

Featured Runner – July, 2010

Shulamite Wan

Our next featured runner is Shulamite Wan. Shu is a relative newcomer to the WCC and implements cross-training into her lifestyle to enhance her running. When she's not running, Shu can often be found in the pool swimming laps in an effort to obtain a high fitness level for her entire body. Shu graciously took time out of her busy schedule to share her thoughts as a runner.

How/when did you become a runner? Did anyone inspire you to do so?

I started running in July of 2008 in an effort to work off the weight I gained from the unhealthy eating habits I picked up in college, but it was sporadic. I was circumstantially inspired to run, however, when I was in the pool and Earlham decided to close their pool for an hour for cleaning. I was ticked, and thought, "Well, how can I get a workout? I guess I'll run. SIGH." So I got out of the pool and started to run. Sarah Bergmann, who ran with the Running Wayne County group, was on the Masters swim team with me, and kept talking about running, then kept bugging me to run with her. You have to understand that previous to September 2008, I would only run if chased or after a soccer ball or frisbee. Running just to run made no logical sense to me. I continued to run after that because of the convenience factor and because it became quite fun to run with other people.

How many miles do you normally try to run each week? What motivates you to run?

I am running 20-25 miles a week. I love to run because it usually helps clear my head. I also get a feeling of accomplishment after running. Races motivate me to run. I am competitive and I sincerely enjoy following a planned schedule that tells me how much I am going to run and for how fast per mile. I take comfort in that constant! I also enjoy eating and I run to keep my fitness level up and the weight down.

Do you have a favorite race & why? What's your favorite WCC race?

As far as favorite races go, I would have to say my first half marathon in Xenia, OH is it. The weather was perfect, the volunteers were exemplary, the post-race food was amazing (four different kinds of

soup! plus cookies!), and the medal and technical tee are well worth it. My favorite WCC race would be the Girls Inc 5K. I volunteer with Girls Inc and supporting the girls there in the 5K and kids fun run is what makes that race great.

Do you have an especially memorable moment as a runner (whether in a race or not)?

There are many memories of running and probably too many to name. From running in 14 degree weather with Bergie and laughing because the wind chill froze our hair (eyebrow and head hair) and sweat so we looked like old men under our caps... to running in the POURING RAIN and getting a shout out from G101.3: "I just saw a lady who is running in the rain... into the rain, I should say... she's not running from it!" to "patting the post" ... getting passed by a lady who is pushing a jogging stroller... to convincing my boyfriend that I really ought not to run 11.4 miles by myself at 7:30 on a Saturday morning... to praising Vaseline... to my astonishment on winning a medal for my age group... to finding out strange meanings behind terms like a road that "dog legs"... to having the best sense of accomplishment after RUNNING up Buffalo Hill (ouch!)... to training the girls at Girls Inc to run a mile for their fun run... to getting interviewed for the WCC's Featured Runner! It's a great way to exercise, meet people and make friends, and enjoy the outdoors.

What do you consider the best or worst things about running?

The best thing about running is the camaraderie of people who run. Almost everywhere you go, you are likely to find a runner. Runners are friendly and supportive people who push themselves and others to do their best.

Convenience is also one of the best things about running. No matter where you are, as long as you have the will, you can walk or run. The weight-bearing, bone-strengthening, cardiovascular benefits are unrivaled.

Swimmers may have lung capacities to be envied, but they, especially women, must find weight-bearing activities (such as running or lifting weights) in order to strengthen their bones.

The worst thing about running is sweating. I still do not like to feel sweat while exercising. All that time in the pool has spoiled me. Also, because running is contagious, it is tough to scale back and not run too much, before getting injured. The chance of injury is the worst part of running. Push yourself to your potential, but listen to your body too.

You often cross train by swimming. How do you feel that effort enhances your running?

I have swum since the eighth grade. Swimming is a great way to cross-train and take care of your body on the days that you are not running or don't feel like running. Swimming increases your lung capacity, boosts muscular endurance, and "is a good, low-impact way to hasten the removal of waste products that cause soreness, while correcting muscular imbalances caused by running. However, if your goal is recovery, you shouldn't cross-train for too long or go too hard. Limit your sessions to 30 to 60 minutes (a bit longer if cycling a flat route). Your heart rate should be elevated, but your breathing shouldn't be labored. Swim whenever you're feeling slightly fatigued or sore, especially the day after a long run or speed workout." (Runnersworld.com). "A strong upper body keeps your form from deteriorating and helps you power up hills, while a strong core and lower body absorbs shock better, which can protect you from injury."

What are your goals as a runner?

My goals as a runner are to run as long as I can. I want to be a lifelong runner, not a once-in-a-lifetime runner. I am training for the Bourbon Chase overnight relay with 11 other women on my team, and my first marathon, the New York Marathon. Those are my goals for now. I have done some sprint triathlons, but I would love to do an Olympic-distance triathlon soon.

If you could give advice to a beginning runner, what might that advice be?

My advice for beginning runners - again - push yourself to your potential, but listen to your body's signals. Hydrate and fuel properly, and get enough sleep. Cross-train for a couple days a week when you are not running. Never increase your mileage by more than 10% from the prior week. Running is surprisingly more mental than physical when you get down to it. Have a mantra, such as, "I am fit. I am strong. I am an athlete. I believe in myself and the people around me. I can do it!" when you run. It keeps you going longer and stronger.

Thanks so much, Shu, for sharing your thoughts as a runner. We look forward to your continued good health & continued participation in WCC events.

This interview was conducted by Dale Bolser for the WCC.