

This Mother Can Run

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2011

“Aside from my awesome family, running was my only constant, and it provided me with an outlet and a way to make friends everywhere we went. I have relied on running to get me through moves, deployments, pregnancy, and anything else life has to throw at me!”



Kelly Calway, PAGE 8

PAGE 16

ULTRA
RUNNING

PAGE 23

RUNNING IS
MY BOYFRIEND

contents

Ask The PT

Eric Tomei

Running Slump?

Katie Norris

Salute to Captain Calway

Kelly Calway

So You Want to Run an Ultra?

Alison Gittelman

Running Rhythm: Slow Down

Angela Amman

The Perfect Imperfect Boyfriend

Lanni Marchant

Pg	3
Pg	6
Pg	9
Pg	16
Pg	21
Pg	23



This Mother Can Run

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ASK THE PT

I have knee tendonitis. I do strengthening of the VMO and have general strength and alignment from hip to toe. I thought I had it figured out and then one month into training and I am feeling the familiar twinges. What should I do?

Knee tendonitis is one of the most irritating, annoying and most common injuries that can grind any runner's progress to a screeching halt. But let's get some basics down about the origins of knee tendonitis.

First, when someone tells you, you have knee tendonitis that means patella tendonitis. The patella is the actual knee "cap". The tendon is just below the kneecap and you follow it down with your finger into your shin bone. The cordy structure that feels like a bunch of guitar strings woven together is your patella tendon. Just as important, is what surrounds the patella above it, and that is the muscular support structure known as the quadriceps.

The quadriceps muscle is better known as the front of your thigh. It is comprised of 4 muscles. The vastus medialis is the inside of your thigh, the rectus femoris is the middle of the front of your thigh, the vastus lateralis is the outside of your thigh and the deeper vastus intermedialis lies just under the rectus femoris.

The common theory is that the stronger the quadriceps is, especially the vastus medialis obliques (VMO), the greater the chance you have of Mr. Tendonitis not visiting you. This is absolutely true, however, what if you already have tendonitis? Sometimes it can be so painful, people feel helpless to do anything about it.

First, see a doctor if the tendonitis stays the same or gets worse after a 7 day period. In the mean time icing to prevent further inflammation, oral anti-inflammatories, and rest from painful activity are great ways to

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“Knee tendonitis is one of the most irritating, annoying and most common injuries that can grind any runner's progress to a screeching halt.”



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“The common theory is that the stronger the quadriceps is, especially the vastus medialis obliques (VMO), the greater the chance you have of Mr. Tendonitis not visiting you.”



calm that tendonitis. Strengthening exercises of not only the quadriceps but more importantly the hips is paramount. The stronger you make everything above your knee, the greater the support system you have for your knee and the less of a chance you have any kind of injury.

Even after doing everything preventative you can, you still might feel the occasional “twinges” in the knee. This is completely normal. Check to see if you are wearing proper footwear, make sure you are running on flat terrain or a treadmill, and keeping hydrated are all keys that you can control to prevent patella tendonitis from rearing its ugly head.

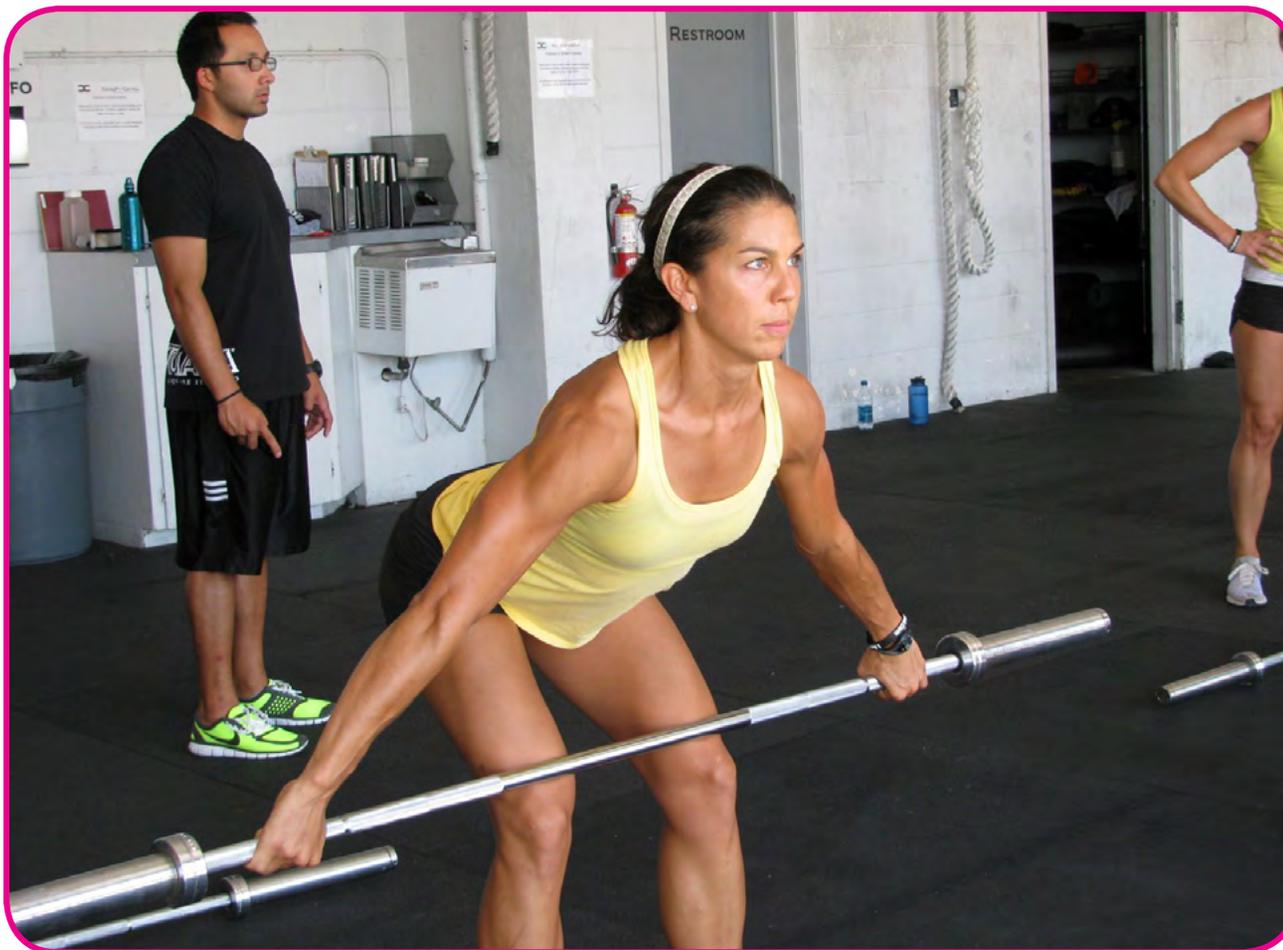
“The stronger you make everything above your knee, the greater the support system you have for your knee and the less of a chance you have any kind of injury.”

