

The Boston Diaries, Part 1

The Half-Fast Runner is preparing to do something that he never thought he would ever do, and never set out to do in the first place, and that is run the Boston Marathon. What follows are a few of the entries in my training journal over the past few months.

November 2: What better day to begin training for the Boston Marathon than Election Day since I have avoided the hordes of people at the polls by voting early (but not often). And while I was out for an easy run along the North Valley ditch banks with Kori, my older dog, Americans reelected President Bush quite handily. It reminded me of something Mark Twain once said: “Sometimes I wonder whether the country is being run by smart people who are putting us on or by imbeciles who really mean it.” Of course, he also thought that whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it's time to pause and reflect.

November 6: My body is lecturing me during a rather tedious afternoon run and as much as I try not to listen, it has a rather captive audience: “Well, now you’ve gone and done it. I warned you about running marathons but did you listen? Nooo, it’s Mr. Big Shot, the marathoner, on his way to Boston. You told me you’d never do this again, that once was enough because then it was nothing but sore this or aching that, pasta day and night, black toenails, miles and miles of more miles and miles with no time for anything else! And you never take me anywhere!” At least among my friends this sort of behavior is considered quite normal. And it not like

it’s against the law – it’s just a character flaw many of us have.

November 11: Six miles today, including two with the new puppies who have been wanting so much to come out with me and learn how to run. But in their excitement they were having a Chinese Fire Drill and turned themselves into a hilarious Gordian Knot of tangled leashes, tails, legs and snouts. But love me, love my dogs. To others they may just be dogs, but to me they are adopted daughters who happen to be short and hairy, walk (and run) on all fours and whose communication skills are rather basic. But I really have no problem with any of these traits.

November 17: Tired and achy after staying up too late reading last night. Plus the pain in my right Achilles tendon from a tempo run this afternoon doesn’t help and I feel like I’m coming down with a cold. Even if more than a dozen studies have proven that neither vitamin C nor antihistamines have any effect on preventing the common cold, that’s what I’m living on right now. I haven’t been able to follow my schedule for over a week and can’t imagine when I’ll feel well enough to get back on it. What in the world have I done?

November 25: Thanksgiving Day and my achy, feverish body says to bag the Turkey Run. For once, I pay attention. Ordinarily I can take setbacks like this in stride but this is different – it’s knocked me out of a good week and a half of training and I refuse to suffer such an indignity in silence if I’m still able to bitch, moan and whimper. Plus, I’m sick of bouillon. If I don’t get a medium-rare steak and soon, I’m going out and kill

something. I didn't climb to the top of the food chain to be a vegetarian.

November 28: My first run in what seems like ages. It felt good even if it was only a couple of miles, but I am still so weak. At least I'm eating everything in sight, especially ice cream. Americans eat an average of 16 pounds of ice cream every year and I intend to hold up my end of that bargain.

December 12: Finally getting back into some semblance of shape. Beautifully mild day, warm enough to run in shorts – I could do this forever. I am, however, beginning to appreciate that there is a very fine line between "recreation" and "mental illness."

December 15: Tried some rigid orthotics in my running shoes and was surprised at how comfortable they were and how good they made me feel. Lifted weights at the club afterwards and then went for a bike ride.

December 16: So sore from yesterday that it took me the better part of an hour just to tie my shoes this morning. Think I'll leave the weight training to Governor Arnold for a while.

December 25: A gorgeous Christmas Day and Santa remembered the microfibre shirt I wanted. Ran a very relaxing five plus miles in the Nature Center, though sore from chopping firewood and putting out *luminarias* yesterday. Martha Stewart seems to be in the news more now that she is in a West Virginia prison and I'm sure that she has a few tips for the prison's Christmas dinner, like not having the table centerpiece be anything prepared by a taxidermist.

December 31: Looking forward to the New Year, when I really do resolve to try and not let yesterday take up too much of today. And also see the Red Sox in Fenway Park the day after the race.