

May 2014 - Featured Runner

Editor's note: *Nicole was the female winner of the 2013 WCC series.*

Name: Nicole Andreas

Age: 31

Occupation: Parish Administrator (First English Lutheran Church)

When and why did you start running?

In May 2010, my husband (Sean) and I were training for the Columbus Marathon. We had recently moved back to the Midwest, were both unemployed and living with my parents in Greenville, Ohio. A friend asked Sean if he wanted to do the marathon and train together. Sean was in and I said I would do the shorter runs, but ended up doing all the training together and we both finished the 2010 Columbus Marathon.

Why do you run now?

I run now because I found something I'm good at. I've always been competitive, but not really athletically coordinated – which is insanely frustrating. I can handle the individual skills of sports requiring balls, bats, rackets, etc., but put me in a game situation and its pointless – literally. And even running at the beginning was pretty rough and frustrating, but thanks to my stubborn... I mean, strong-willed personality I stuck with it.

What is your biggest running/fitness accomplishment so far?

Towards the end of the summer of 2013 I started running with the Early Risers on Tuesday & Thursday mornings, which really pushed me since it introduced me to speedwork and helped me to improve as a runner. During the WCC 2013 season I ran 7 of the 8 races and bettered my personal record on each course (most by more than a minute). That included setting the course record at the Cope Environmental Center's Fall Foliage 5K, which has always been my favorite WCC race.

Also thanks to running with the Early Risers I bettered my half marathon time by 6min,52sec in August at the CFW Mini here in Richmond and then took another 52 seconds off in November at the Monumental in Indianapolis. So it doesn't come with any kind of guarantee, but if you're looking to improve yourself as a runner (regardless of pace) – clearing your schedule for Tuesdays & Thursdays at 5:15am might be worth a shot :o)

What is your next running/fitness goal?

In no particular order (or time frame as to when I actually would like to accomplish these): qualify and run the Boston Marathon, complete a sprint triathlon.

Describe your typical running week.

Like I mentioned previously I run with the Early Risers Tuesday (6 mile) and Thursday

(speedwork) mornings. Saturday mornings Sean and I usually do 6-10 miles with the Running Wayne County group. (During the summer we also like to do the Earham Fun Run, a 4 mile tempo run on Wednesday evenings.) Those are the only runs set in stone since they're with a group. Generally I try to get out 4-6 days a week – but specifics like milage, location, time of day, solo or group run will vary from week to week, especially if I'm training for a half or full marathon. I do all my running outside, without music.

What other activities do you use to supplement your running?

I have yoga workout videos and core/strengthening exercises I sometimes do (usually on non-running days).

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

ProFlex20 (chocolate or vanilla recovery drink)

Garmin Forerunner 10

And this time of year, my micro-fleece lined running tights.

What are your pre-race rituals?

I'm not as regimented with pre-race routine as I used to be because there were times I got to the start line, realized I had forgotten/messed up one thing, then would start freaking out in my head and have a bad race. Now I have coffee and banana or cereal (depends on distance) a few hours before the race and then half an energy bar shortly before the race. But even still, on training runs I might purposely change things up so I know I can do the distance even if the pre-race routine isn't the same.

How do you get through a tough run?

Try to focus on form & breathing and keep pushing because slowing down is only going to make it last that much longer.

What is your favorite thing about running?

My favorite thing about running is that even though you can get real technical with it, running is really just about getting out there and putting your body in motion.

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

Remind myself that if I want to improve, or even just maintain, myself as runner I have to get out there and run consistently. If that doesn't work and there's enough daylight, I drive out to Cope and run the trails which breaks up the monotony of road running.

Who is your running hero and why?

Tiffany Mull because frankly she is one tough athlete and a nice person. But more specifically, she balanced life as a wife, mother of four, and an accountant with training for IronMan Wisconsin. That's just impressive.

What is your biggest running-related pet peeve?

All the stinky laundry, which is compounded by all my husband's stinky running clothes.

Are you a morning or evening runner?

I can do either depending on what the schedule of the day holds. In general, morning runs are easier to fit in the routine.

Are you a solo or group runner?

A little of both – I don't talk much when I run so I'm good with solo runs; I'm not very good with directions so group runs are helpful. I think both are important – you need group runs to push yourself, but you also need solo runs to know you have the mental-strength and confidence. That's another thing I like about running – its an individual sport that can also have a group mentality/dynamic. Which we're very fortunate in the Richmond area to have such a large and strong running community.

What is your favorite type of run?

Trail runs, especially muddy trails. I love to go out to Cope during a light rain or the day after a heavy rain, it just makes me happy.

Fill in the blank:

I love running because it's a hobby my husband and I share.

When I run I think about anything & everything – can't focus for more than a minute while I'm running.

The hardest part of running is controlling my breathing.

The best running advice I ever received was “shoulders back, head up, keep pumping” - a loose quote from a random spectator as he sipped his coffee and coached me around mile 20-22 of the 2010 Columbus Marathon.