Nothing however substitutes a doctor’s advice. Avoid self-diagnosing yourself, because it could be symptomatic of a more serious problem with your knee that you are just not aware of. Take care of yourself, and have patience. As with all injuries, this is a long distance run, not a sprint. Treat yourself accordingly.

Eric Tomei is a physical therapist who has been in orthopedic practice for 10 years. He currently works in Rochester, MI as a staff physical therapist and truly enjoys shaping the health of all his patients. He has a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology, a Bachelor’s Degree in Health Sciences and a Masters Degree in Physical Therapy from Oakland University. His passions include: Real estate investing, physical fitness, and volunteering for various charities in the metro Detroit area.



Running Slump? Cross Fit Might be the Answer



“At first, the workouts will seem like they are written in another language. Words like Burpee, Good Mornings, etc.”

I'm a bit of a dingbat. I admit it. A few years ago I hit a running plateau and decided it was time for a change. I looked into classes at gyms and the Y, but decided none of them were for me.

Then I found a class at a local studio called Mixed Martial Arts. I had no idea what that was, but I thought it sounded like a good blend of aerobics and kickboxing or something. Right? Well that's what I thought and I got the schedule. The class was only offered at 5:30am, which seemed pretty early but I was determined to get out of my slump. I wore my little Yoga pants and my pink Nike shirt. I walked in and everyone STARED at me. It was a room full of heavily tattooed men dressed in jean shorts and cut off shirts. Welllll...turns out Mixed Martial Arts means Cage Fighting. Like you might see on TV where they are literally in cages and kick and punch each other. Oops! I did not stay for the class. Looking back, I think of a few of them were actually slightly disappointed to see me go.

Since then, I have actually found something that is a great solution for that plateau. CrossFit is a very specific way to work out and the idea is to really push yourself as much as possible in a short period of time and work every muscle in the process. Although I am starting to hear about it more and more, it still seems to be almost a well-kept secret. When you do find someone who does CrossFit, they are incredibly passionate about it.

Lisbeth Darsh is the Director of Social Media for CrossFit. "We were recently featured for the first time on ESPN2," she says. "This has really increased the awareness of CrossFit."

The reason I think it's a great option for moms is that the idea is that you work out really really hard, doing specific things, but then you don't have to work out for such a long period of time to get results. You don't have to set aside an hour to work out. Twenty minutes will do. Seriously. My husband, the orthopedic surgeon, does it every day. In fact, it is the only program he follows and he has done one half Ironman already and is doing another this fall. When he first started doing it, it seemed a little intense and crazy to me, but soon I became a huge fan because it shortened his workout time dramatically. At the time, he was working at the hospital from 6am to 8pm every night. My daughter was a little over a year old and I was pregnant with my son, so the more time he was around, the better! The same goes for me and probably most moms out there. I just don't have time for an entire hour long workout at the gym. Sometimes I only have 20 minutes and CrossFit can literally be that fast.

CrossFit is something you can do on your own, either in a gym that you already belong to, or even at your home gym. One way to get started is to go to their website <http://www.crossfit.com/> and follow workouts from there.

Lisbeth Darsh from CrossFit also adds, "We recently released the website <http://tv.crossfit.com>. For our premiere on ESPN2, we wanted to provide an easy explanation of CrossFit including videos. If you are new to CrossFit, this website should be your first stop."

After going to one of these websites to learn more about the theory behind CrossFit, I have an even better way to train every day. If you have an iPad or iPhone, download the free app called XF Diary. From there, you can choose the type of workout you want to do. You will have to enter a "feed" you want to follow. There are hundreds to choose from if you Google CrossFit.

I chose www.crossfitmom.com even though I wasn't pregnant when I started. I thought it would be a great way to ease into this intense program. The app will give you a different workout every day. At first, the workouts will seem like they are written in another language. Words like Burpee, Kettlebell swing, Good Mornings, etc. However, the awesome thing about Cross Fit is that they have all kinds of videos on YouTube to show you how to do everything. To get started, download the app, then pull up the workout for the day. You will see something like this:

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|--------------------|
| 250m row | 20 push ups | 250m row |
| 20 squats | 250m row | 20 knees to elbows |
| 250m row | 20 pull ups | |



"I have actually found something that is a great solution for that plateau. Cross Fit."



So, to do this on your own, you will want to look up what “knees to elbows” means. You can use YouTube to do this. Type “CrossFit Knees to Elbows” and you will get tons of videos to show you how to do it. Soon you will know all the exercises by heart and won’t have to look them up.

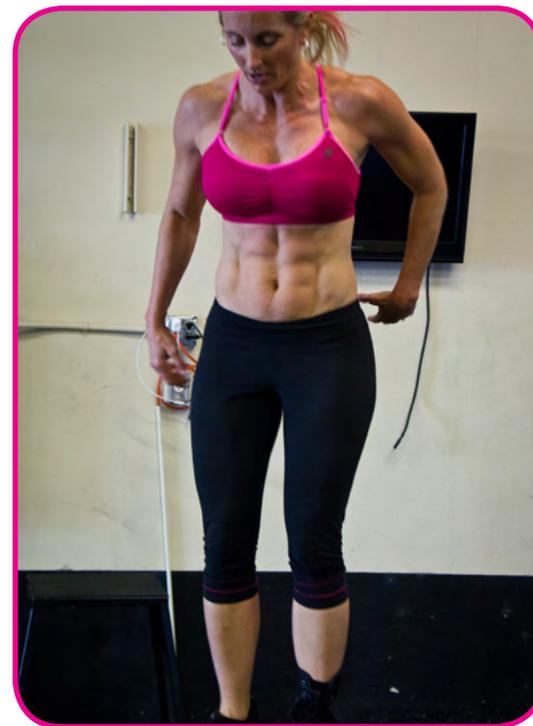
Keep in mind the idea is to do all this as quickly as you can and with a lot of intensity. You should be breathing really hard and probably will be sore the next day at first. It may be more difficult to do this at home, but I was able to buy a chin-up bar at Target and I can figure out how to do most things with some minor modifications.

