

2013 July Featured Runner - Ken Wedig

Name: Ken Wedig

Age: 48

Occupation: ER doctor

When and why did you start running?

I started running, in the runner's sense of the word, when I was in my mid 30's. I had a Border Collie, named Pax, and I thought running would be a good activity for both of us. I wanted to be aerobically fit and she was the best companion imaginable. Even today I can hardly speak of her without my voice cracking and eyes tearing up. My first marathon was Columbus in 2002. Steve Walkotte was training for it and he asked me to join him on some of the longer training runs. Finally, after a 20 mile training run I realized that I should sign up too. I mean why do all that running and then not run a real marathon? Steve and I ran a marathon in even numbered years between 2002 and 2008. Then in 2009 I started running a marathon, or more, every year.

I've been running in WCC races since 2003.

Why do you run now?

I run for a lot of reasons, like most runners do, I think. Still high on that list of reasons would be for fitness. I remember way back in medical school being told that 80% of illness is lifestyle related. That's a pretty sobering statistic, particularly in light of today's soaring health care costs. I strive to make good lifestyle choices and running is one of them.

Of course I run for fun too. At 48 years of age, I realize that my best (fastest) times are behind me, but my enjoyment in running is not diminished in the least. In fact, I think I'm enjoying running more as I get older. There's less pressure to perform!

After all these years, running is now a part of who I am.

What is your biggest running/fitness accomplishment so far?

I am going to give two answers to this question; one as an individual, and the other as a team.

Individually, the running accomplishment that I enjoyed the most is probably the Chicago marathon last year (2012). I ran my first sub 3 hr. marathon (2:59:11) in Chicago in 2004, and I may have ran my last sub 3 hr. marathon (2:58:45) in Chicago last year. It was a beautiful day with perfect weather and I felt good the entire race. Even the last 4 miles felt good! I ran a negative split and I ran mile 26 in 6:37 (my fastest mile was mile 14, 6:35). You might say that I didn't run hard enough if I felt good even at the end, but I was only running to get one more sub 3, and I did.

The bonus was that I got to run it with Kory George for about 18 miles, then loosely with Steve Hayes and Terry Yandl for a few more miles. Todd Barker was there too, and to hear him tell it he'd say I jumped over his cramped body lying at the side of the road at mile 19, but the truth is I never saw him.

Chicago 2012 was also special for two other reasons. Todd, who I call "the usual suspect," signed up ten "unsuspecting" fellow runners to run as a team. Well, team CFW finished 2nd in the Blue team division. That's amazing when you consider that there were teams from all over the world; the Chicago marathon is one of the World Marathon Majors after all. (This isn't the biggest team accomplishment though, that's still to come.) The final aspect of Chicago that was so memorable was that we had about 28 local runners in the race. A bunch of us went for a short, morning run the day before the marathon and we had a big group dinner that evening. How cool is that?

The "biggest running accomplishment as a team" goes to the inaugural Bourbon Chase in 2009, when our "Running on Empty" team won the ultra division. The Bourbon Chase is a 200 mile overnight relay race in Kentucky. Most teams consist of 12 runners who take turns running legs. An ultra team consists of 6 or fewer runners. Now there were only 5 or 6 ultra teams in the field of roughly 150 teams, so you could say there wasn't a lot of competition. However, of those 145 twelve-person teams, only 5 of them beat our six-person team! The other Richmond ultra team, CFW, got 2nd in the ultra division and placed 8th overall in the field of 150 teams! A pretty amazing accomplishment from our little running community, wouldn't you say?

What is your next running/fitness goal?

My next goal is to run the St. George Marathon in Utah on October 5th. If I get through that without injury I will then run the Monumental Marathon in Indianapolis on November 2nd.

Describe your typical running week.

I have two types of running weeks; training and maintenance. For the past several years I've been running at least two marathons a year, although last year I ran three marathons and an ultra (50k), and the year before that I ran two marathons and an ultra. With a typical training cycle for a marathon being 16 wks, you can see that at least 32 of the 52 wks in a year are training weeks.

When I'm in maintenance mode I run a lot less. Usually 3-5 miles 3 or 4 days during the week and I still try to make the RWC group runs on Saturday, which adds 10-11 more miles. I would estimate that 20-25 miles/wk would be typical.

When I'm training I usually try to make as many of the "Early Risers" runs that I can and incorporate Saturday RWC group runs into the long runs (16-22 miles). I try to run 5-6 times

a week. Training weeks start out in the mid 30 miles/wk and quickly get to 45-60 miles/wk. My work schedule precludes strict adherence to this schedule, so it's rarely perfect.

