders along the course. (2005 - 2 hours flat, 2006 - 1:51) My second favorite race is pretty funny. I have run the Jingle Bell 5K on Hilton Head Island, SC, several times at Christmas. Everyone is given small bells to tie onto their shoes and it makes quite a noise with 800 runners! It is fun though. People really get into it. Some people dressed up as elves and there was a guy dressed as Santa the last time I ran it. Oh and yes, Santa beat me to the finish line. You shouldn't beat Santa should you?

What's your favorite place(s) to run?

I like the Cardinal Greenway the best in Richmond. I can run with my music turned up and not have to worry about traffic. The scenery is pretty good and there are areas that block the wind.

What kind of long term and short term running goals do you set for yourself? Are there any future races you want to do?

I plan to start running intervals once per week. I would like to improve my 5K time. My ultimate goal would be to break 20:00 on a 5K. My best 5K time so far has been 22:30. I would like to do a full marathon in the near future. My running partner and I have signed

up for the Columbus Mini and are talking about another 1/2 marathon in the fall. I do plan to run all of the WCC races again this year. I have not missed a race since the Challenge was started.

Do you ever listen to music when you run?

I always listen to music when I run. I like progressive rock and a faster beat. My favorite groups to run to are Chevelle, Linkin Park, FATA, and any thing with a solid beat. Yes, I'm a head banger at heart.

What's the single best thing and the single worst thing about running for you?

The single best thing has been meeting good people. I have made a lot of friendships through the races and I am glad that I started doing them. The worst thing was learning, the hard way, that I over-pronate. Several years ago I went from one injury to another. First it was shin splints, then plantar faciitis, Achilles tendonitis, knee issues, on and on. One day I picked up a Runner's World Magazine and read an article on over-pronation and the problems it could cause. I had already had most of them. Guess what? The wrong shoes. I had no idea that I was in the wrong shoe. I went, in pain, to a specialty store and was told I needed a motion control shoe. The specialist there watched me run and showed me how my foot rolled. He told me that my hunch was right. I am an over-pronator. After being fit into the right shoe I have not had any issues. Talk about learning the hard way. Ouch. If I hear a runner complain of foot, leg or back pain I suggest that they change their shoes or visit a specialist. I would guess that the bulk of running injuries can be blamed on running in the wrong shoes. The rest are over training issues.

What advice would you give to someone just starting out as a runner?

Buy the right shoes and set realistic goals. Do not compare yourself with anyone else. Compete against yourself! Go to a specialty store where they watch you run. The Runner's Forum in Indianapolis is awesome. They will fit you in the right type of a shoe to start with and you can avoid the issues that I have had.

Thanks, Tom, for sharing your story. The WCC appreciates your dedicated support. Keep running!

This interview was conducted by Michael King for the WCC.
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