I know this sounds like a lot of work to figure out how to get started, but it really can be worth it. The workout you get is something more intense than you’ve probably ever experienced if you do it right and it doesn’t take as long as a normal workout. My husband decided one weekend that he wanted to run a marathon even though he hadn’t exactly been training. Since he’d been following CrossFit religiously he decided to give it a try. And what do you know, he got a personal record! Of course, he doesn’t do the app geared

toward preggos. At that point, he had graduated to CrossFitEndurance (<http://www.crossfitendurance.com/>), which is another animal. Same principles, but longer and even more intense.

So, to sum up, if you want to get started with this program, here are your options:

1. *Join a CrossFit gym. Just Google “CrossFit” for your city and you might be surprised at the results you get*
2. *Download the XF Diary app to your iPhone or iPad*
3. *Go to www.crossfit.com and or <http://tv.crossfit.com> get started from there.*
4. *If you’re already in great shape and training for marathons, try www.crossfitendurance.com and give that a try. You might be surprised that you now have to train for a fraction of the time and still can run those marathons.*



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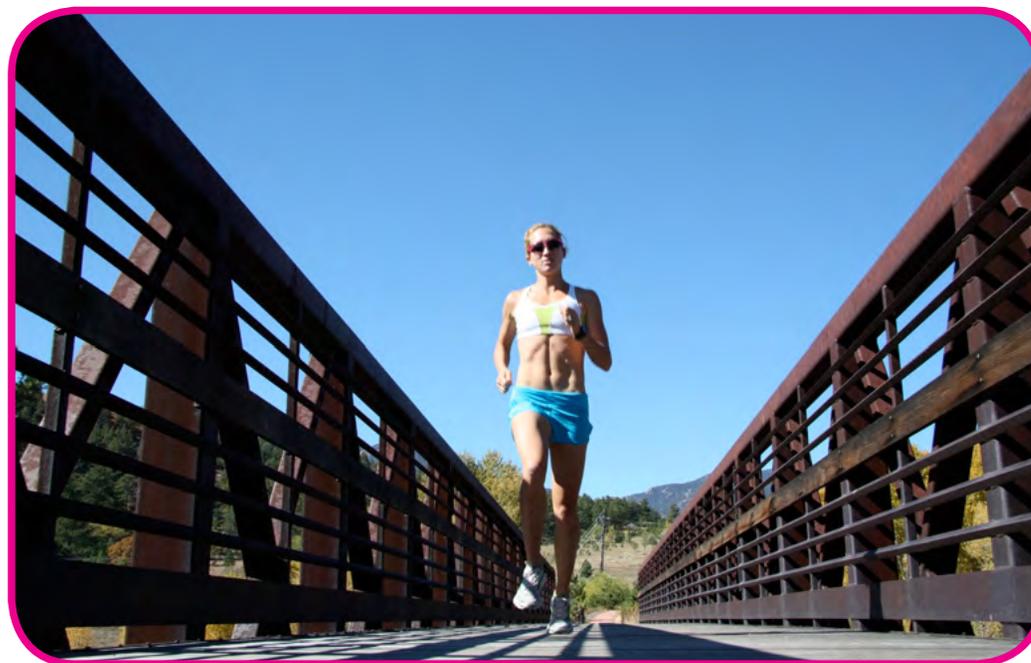
Katie Norris has two little ones, ages 3 and 1. She works full time to support her husband, who is doing his orthopedic surgery training. Katie is a big believer in always looking for the positive in life and writes about how she does this in her blog, www.mommywith-selectivememory.blogspot.com. Katie is a former athlete and is still active in running and training. Her husband has a special interest in triathlons and is even doing clinical research on barefoot running through the department of orthopedic surgery. The happy but very busy family resides in the Mid-west where they enjoy being outdoors.

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SALUTE TO CAPTAIN CALWAY: A RUNNING MOM

Meet Kelly Calway, U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program runner, Army Captain at Fort Carson, Colorado, loving wife, and doting mother. Her husband, Captain Chris Calway, was deployed to Afghanistan for months, yet Kelly managed to work, train, care for their daughter, and qualify for the 2012 Olympic time trials. She is driven to succeed and focused on what she needs to do. Kelly is a role model in every sense of the word. Please join me in saluting, Captain Kelly. This Mother Can Run!



Q: You've made it into the Olympics time trials. Congratulations! What has been your biggest running accomplishment?

A: Thanks! I am very proud of making it to the trials, and I can't wait to race in January 2012! My biggest running accomplishment is definitely my second marathon, the Honolulu Marathon. I ran my first marathon and shortly afterwards found out I was pregnant with my daughter, Hazel. After being bitten by the marathon bug, I spent nine months dreaming of doing another. I ran throughout my pregnancy (I even ran the day she was born), slowing down and shortening my runs near the end. I ran the marathon 8 weeks after she was born and a few days after my husband deployed. It was terrible! I was nursing so I had on two sports bras, although that didn't seem to tame the girls, and I was totally unprepared to run, but I finished! I won't even tell you the time (still a Boston

qualifier), but it was, by far the most painful marathon I have ever done. Whenever I think I'm hurting in a marathon now, I try to remember how tough that race was and it motivates me to push harder.

Q: How will you prepare for the Olympics?

A: I will be running a lot. I am getting ready to ramp up my mileage and add in a lot more and longer tempo runs into my training.

Q: Do you have a running coach and/or running team?

A: I run for the Army's World Class Athlete Program. We have a middle distance and distance team of 8 soldiers. My coach is the former USAFA Coach, Mark Stanforth.