After a marathon, I usually need a break from running that can last a month or more.

What other activities do you use to supplement your running?

I enjoy cycling and try to join the 5:30 pm group rides from CFW on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the warmer months of the year. My work really limits the number of times I can make these rides however.

I really enjoy walking in the woods. I do a fair amount of manual work on my property that gives me an honest workout.

What is your favorite running-related snack/product/gadget?

Without a doubt, that's my Garmin 405. Having a GPS watch with heart rate monitor really helps your training. When I run, I usually have it set to display my average pace for the run, total running time, and distance. It also tells me what time each mile was ran in. It uploads the data to Garmin's website and you effortlessly have access to a detailed running log.

What are your pre-race rituals?

I don't have any pre-race rituals for shorter races. For half marathons and marathons, I get up at least 2 hrs before the start and eat an everything bagel with cream cheese and drink some G2. I continue to drink G2 or some water, but not too much, and 15 minutes before the race I'll have a gel of some type.

Getting 2 or 3 good nights of sleep prior to the night before the race is also important. The night before the race is often a restless, poor sleep due to anxiousness.

How do you get through a tough run?

I try to remind myself that regardless of how much I may suffer on a tough run, there are countless people in America and elsewhere who are suffering pain, whether emotional or physical, way more than me. That gives me perspective, and then I think I'm not hurting so bad after all. I can get through this.

What is your favorite thing about running?

The people I run with. It never ceases to amaze me how wonderful the people I run with are. The camaraderie that exists within our running community is really special. There are obviously a lot of hours spent together running, and the shared experiences bond us together. Since 2009 I've travelled with other local runners to Kentucky, California, New York, Michigan, Boston, and Chicago. That's just the list of "big races," there have been numerous other group trips to half marathons equally full of fun memories.

The most important step in becoming a better runner is to run with a group. Not wanting to be the one getting dropped all the time is motivational, to say the least. The support you get is invaluable. The banter is priceless.

How do you motivate yourself on days you don't want to run?

I saw a runner at the HUFF 50K in 2010 wearing a shirt that said, "You can suffer the pain of discipline today, or the pain of regret tomorrow." When I recall that it usually gets me going.

Who is your running hero and why?

I'm not one to have a hero, but there are many people whom I admire. Two that deserve special mention are Terry Yandl and Todd Barker. Terry is a phenomenal runner who is also exceptionally selfless. He'll happily run your pace and he knows just what to say to get you through the tough spots. Todd is the chief instigator or coach, depending on your point of view. His dedication to the running community is peerless. If I had half the dedication they have I'd be twice the runner I am. I could say a lot more about both of them, but it would be used against me, so I'll leave it at that!

What is your biggest running-related pet peeve?

I don't think I have any, but I'm sure my friends could come up with a list.

Are you a morning or evening runner?

I am definitely a morning person. The "Early Risers" group is aptly named. They meet at 5:15 am routinely, and during training cycles some of us start even earlier at 4:45 am. Even for a life-long, morning person that is a little hard to get accustomed to, but after a couple of weeks you start waking up at 4:25 am without an alarm. And being done with a 20 mile long run before 9:30 am on a Saturday is ineffably satisfying.

Are you a solo or group runner?

If you've read this far, you know the answer to this, I'm a group runner. Running in a group will make you a better runner and dramatically increase the enjoyment you derive from running. Long runs, in particular, are so much easier to get through if you have company. I can't fathom what it would be like to train for a marathon without training partners.

What is your favorite type of run?

That's a tough one, but if I had to pick it would be a trail run. It combines my love of nature and running. Additional benefits are the softer running surface and the slower pace, which I'm always asking for. I've done three trail ultras (50K) and I would say that the muscle soreness and pain after one of those is only about a third of the muscle soreness and pain I experience after a road marathon. On a trail your stride varies constantly as it adjusts to the terrain, therefore using different muscles, whereas in a road marathon every stride is identical and the same muscles are used relentlessly.

Fill in the blank:

I love running because: *endurance sports rock.*

When I run I think about: *how I have such a hard time keeping up with these guys in training but somehow finish ahead of them on race day (except Terry of course).*

The hardest part of running is: *getting out of bed at 4:30 am on a frigid, windy, winter morning.*

The best running advice I ever received was: *run with a group!*