

Gold Coast Runners



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CLUB MISSION: *The purpose of the Gold Coast Runners is to promote, encourage, and support the sport of running and walking through a network of people and resources engaged to educate the community on the benefits of the sport.*

MY STORY

By Spencer D. West



Every month, I use this column to share training tips and techniques I've gathered during my four and a half year transformation from being a seventy pound overweight couch potato to a relatively fit athlete, as well as highlight the local athletes who have inspired, motivated or otherwise fascinated me during my journey. When I've shared my story of weight loss and re-gained fitness with other runners and even non-runners, I've been told that my story is inspiring. In this article, I'm going to tell my story, not for the purpose of a self-congratulatory pat on the back, but rather as a motivational and learning tool for other runners who are either starting out or struggling with their own personal or fitness goals. Running gave me my life back, and I hope others have or will experience what I have been privileged to during these past four years.

Growing up, weight had never been an issue for me, as I was naturally thin. I even ran track and cross-country briefly in high school. I even remember desperately trying to "bulk up" in high school and not being able to gain weight if my life depended on it. As most readers can probably relate to, that all changes as we get older. When I was in law school, I had my first experience gaining weight and had to whip myself into shape so I could fit into my tux on my wedding day. During my last year in law school, I ran the Boston Marathon in the "bandit corral" with my wife (although she was miles ahead of me as she frequently reminds me). However, during the years after that, I slowly started to pack on the pounds, especially after my wife got pregnant with our first child. I always thought of her as the real runner, and as she shed her baby weight I gained mine sitting on the couch and watching

her go out the door for her workouts. She recalls that she couldn't even get me off the couch to go for a family walk. This continued until I found myself seventy pounds overweight with my knees and back hurting just from standing up or playing in the yard with my two small children.

In May 2008, I was with my father-in-law and two children watching from the side-lines in Rhode Island as my amazing wife maneuvered her way up the steepest hill I've ever seen in a marathon (and at this point I've run my fair share). I can't say exactly what it was that triggered a reaction in me, but at the point she passed by us with a big smile on her face, I promised myself at that instant that I would dedicate myself to getting back in shape and re-gaining my life back. I'm no expert on weight loss and probably went about it the wrong way, but nonetheless I kept that promise to myself and to my family from that day on and cut out soda, diet and otherwise, from my diet, cut my calorie intake more than in half and started really concentrating on sensible eating. I also knew that I needed to include physical activity in my weight-loss but I truly was not able to make it to the end of my rather short street without stopping severely out of breath on my first attempt at running in years. As the weight came off, however, I was able to gain in distance but still ran at a very slow pace. At some point, I asked that my wife sign me up for a 5K and she signed me up for the Twilight 5K in South Miami, which I completed in close to 28 minutes in June 2008. That race was where I caught the running (and racing) bug and I have never looked back.

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Upon submission of this application, I agree to assume all risks associated with participation in any activity of the Gold Coast Runners. I release all sponsors, officers, employees and any person assisting on a volunteer basis from any claims of liability resulting from my participation. Parental signature required for minors.

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