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“Motherhood and the Army can both be very rewarding but at times very stressful, and I use running as my coping mechanism.”

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Q: How do you feel about the new ruling that women runners cannot hold world racing records any longer if there were men running in the same race?

A: I don't think that the ruling is fair. I certainly don't think that they should retroactively enact the ruling either. I think that Paula Radcliffe's original record should stand.

Q: Do you have any running injuries or have you ever? If so, how do you cope?

A: I've been lucky not to have too many injuries in my 20 years of running. I have had a stress fracture, tendonitis, tendonsis, and standard aches and pains. I am sure my husband would tell you to avoid me during those times because I am definitely cranky when I am not running! But some of the things I do during recovery are aqua

jogging (I know it sounds like a grandma workout, but I don't wear a belt and add shoes to make it more difficult), cycling, running on the Alter G anti-gravity treadmill (it's the craziest machine!) and finally I let myself rest! I think the best ways to prevent injury are to listen to your body, stretch, eat right, and sleep.

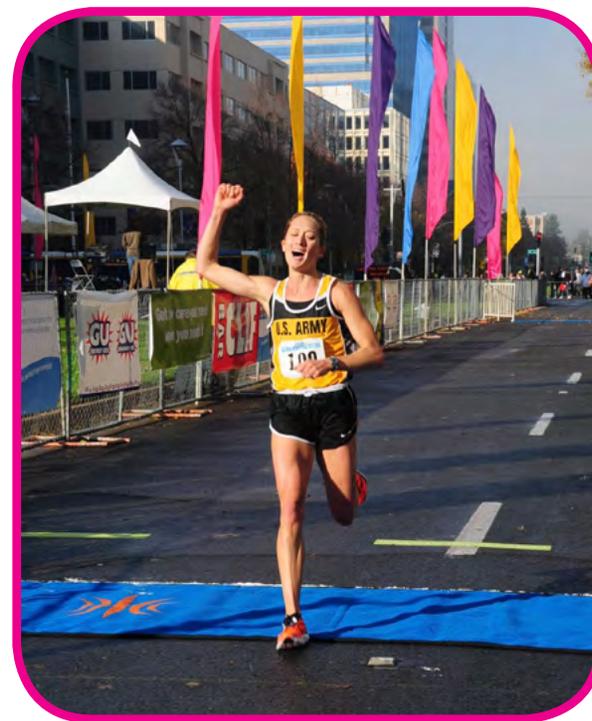
Q: How has the Army prepared you for the Olympics, motherhood and balancing the two?

A: I am running for the Army World Class Athlete Program, so I have so much support on my way to the Olympic trials. I am provided with a coach, training gear, access to a trainer, strength coach, and last but not least time to train! I am so fortunate to be in this program! As far as balancing Army responsibilities and motherhood, I think running has helped me balance the two. I use my runs

as time to think, process, and to relieve stress. Motherhood and the Army can both be very rewarding but at times very stressful, and I use running as my coping mechanism. When my daughter has a tantrum, she has to go to her room. When I feel like I'm going to meltdown, I go for a run.

Q: Did you know when you joined the Army that you would make a career out of running through this division of the military?

A: I had no idea. I have run competitively my entire life, beginning at age 8 and continuing all the way through college at North Carolina State University. I always saw myself running collegiately, but never really thought beyond that. Upon graduation, I commissioned into the Army as a Second Lieutenant and thought I would probably just run for fun. After I ran my first marathon I applied to the World Class Athlete Program on a whim and was utterly shocked when I was accepted into the program.



Kelly finishing the California International Marathon 5th place 2:42



Husband Chris, Dad, Mom, sister, Hazel & Kelly in Hawaii 2009

Q: What motivates you to run?

A: Running is my passion. I love to run, and I can't imagine living without it! I was lucky to figure that out at a very young age. I grew up an Army brat, moving all over the country every couple of years. Aside from my awesome family, running was my only constant and it provided me with an outlet and a way to make friends everywhere we went. I have relied on running to get me through moves, deployments, pregnancy, and anything else life has to throw at me!

Q: How has the conflict in the Middle East impacted your life?

A: Both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) have had a heavy impact on my family's life. My husband first deployed when our little girl was less than 3 months old and didn't return until she was 18 months. That was a difficult time



Giving away toys to orphans in Iraq and bottom pic caption: Sisters, Hazel, Kelly and her parents in Eugene, Oregon for sister's graduation.

for me, learning how to be a mom, being a full-time soldier, and training. Shortly after he returned, I deployed to OIF, and my husband had to quickly learn how to be a father to a rambunctious toddler. Those deployments made it difficult for our young family, but we did have nearly a year of down time to catch up.

This summer my husband returned from a year in Afghanistan. This was a tough one for us, because the communication was severely lacking and because Hazel understood a lot more. We are all back together again now and enjoying this precious time together. The deployments have definitely made us value each other and our time together.

Q: What message would you like to get across to people about our soldiers?

A: Our soldiers are some of the best and brightest people in America and they work hard and make a lot of sacrifices for the people of this great country.

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"The deployments have definitely made us value each other and our time together."
.....





Kelly finishing the Army Ten Miler 2010 (2nd place)

Q: Is there anything the average running mom can do to show support for our troops?

A: Absolutely! Honestly a kind gesture and a thank you goes a long way. But if you feel compelled to do more than that there are some great races and organizations that help raise money for troops. For example, Team Red White and Blue, whose website allows you to raise money for wounded soldiers, and the Army Ten Miler which benefits Soldier and Family Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Programs.

Q: What is your favorite race distance? How did you come to like it?

A: I do love the marathon. There's no other race that makes me feel so accomplished,

but I also really enjoy half marathons and 10k races because I get to unleash the speed and not run so restrained and tied to a pace.

Q: How do you find time to train when your husband, Captain Chris Calway, has been deployed to Afghanistan while caring for your 4 year old daughter alone? Do you ever run with her in a baby jogger?

A: Fortunately I have some great support; our families have both pitched in to help as well as many friends and the Army community. There are definitely days when I have had to take her

out in the BOB. When she was tiny, it wasn't that bad, but now that she is a 40 pound 4 year old that loves to have the stroller stocked with games, dolls, you name it. It's tough to push her at 7,000 feet! The furthest I've gone with the stroller was 16 miles. Hazel loves to cheer me on, but now I try to limit it to 6 miles or less.

