

Featured Runner – January, 2011

Kristina Tabor

Our next featured runner is Kristina Tabor from the New Castle area. Kristina is the 2010 WCC Female Champion, setting a new single season points standard. She and husband Jon have run several WCC events over the years, but each made a season long commitment in 2010. Jon had a great year as well, finishing 3rd Overall Male in a very competitive men's division. Both Kristina & Jon also spend time coaching young runners in their area. Kristina took a few minutes out of her busy day to share her thoughts on running.

How did you get involved in running? When did you realize that you had potential as a distance runner?

My first race was actually a kids fun run mile when I was four. I didn't do much after that other than lots of playing until 4th grade. My school offered cross country and track starting at 4th grade. It was the only sport you didn't have to try out for, so I didn't get cut! My aunt and uncle were both runners so I thought it sounded fun. I ran all through elementary, junior high and high school before running at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, for four years.

I really enjoyed running in high school and was mediocre to decent. I actually wasn't even that competitive, time-wise, in college until my senior year. I knew all along that I would be a lifelong runner, and hopefully coach cross country or track at some point. My senior year everything really clicked and I would have loved to have had four more years to compete.

Amazingly to me, I have gotten faster after having each of my two kids (now ages 5 and 2 1/2). The more years I run, the stronger I've gotten mentally and physically.

What motivates you to run? You're also a busy parent of young children....how do you fit running into a busy schedule?

I honestly love to run and I love to be outside. Since becoming a mom, and having limited time to myself, running has become a much needed "me" time. Even during the years of pushing a running stroller, it was still 'my' time to get out and enjoy being outside and simply being me. It was a lot easier when I had just one kid, because I could pop him in the jogging stroller and off we'd go. I've also been a morning person which means there are seasons of life when I do a lot of runs in the dark of the early morning hours.

When I am in season coaching, I run with my girls (New Castle High school track and cross country) and that helps to get some training in, even if it isn't specific to a race I'm working towards. I usually have to squeeze in long runs early Sunday morning before church when I'm training for a half-marathon.

My husband, Jon, is also a runner and a coach, so he understands my need to run and he's been very supportive of my running especially in this last season as I've been starting to discover my abilities. It means so much to me because when we were in college and first married, Jon was the runner who won races in our family. I ran hard, but wasn't that good. Lately, he's had trouble with injuries in the last few years (calf muscle tear, Achilles tendonitis) and has been willing to support me.

Do you have a favorite (or memorable) race in your years of running? What is your favorite (or most memorable) WCC event?

That is a tough one! I grew up in southern Indiana and ran lots of races in the hills of New Albany, Indiana and Louisville, Kentucky. A few favorites would be the old Midnight Chase 4 miler (run at midnight), the Derby Festival Half Marathon and the Fast Freddie's Festive Five Mile Foot Feast on Thanksgiving. Most recently I'd add the Indianapolis Monumental Half Marathon—it was crazy cold, and I set a new half marathon PR so it is a great memory. And the Kris Kringle 4 miler in New Castle, even though it isn't a very big race, I enjoy the cold and running the hills of Memorial Park.

I don't know if I have one favorite WCC event. My first exposure was running the Turkey Chase 7K while in college because I was a friend and teammate of Kelli Bowers (daughter of Turkey Chase director Pat Bowers). I've probably run it more than any other race, since I started running that before the WCC existed. I also really enjoy running at Glen Miller Park in any season, but especially in the snow. I miss when it was run in the dark with the luminaries up. This year, running in the falling snow really made the Frost Bite 5K fun.

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

Short term I want to stay healthy and injury free. I've battled plantar fasciitis the last 3 years or so and have to be really careful. I'm trying to decide if I'm going to run a spring half-marathon. I've found that I really enjoy training for and competing in longer distances. For the most part, my training is always centered around doing workouts with my high school athletes and squeezing in long runs and a few key workouts.

Long term, I want to continue to stay healthy and hopefully run some more marathons. I've only run one, and it was an incredible experience, especially the training. I also want to continue enjoying both running and racing for as long as I can. I'm running faster now than I did in college or in the years before I had kids. I never want to take it for granted because I know that I'm not guaranteed another fast season of racing. I never want to stop enjoying running and experiencing the joy of seeing what my body can do when I get out and run.

I also want to help instill a love of running in the girls that I help coach and hopefully, in my own children.

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

I love running fast or slow. Just getting out there and experiencing God's creation . . . I like to run out of town whenever possible. I love to get out when I've had a rough day and start slow and just feel so strong by the end. The worst thing about running—dangerous, unchained dogs that scarily interrupt a run, or worse--ruin a running route because I can't safely run past!

During a typical summer running season, how many miles do you try to log each week? What are your thoughts on speedwork, tempo runs, etc.?

I usually run between 35-45 miles a week almost year round. I have lower weeks obviously and higher when training for a long race. Even though I enjoyed running cross country more than track when I was competing in high school and college, I was a middle distance runner—800m/1500m/relays—and so I really enjoy speedwork. I have to be careful to not give too much in a workout however and save it for a race. I enjoy doing what we call, “Kenyan runs” where you start at a comfortable pace and every mile drop the pace down for 5 or 6 miles before cooling down. This past fall, I did a few 5 mile tempo runs as I prepared for my half-marathon and I know that running in that steady “uncomfortable” state helped me in my 5K racing as well.

From August to the end of October and then from February to almost June, my main training is whatever we're doing at practice and maybe a few more miles at the end or on the weekends. If time would allow, I'd really like to see what I could accomplish if I followed a training schedule for *me*.

The older I get, the more I believe in cross training—my favorite is deep water running, with a belt (flotation belt). I try to water run 2-4 times a week. It really gives me a great workout without the pounding and I just enjoy the water as well. It has helped me to train hard and race hard and be able to recover more quickly.

The WCC has increased its efforts for off-road events in recent years. What are your thoughts regarding pavement training vs. running off-road?

The Run with Wolves race came during a tough time in my training, so although I was exhausted that day, I still really like the course at IU-East. It is great to see what Pam Mertz has done and continues to do with the XC program and the course. I love running cross country and enjoy the softer surfaces. I was disappointed that I couldn't make it to the WCC run at the Cope Environmental Center (the only race I had to miss) because of the late starting time. Our cross country teams were competing in the Regional and I knew it was more important to travel with the girls' team and be with them during warm up as they prepared to race and qualify for their first Semi-state in 5 years. If the Cope race had been earlier, I might have tried to do both. I hope to do it in the future.

I do train more on roads than grass, except during cross country season, but try to find a good mix to keep my body from having so much pounding. As I get older my joints like that, too! Every year I plan to run more on the trails at Westwood Park, but it takes more effort to get there—not too easy with a running stroller either!

What advice would you offer to a beginning runner?

If at all possible, find a group or another person with whom you can run. It makes it more fun and helps to keep you accountable. Accountability really is the key to starting a good habit (or stopping a bad one!). Also, signing up for a race several months in advance and using a race training plan (you can get them from Running Times or Runners World online or the magazines) will help you know where to start. When my mom started running after I went to college, I would tell her to use mail boxes (or telephone/electric poles) to break up her run. Run from one to the next. Then walk the next. Keep working to where you can run for 3 and walk 1 and keep increasing the run and reducing the walk and before you know it, you will be running a full mile at a time. I always tell people to not be afraid to do the little that you can do.

Thanks, Kristina, for your input. Congratulations on a great WCC season. We look forward to your continued support of the WCC for many years to come. Stay Healthy!!!

This interview was conducted by Dale Bolser for the WCC.

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