

SUMMERTIME ROLLS · FOR LAPPALOOZA'S 20TH BIRTHDAY,
PERRY FARRELL'S ➤ ROCK 'N' ROLL FESTIVAL IS LANDING IN CHICAGO p. 42



➤ JULY 15, 2011

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RUNNING DOWN A DREAM

Marathons are no longer races reserved for elite athletes

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Running Around

FIRST THINGS FIRST: THIS WASN'T A SCIENTIFIC study. This wasn't commissioned by a team of Ivy League sociologists; this wasn't the culmination of an academic's life work. What you're about to read is my theory that was conceived on one of those red-eye overseas flights and put to the test months later.

Now, I can't publish my findings in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and if I dared to pitch this story to the editors at *Runner's World*, I'd be laughed right out of the building. I'd probably have to turn my Asics in at the door.

Here's my argument and my conclusion: The older we get, and the more we're faced with the grim reality that the human body doesn't age like fine wine, the more our primordial instincts take over and we have to prove to ourselves, to our loved ones and to our maker that we still have some of that good stuff left in us. We have to convince ourselves that even though new aches and pains creep up with each birthday — and despite the fact that our developing arthritis has become a more reliable early-warning thunderstorm detector than the CBS weather forecaster — we humans are a superior species. And what's the best way for a middle-aged person to announce to the world that he or she is still big and strong? What's the international sign for discounting your growing reliance on knee braces and orthotics? Pounding your heels, ankles, shins, knees and the body's other mechanical necessities on the pavement for 26.2 miles, of course.

Yes, the marathon — the most grueling of athletic pursuits and the perennial box to be checked on bucket lists the world over. Ever since I hit my 30s, I've watched friends, family members, colleagues and complete strangers steel themselves for a self-inflicted body beating. And I just couldn't understand why the same people who now make more frequent trips to the bathroom in the middle of the night would want to endure so much physical and mental anguish. So I decided to run a marathon.

I'd done it before. Long, long ago, when I was a high school athlete, I completed a marathon. Back then, the shin splints and searing foot pain were enough for me to swear off running — let alone running marathons — forever. But the older I get, the more I see people training for marathons. And the more I see people seeing people training for marathons, the more I think I need to train for one myself. The thing is, I don't have time to literally build up my stamina and strengthen my muscles. I've got lawns to mow, children to chase, dishes

to do, TV to watch. No, if I was going to run 26.2 miles, I was going to do it all in one shot, my own emphatic announcement to the world that I still have some fire in the ol' belly.

After several hours of rummaging through my closet, I found my old pair of running shoes; some brilliantly white tube socks; a shirt whose sleeves had long ago been ripped off; and the smallest, tightest pair of shorts I could find. I yelled to my wife in the other room that I was going out for a run and would be back in a few hours. "A run?" she asked. "Good. You could use some cardio exercise."

Before the door was completely shut behind me, I was halfway down the street. Ah, the looks on my neighbors' faces. They were looks of envy — looks that clearly said, "Boy, can that guy run!" My arms pumped at a furious pace, my breathing was nice and measured, and my knees kicked so high that I almost broke my jaw. I really opened it up when I hit the open road and decided to turn on my afterburners. Cars honked. Children waved. Butterflies circled around my head. And in just five hours, I was done. Literally. I ran for about 10 minutes and then spent the next four hours and 50 minutes at a bar.

This wasn't a scientific study. In fact, this was downright foolishness, both athletically and literarily. We'll show you the best way to train for a marathon on page 52. Just don't do it like I did it: There's no way to age gracefully when you have plantar fasciitis.



ADAM PITLUK
Editor

P.S. I love you, Perry Farrell (page 42).

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