Q: When you were deployed to the Middle East, how was it training in that climate?

A: I was deployed to Iraq for OIF 2010-2011. First of all,

finding time to train over there was tough. I worked 16-18 hour days, with no days off, but it's a huge priority for me, so I managed to get out as often as possible. As for the climate, it's HOT, ugh, it's terribly hot. It feels like a hair dryer blowing on your face. I made it outside as much as I could, but I did put in many, many miles on the treadmill.

Q: How often do you run?

A: I run twice a day (usually about 9-11 and then 3-5 miles) or do a long run (16-22) seven days a week.

Q: What is your favorite workout (speed, tempo, long...)

A: I love the track! Speed work is my favorite (probably because I ran the 1500m in



Kelly & Hazel cheering on the world's best cyclists at the USA Pro Cycling Challenge in Colorado



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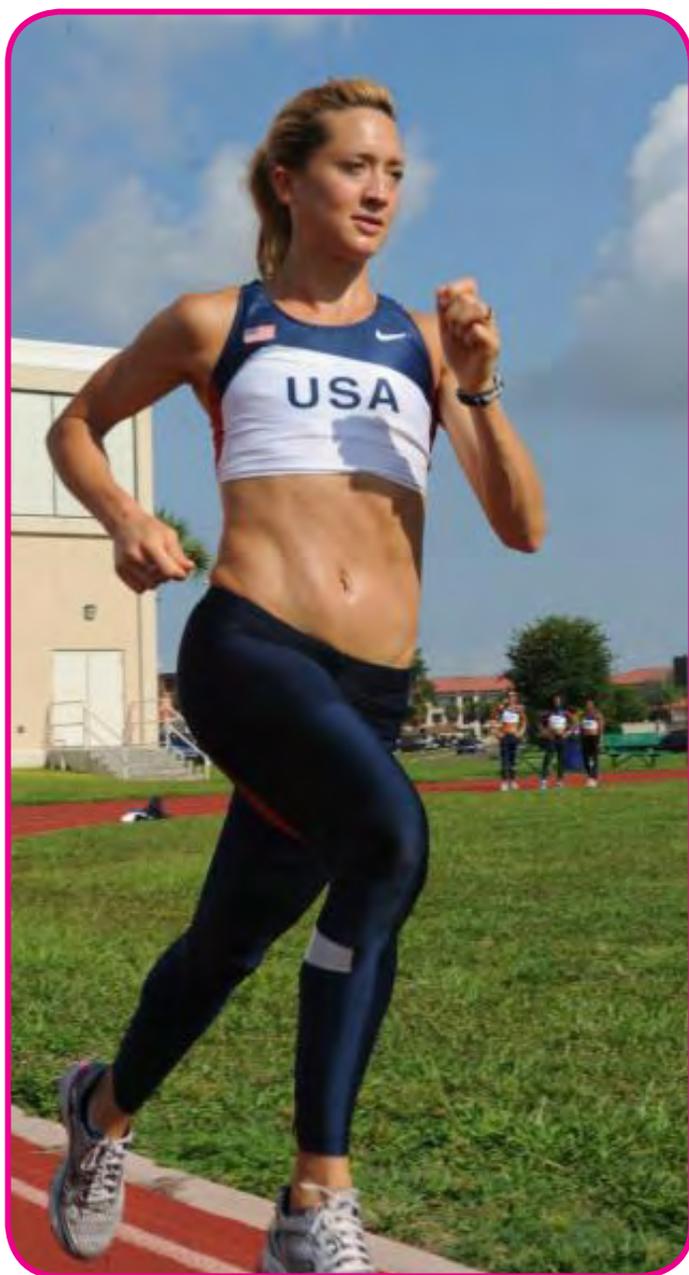
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Kelly representing US at the Military World Games in Rio 2011

“I worked 16-18 hour days, with no days off, but it’s a huge priority for me, so I managed to get out [and run] as often as possible.”

college). But I have grown to love a good, long tempo run. There’s no better way to simulate a road race.

Q: What is the best running advice you ever received?

A: Everything in moderation. This is my mother’s mantra, and I learned over the years that she is a wise woman. She’s also been running for over 35 years! She applies it to more than running, but I have found that it is more than applicable in terms of running.

It took the birth of my daughter to realize this one, though! In college I became pretty uptight about mileage and wanted to make sure I got the total number written in my training log everyday. Becoming a mother made me realize that I have to be flexible; some days I may not get in a second run, or any run at all for that matter, and I will be okay. I’ve become a much smarter runner since becoming a mother and that has made me a much faster runner too!

Q: What are your running goals?

A: I want to represent the USA at the Olympic Games!



Kelly, Chris & Hazel in Massachusetts this summer

Name: Kelly Calway

Q: Favorite running song and the artist/band

I'm such a nerd, when I do listen to anything (usually on the treadmill) I listen to NPR podcasts.

Q: Favorite time of day to run

I'm not an early bird, so later in the morning

Q: How do you prefer to train?

- alone
- with a partner
- in a group

Q: Most scenic place you've ever run

The bike path along Oahu's North Shore. We used to live there, and it was the most amazing route along the most gorgeous beaches in the world. And the bonus is that when you're done you can dive into the gorgeous blue water to cool off!

Q: Average miles per run

12 miles

Q: Where do you usually run?

- treadmill (I spent a lot of time on the treadmill when I was in Iraq.)
- outside (This is where I MUCH prefer to run.)

Q: What do you do while running?

- listen to music
- watch TV
- talk
- think
- other (I LOVE to run trails and so part of my running is just exploring.)

Q: Favorite running gadget or gear

I love the lululemon scoop bra. It's so cute and stylish!

Q: Why did you start running?

- to get in shape
- to get back to pre-pregnancy weight
- for fun
- for sport
- other I started running when I was 8 years old. Here is a great picture of my mom and I running the Straub Women's 10k in Hawaii.

Q: Favorite race distance

- 5K
- 10K
- 1/2 marathon
- marathon
- other



So You Want to Run an Ultra?



