

The ROAD TO THE COLUMBUS MARATHON

January 25, 2008 -- Journal Entry #1

First and foremost I've made a pledge to be as honest as possible in sharing my experiences with all of you! So, I will confess, getting back into running (or getting into running at all) isn't as easy as it looks!

I am running (run/walking to be exact) but not as often as I need to be or as often as I would like to be. There has definitely been some huffing and puffing (which means I've been trying to run too fast). My lungs have felt as if they've never been exposed to cold air. My chest has felt like it was going to explode at any moment. But I have survived!

My strategy has been to start by time -- no watch, no Garmin, no pressure but a time limit! I am up to 45 minutes -- don't be too impressed -- this has only happened once. But, it's happened. Slowly and painfully it's happened.

It's happened in spite of the obligatory sleepless nights that come with having a newborn. It's happened in spite of the challenge of juggling motherhood and work. And, it's happened in spite of having to leave one of my most loyal training partners at home.

Many of you have met Gus -- the official Fleet Feet Sports greeter and Spokesdog for the Annual Doggie Doo-Athlon in Blue Ash. Gus has run with me for the past ten years. He's never complained about the 5:30 a.m. wake-up calls. (Then again why should he? He gets to sleep for the rest of the day anyway.) He's never complained about the cold or the heat and he has never complained about the pace or the distance of the workout.

Gus has had a chronic back problem since he was a puppy. This, coupled with his age, has sidelined him from running anymore. It is hard to imagine running on a regular basis without Gus. And I have to admit that the thought of heading out the door in the early morning hours (and dark) without my built-in security system is a little daunting.

I am going to have to sneak out of the house or change my shoes in the garage so that he doesn't know where I'm going. And I'll probably have to sneak back in as well.

This marathon training is proving to be one full of many firsts. The first time I've started from the couch (okay maybe a slight exaggeration but not much). The first time that Gus won't be a big part of my training. The first time that I've told thousands of people what I am going to do. The first time that I'm sharing this experience with those thousands of people.

And last but not least the first time I am training on this particular road. This is a road that is making room for anyone who wants to come along. This is a road that inspires folks to get out and run or walk to get in shape, to stay in shape, to cure a disease, to mend a broken heart or to make new friends. This is a road to encourages folks to be selfish and selfless at the same time.

If you aren't a dog person (or you haven't run with a dog over the course of many years) Gus' story won't seem that sad or life-changing. But his aging marks the passing of time and the reality of what happens to our bodies as we age while our minds remain young. Gus' changes make this road a little lonelier for me in some ways.

I know that each step has to be taken one day at a time, one minute at a time and one mile at a time. Enjoying the journey is the fun part. Staying on this road is the challenge.