

Post-Marathon Blues

It's Spring and the robins are all over the yard, the sun is shining, the days are longer and I feel like, well, like nothing. Nothing? What is going on here?

The past year included the Boston and New York marathons followed by a pleasant winter of easy running along with some time off. This spring I had been looking forward to running the near-by trails with my dogs and the occasional track workout to get some speed back. I was also looking forward to racing over familiar courses with old friends.

I was, but that was then. This is now.

While training during the past two years, I had wondered what it would be like to run across the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, through all five boroughs of the Big Apple and then turn off Fifth Avenue into Central Park. What would it be like to stride down Heartbreak Hill and then make that final turn onto Boylston Street to see the blue and gold finish line for the first time? For months I had approached each day knowing exactly what I needed to do to prepare.

Then one day I didn't know what to do.

That day the euphoria had faded and was replaced by something else: the post-marathon blues. "Be patient and it'll work out," was a friend's advice. Like time wounds all heels, I thought, especially Achilles, as mine have given me nothing but trouble.

There seem to be more distractions these days, more excuses not only for not running, but for not working out at all. After the exhilaration of Boston and New

York, what next? What could possibly be next?

Now I even find myself thinking more and more about my first love. They say you never really forget your first love. Maybe it's just as well, because at least in your mind your first love is always blissfully perfect. A fling perhaps? But this is getting serious – I went out and bought a new set of golf clubs.

But post-marathon blues seem to be more common than I would have thought. Runners tend to be very goal-oriented people but after the big day, a goal like "staying healthy" just doesn't cut it any more.

Both runners and non-runners alike tend to view the marathon as the ultimate running accomplishment, something to aspire to. Tell someone that you are training for a 5K and you are likely to hear something like "That's nice." Even win a medal in your age group and the reaction won't change.

But tell someone that you are training for a marathon and they can relate to that as something out of the ordinary. Even if they don't know the distance, ("How far was that marathon you ran?"), they all seem to know the story of Pheidippides, who ran from Marathon to Athens to announce a great victory over the Persians and then dropped dead ("Be careful – don't be like the guy who died!"). They know little else about distance running, but they do know that.

New York City Marathon founder Fred Lebow once said, "Every jogger can't dream of being an Olympic champion, but he can dream of finishing a marathon." That's a dream anyone can identify with, but I honestly never felt it was something I

necessarily had to do in this life. But finishing a marathon provides such a phenomenal sense of accomplishment that it is truly a worthwhile goal.

And now, it seems that I need another goal, like getting back to racing in all 50 states. I have six more to go and Wyoming beckons. There is a Memorial Day race in Laramie and I don't have a thing to wear. What better way to get going but go shopping – for running shoes, not golf shoes.