Are you a marathoner who's always asking, "What's next?" Do you find yourself signing up for another marathon because you want to experience that feeling of elation and accomplishment again? That feeling you get only when digging deep and overcoming physical and mental obstacles? So you run another marathon, and maybe several more, but are you still asking, "What's next?"

Maybe you're not a marathoner, or even a fast runner, but are looking for a new focus and motivation, something that will test your limits.

Or perhaps you're looking for adventure, an experience, where racing is no longer about putting one foot in front of the other in an attempt to get from point A to point B as fast as possible, but an activity that incorporates everything around you, where you become part of – rather than just take part in – the event.

It may be time to consider an ultra.

I love running trails and excelled at cross-country in school while failing dismally on the track. In recent years I ran several trail races and relished the mud, hills, and difficult terrain. But I wanted to go further. After five road marathons that was fun but not exactly life-altering. I was looking for a different type of experience.

I found it in an ultra.

In May 2011 I ran my first ultra, the Capon Valley 50K. Given that I have yet to run another, (although I plan to run another 50K and a 50 mile in 2012) I grant that I'm no expert on ultrarunning. But I can offer up my experience of entering the ultramarathon

world to others considering the "leap" while it's still fresh in my mind. And I've enlisted a couple of seasoned ultramarathoners to provide the expert perspective.

What's so different about ultras? (Apart from distance!)

To many people, even marathoners, an ultra has a certain aura of forbidden territory. If

a marathon is a long way, an ultra is one heck of a long way. But in actual fact, distance pales in comparison to some of the other differences between marathons and ultras.

Terrain

While there are a few road ultras, such as Comrades Ultramarathon in South Africa and Badwater in California, most are run on trails. These can range from flat, wide fire roads to narrow, rocky, treacherous mountainsides. And it's very possible that you'll find all of these in one race. For example, at JFK 50 in Maryland, after the first 2.5 miles on pavement, the race moves to the very technical Appalachian Trail for 13.5 miles, after which there are 26 miles of flat dirt/gravel along the C&O Canal Towpath, followed by a return to pavement for the final 8 miles.

Size

Ultras are generally small, averaging several hundred participants compared to the

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 "Trail ultras, by nature, are always smaller, which makes them more intimate and personal."

several thousand at a large road marathon. The largest ultra is Comrades with 18,000 participants...but of course that's a road race. Trail ultras, by nature, are always smaller, which makes them more intimate and personal.

Hoopla

Ultras are, for the most part, low-key. With a few notable exceptions such as The North Face Endurance Series, ultras don't have a lot of prizes, swag, or big sponsors. They don't include football-field sized expos with yards of race paraphernalia for sale. You sign up, show up, and run. You might get a medal or a certificate. You're more likely to get a hot meal than an awards ceremony.

Pace

Ultras are slow races. Sure, there are speedy ultrarunners, but for most people the race is much more leisurely than a marathon. As accomplished ultramarathoner (she's completed 29 ultras, including 16 JFK 50 milers and 4 100 milers) Anna Bradford notes, "Ultra running doesn't



"Ultra running doesn't require speed – it simply requires persistence."



require speed – it simply requires persistence.” Everyone walks up the hills, even the early ones. I think it’s an unwritten ultrarunning law. At Capon Valley 50K, the first hill came within the first mile. Everyone slowed to a walk. And seasoned ultramarathoners know this is the key to a successful race.

Getting Back to Basics

So why run an ultra? Aside from answering the post-marathon “What’s next?” question, an ultra can answer the “Why run?” question. Because ultras tend to strip away the layers of fanfare that often surround other races, all that’s left is running. It’s back-to-basics why-you-do-this-in-the-first-place racing. Without distractions, you’re reminded of what you love about running.

Elite ultramarathoner Neal Gorman considers ultrarunning a “sport [that] offers so many levels of competition within myself and among others. The more I run the better I know myself. Running makes me a better person and improving, as a runner and as a person, is part of the fun.”

Gorman, who in 2010 set a new cumulative Grand Slam (Western States, Vermont, Leadville, and Wasatch Front) Series of Ultrarunning time record, considers the

racing experience “a celebration of everything I like about running - traveling to and experiencing the outdoors, socializing with other like-minded athletes and pushing my physical and mental boundaries, which is very fulfilling on an innate, primal level.”

You could say that non-ultra distances also provide this, and I wouldn’t disagree, but I think ultras afford more access to this “looking-at-ourselves” experience because the fact that they are stripped of all the “noise” that surrounds many non-ultras exposes us to that. It’s like having to get away from light pollution to see the stars more clearly.

Choosing Your First Ultra

You may be looking to run an ultra close to home, which is a good idea not just because of the proximity, but because of familiarity. Bryon Powell, competitive trail runner and editor of irunfar.com, suggests, “If you are fortunate enough to live where there are mountain trails out your back door and there’s a race on those trails, run it! If, like me, you live within

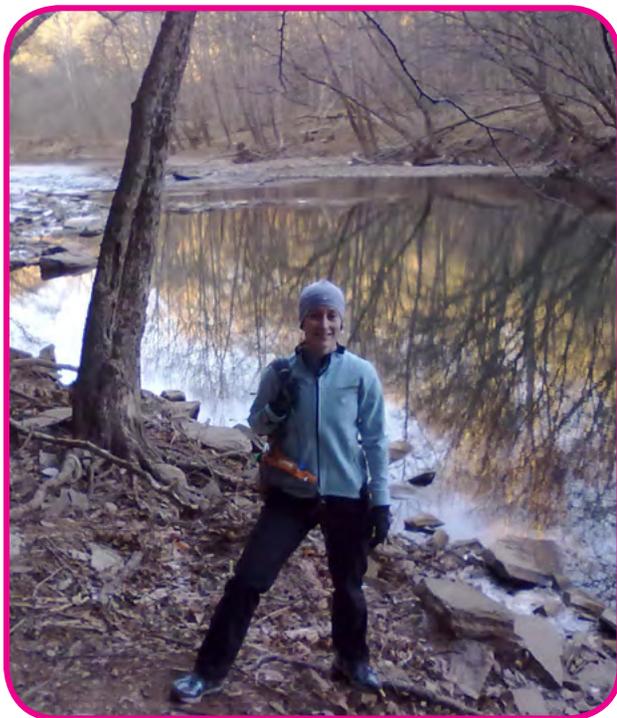
an hour or two of trails that are home to ultras, consider one of those races.”

