

Featured Runner of the Month – December, 2007

Cecil Franke

Editor's note: This interview was conducted a few days after Cecil competed in the USA Olympic Marathon Trials in New York City, November 3, 2007, where he ran the marathon in 2:25:01.

It's been well documented as to your success in running i.e. your 1986 IHSAA 3200 meter state title and your school records that still stand at Ball State University. When did you first realize that you had some potential as a distance runner? Did the talent develop the passion, or did the passion develop the talent?

I initially went out for track to be a pole vaulter, but a mile time trial put distance running as the focus. As a freshman track athlete, I had very talented team mates and a very gifted coach. Don Yentes now coaches at the University of Wyoming and has coached well over a hundred All-Americans as well as athletes who have gone on to make money at the sport. Between my coach teaching me to think big and team mates who were willing to do much of the work with me, the goals just kept getting higher. I think the passion and desire to compete at the highest level led to more than I thought possible.

What motivates you to run?

When I was younger, it was all about competition and pushing the limit. I put an extreme amount of pressure on myself every time I put on a uniform. More recently, it has been a quest to find out what I am capable of at this age. I have a deeper appreciation for the sport and the opportunity to get very fit. Mostly, I'm trying to do what I can while I can still do it. I can't say that things have always worked out perfectly or that hard training has always led to a great race, but if you love it, it generally loves you back. I also take a lot of comfort knowing that I have done everything possible to prepare for a race. I line up confident that I have done everything possible.

During the typical summer WCC season, how many days (and miles per week) do you normally train?

In preparation for 5ks and 10ks, I usually hover around 90 miles per week. I usually have 4 days a week that are intervals, fartlek, and strong tempo runs. During 5/10k preparation, I usually do not run more than 15 miles on any workout. Leading up to the Boston Marathon, I had run 15 months without missing a day. I do not

willingly take time off or miss days. I am currently forcing myself to take two weeks off for some persisting pain.

Do you have a favorite WCC race? (explain)

I like all of the WCC races, mostly because of the people. In the past, I have really looked forward to the Rock-n-Roll 5K because of the transition from marathon recovery to shorter speed work. Late June and early July are usually the weeks for my better short races. In the last couple of years, the marathon training and racing have dictated how I was feeling at the Wayne County Challenge races. There were times that I was just plain running tired, like the last two years at the Frostbite.

You've had the chance to run on the world stage. What has been your favorite race overall thus far? What makes it a favorite? Do you have a favorite place to run/train?

I really have the best memories at the Flying Pig Marathon. The race was a great experience and the race directors really did a lot for me afterwards. The Olympic Trials was probably the most memorable because of the celebrities in the field, but I left the course knowing that it wasn't my best race.

My favorite workouts are the long Sunday runs in preparation for a marathon. I like to go out and run hard for 2 hours and keep an eye on the miles splits. The only down side is the hour or so after the run, which is extremely uncomfortable.

What are your short & long term goals as a runner?

If things go well, I hope to make waves in the masters division on a national scale. I definitely want to go back to Boston and take another shot at that course. Right now, I am hoping that the body heals and bounces back. I know I have work to do and can't wait to get to it.

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

The best thing about running is that I enjoy doing it. Even when the weather is nasty, I like working out. The health benefits are great and it doesn't cost much. The people you meet at races and other functions are unique. Everybody competes against each other, but still hopes everyone else had a good race. It was no different at the Trials.

The worst thing is the realization that it will get tougher to run fast every year. I know that some day I'll get frustrated with myself when times and workouts start to fade.

What advice would you give to a beginning runner? You also have a unique ability to remain relatively injury free. Any advice that you can pass along regarding that as well?

This is where running is just as much art as it is science. The body tries to tell you how the training is going. The art is knowing how to listen to it. The difference between "hurt and hurting" is the difference between a new PR and two missed weeks of training. It is very important to remember that there is no magic formula for running fast. Everyone is different and will respond best to something short or longer. Find what works best for you and do it to the edge of injury.

For young runners, I always say not to run more than 6 days a week and keep the mileage under 75-80 per week. College is a much better time to hit the higher mileage and the body is more mature. The most important thing is to keep it fun. Running is the worst thing in the world if you see it as something you "have to do." If you see it as a privilege, it's an entirely different sport.

Congratulations on a fine performance at the Olympic Trials. All of us in the WCC family are honored to have you to lead and inspire us. Continue to Stay Healthy and run well for many years to come.

Thanks to all of you. Your support has made all of this possible. I feel fortunate to live in this running community.

*This interview was conducted by Dale Bolser for the WCC.
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