Capon Valley is about 90 minutes from where I live, but it’s in the mountains of West Virginia, whereas I live in the Virginia Piedmont. I trained on the hilliest trails close

to my home to gain some familiarity with the type of course I’d encounter. Whether you choose a race that’s close to or far from home, it’s a good idea to get some insight from others who have run the race. The ultrarunning community is super-friendly and it’s not hard to find someone who’s more than happy to share their experience.

Bradford is always willing to share stories from the trail. In fact, she’s got a reputation for “reeling people in” to ultramarathoning because she makes it all sound like so much fun. “Running an ultra, for me, is a low-pressure, high-gratification experience. As the miles pass, I allow myself to be totally impressed with myself...I have more fun during a 50

“As the miles pass, I allow myself to be totally impressed with myself...I have more fun during a 50 miler than I have on most any other day of the year.”



miler than I have on most any other day of the year.”

Part of the fun comes from the fact that an ultramarathon is a much more social event than shorter races. Because the pace is slower, and there’s plenty of time, ultrarunners tend to be more willing to engage in conversation. Actually, conversation may be too light a term. I heard people telling their life stories at Capon Valley 50K. Well, how else are you going to while away the hours?!

Training for an Ultra

One question I hear frequently is, “How do you train for an ultra?” When I trained for Capon Valley 50K I simply followed a marathon training plan. Since 50K is only 5 miles longer than a marathon, it made sense. I did make sure most of my long runs were on the trail, and one of them was a 4 hour run. This resonates with Bradford’s thinking: “For the

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“Whether you choose a race that’s close to or far from home, it’s a good idea to get some insight from others who have run the race.”

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average runner, a marathon is good enough training for a 50K or 50 miler. Stay healthy by acknowledging your injuries and cross train rather than run to recover.” Both Bradford and I are strong advocates of cross-training. Bradford uses cross-training to prevent injury. “Since I don’t run if something hurts, I need to have other strategies to stay in shape, which means lots of cross training (swimming, biking, dancing).” I used the FIRST training plan from the Furman Institute, which requires cross-training. This worked well for me as a triathlete, since I was biking and swimming anyway.

Bradford also advocates running a marathon 3-4 weeks before the ultra, then not running longer than 15 miles prior to the ultra, whereas I ran a marathon 8 weeks before Capon Valley, and then resumed the marathon training. But the message is clear: don’t do anything special, don’t do anything crazy, and you can complete an ultra. In fact, staying healthy seems to be key to success at ultra distances. Bradford notes that “...my goal is to prioritize my health and well-being enough to be able to run 50 miles every fall.... I am



cautious in my training and racing in an effort to stay uninjured.” The takeaway here seems to be that getting to the start line of the ultra healthy and uninjured is a key strategy to success.

Ready....Don't Go Just Yet!

A seasoned ultramarathoner laughed at my drop bag at Capon Valley 50K. “You won’t need that,” he said. He turned out to be right, but I was too afraid I might need a change of socks or shorts or even shoes, not to have it ferried to two separate aid stations. That being said, it’s important to know in advance where/how often the aid stations are and what they provide, visualizing what you might need and packing it in drop bags or your own pack, and writing out a plan to help with your packing list. Bradford suggests you “practice carrying your jacket and special food and pharmacy and water during your long runs. Know your pack and whether it irritates you after a couple hours.”

Another key point from Bradford is to take care of chafing and blisters early because, whereas “in a marathon, you can generally gut it out for 4-5 hours, in an ultra, these problems could make for a very unhappy afternoon/evening.” So pack that Vaseline!

Taking it All In

One of the many, many wonderful things about ultras is the fact that you can take so much in, because you’re taking your time. You can look around at the scenery and absorb everything. I remember splashing through the streams at Capon Valley, looking out across the vista after climbing to the top of a mountain, and thoroughly enjoying my conversation with nature. The ability to take in so much of this also enables you to think much more clearly about what you’re doing and how incredible it really is. And it’s ok to do a little internal bragging, according to Bradford. “Remember to be impressed with yourself...It takes an enormous leap of faith, a lot of focus, and a certain amount of sacrifice (on you and your family’s part) to get to the starting line of your first ultra.”

And I guarantee you’ll be coming back for more.

“I remember splashing through the streams at Capon Valley, looking out across the vista after climbing to the top of a mountain, and thoroughly enjoying my conversation with nature.”

When she’s not enjoying time on the trail, Alison Gittelman works as a freelance writer, editor, and instructional designer. She combines her passions for running and writing at www.racingtales.com. The mother of two boys, ages 7 and 9, Alison fits in her training around baseball games, swim meets, and impromptu wrestling matches.

Alison has been a runner for over 27 years, participating in her first track meet at age 11. While she has completed 5 marathons, including Boston, her fondest memories are from running cross-country races as a teenager in France, and qualifying for the English School’s Cross Country Championships at age 18, where she was in the same race as (but nowhere near) Paula Radcliffe!



Alison took up the sport of triathlon in 2009 and was instantly hooked. She has completed 12 Sprint and Olympic triathlons and is currently training for her first Half Ironman. Having completed her first Ultra in May 2011, she now has her sights on The North Face 50K in June and JFK 50 in November 2012.

RUNNING RHYTHM: SLOW DOWN

Mascara dampens my eyelids the minute I open the front door to leave the comfort of our air-conditioned house. Humidity immediately presses my lungs a few inches smaller. Ryan's words "take it easy" ring in my ears before I insert my earbuds and quiet the world around me with music.

"Ryan's words "take it easy" ring in my ears before I insert my earbuds and quiet the world around me with music."

Starting slowly isn't a problem. A little sore from the previous day's long run, my muscles need a few minutes to find ground. Balmy air blankets my body; I felt my legs picking up pace, the heat working out aches and worries at the same time. The fast stride is freeing, but I force myself to slow down. Left. Pause. Right. Pause. Left.

I should make bread tomorrow.
Bangs or no bangs?
Need bananas.

It's not.
I can't imagine that Lady Gaga slows down when the lights on stage get too hot.

Thick, hazy air lulls my legs into submission, slowly moving along to the cadence I had planned.

Milk.
Right. Left. Right. Left.

Focus.
Slow down.

Left. Pause. Right.
Right. Pause. Left.

You and me could write a bad romance.
Left. Right. Left. Right.

Five and six. Seven and eight.
Go Brooklyn, go Brooklyn ...

Propelled by muscle memory, my body pushes through the familiar route without thought, allowing my mind to wander. My growing to-do list plays on an endless loop in the background.

Lady Gaga invades my subconscious. My controlled pace quickens with the beat. Sweat burns my eyes. Slow down.

LL Cool J pulls my legs into a slower, smoother run, offering relief from the pounding beats that normally pulse out of the metallic pink square that logs all of my miles with me, clipped to my shirt or shorts. Relaxed, my arms swing back and forth. Dusk threatens to slide into darkness. I fleetingly wonder how fireflies know to glow as the night fades. Maybe they blink on and off in the daylight, but they're eclipsed by the sun? An easy fact to find, but I intentionally let the question dissipate into the air behind me. Some magic shouldn't be explained by science.

Dinner for the week – turkey burgers, tacos, homemade pizza...

Working against the music, I concentrate on matching the slapping of my feet against the pavement to my mental count.

One and two. Three and four.
Slowing down should be simple, especially with sweat coursing down my back and the muggy air tangling my ponytail into a damp nest against my neck.

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"The fast stride is
freeing, but I force
myself to slow down."
.....

Back and forth. Back and forth.
One and two. Three and four. Five and six.

Seven and –
The hill.

The one that always hurts.
Up and down. My legs are pistons, tired yet
strong. Up and down. My breath catches.
Up and down.

The ground levels out, and I gasp a little
before regaining my breath and my stride.
Left. Pause. Right.
Right. Pause. Left.

I want somebody to speed it up for me, then take it down slow.
There's enough room for both.

Right and left.
Left and right.

Madonna might be onto something. An almost imperceptible breeze grazes my cheek.

Right. Left. Right. Left.
Home

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Angela Amman lives in southeastern Michigan with her husband Ryan,
daughter Abbey (3 ½), and son Dylan (21 months). She's running her
fourth half marathon on October 16 and dreams of running a full one
day. Until then, she'll run for sanity and joy, and maybe a personal best
time or two. Angela blogs at Tiaras & Trucks <http://tiaras-and-trucks.blogspot.com>, where she attempts to capture the humor and beauty
that weave together with the ordinary moments in our lives to create
something extraordinary. She is also an assistant editor at Write On Edge, a contributing
writer at Just Be Enough and a fairly regular reviewer at the BlogHer Book Club.



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"My growing to-do list
plays on an endless loop
in the background."
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THE PERFECT IMPERFECT BOYFRIEND

This morning I set out on top of Signal Mountain for another long, long run, and by mile 15, parts of my body started to remind me that it was not the biggest fan of today's activities. This kinda got my mind wandering, and I questioned "what keeps bringing me back to running"? After all of the hurt, the frustrations, the questioning of whether I should start dating rollerblading, I keep coming back for more. Am I a masochist? Do I like playing the victim? NO! I have come to the conclusion that my relationship with running is not at all like casual dating...running and I are in a very committed long term relationship.

Many of you have heard me previously refer to running as my boyfriend, and like any relationship, it has had some ups and downs. There have been times where I am

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"Running does not judge me or my family for how we grew up, and he does not question my morals or values."

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"I have cussed running out. I have told running to hit the road and never come back."

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so frustrated with running that I feel like hot venom is running through my veins. I have cussed running out. I have told running to hit the road and never come back. But, he never really takes my anger and frustration to heart. He knows that deep down I really do love running, that I have put my heart and soul into making things work between us, and most importantly, he understands me. Yes...there is definitely love in our relationship... and it works both ways.

Running does not judge me or my family for how we grew up, and he does not question my morals or values. He has never turned his nose up at me (hmm... maybe when I forget to air out my shoes). Running did not give me silent treatment because I allowed myself to get angry with the world for a day. Instead, running sat back and let me vent. I got out all my frustrations without being questioned on them or being told that my feelings were invalid. After a good venting, running was still there, asking if I was up for another 8 mile date the next day. Running will not stand by and let me just sit there and lick my wounds either.

Running lets me burp.

Running has never disappeared on me or ignored me after I have called him out for hurting my feelings. He never forgets me or overbooks his schedule. Yes, we sometimes need our space from each other...but I never have to go hunting him down, and I am not always the first to extend an olive branch after we have a fight.

Running like most boys, does not always get it. We have our differences...I admit that I have my days where I am just a pill to deal with. And man, do I give running huge props for putting up with me during those "off" days.

Running has never given up on me. He accepts my apologies when I make a mistake and get frustrated over something small. By no means is running my "biotch"; He barks back

at me when necessary. But never any hits below the belt. I pull my own weight in our relationship. I listen to running when he tells me that he's frustrated or mad at me. I let him vent (aka, take out his frustration on my shins, my pelvis, and my hip) and then come back and see if he still wants to chill later.

Running understands that I have a mad crush on dancing.

Do not get me wrong. Running is not always the perfect boyfriend. But none of us are perfect. And I'll be damned...running accepts that. I pity the fool who doesn't.



Lanni Marchant grew up in London, Ontario in a family with seven children. She was a competitive figure skater until grade 10. She always ran to stay in shape for skating. She earned a scholarship to the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, where after a frustrating freshman cross country season, won her first conference championship in the Steeple Chase and went on to win several more titles. After graduating, she turned her focus more towards road racing and after a year off from a broken pelvis, she saw a dramatic drop in her race times. She had the privilege of representing Canada at the Chiba Ekiden relays twice and is looking forward to running the Canadian standard in the Marathon in 2011. This past spring she graduated from law school and is working full-time at a law firm in Chattanooga, Tennessee. She competed in the Canadian Marathon Championships in the Chicago marathon in 2011. You can follow her running endeavors at Marchant's Forward March <http://marchantsforwardmarch.blogspot.com/>



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“The steeper the mountain the
harder the climb the better the view
from the finishing line.”

-Anonymous

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This Mother Can Run