

How They Train New England Style

This is the second in a series of articles looking at local runners who are pursuing professional careers, raising families as well as racing at a high level. This month we'll read about Byrne Decker's assertion that "the only true limits on running potential are talent and dedication."

Just to recap the premise of this series, I'll summarize last month's intro:

Back in the Dark Ages of American distance running (anytime before Frank Shorter's 1972 Olympic marathon gold medal) there existed a dearth of written training knowledge about our sport.

The single light in the darkness was a series of training paperbacks, "How They Train", authored by Fred Wilt. An FBI agent by day, Wilt served as coach to Hal Higdon, ex-patriot Buddy Edelen (former American record holder for the marathon), as well as de facto coach to all runners who read his books.

Today, runners are buried in volumes of training terms (VO2max, threshold runs), ideal training sites (high altitude, oxygen tents), shoe construction and nutrition recommendations.

I say, let's get back to basics and talk about proven training methods that work for real New England folks.

Name: Byrne Decker **Age:** 33
College: Colby (although ran very little and very poorly there)
Club affiliation: CMS

Best Marks: 5k: 14:57,
5 mile: 24:46, 10k: 31:04, 12k: 38:08,
15k: 48:07, 10 mile: 51:58,
1/2 marathon: 1:08:04,
30k: 1:39:59, 20 mile: 1:47:23,
marathon: 2:26:07

Personal Statistics:

Birth Date: 3/18/67
Birth Place: Albany NY
Height: 5ft 7in **Weight:** 130

Started Racing: 1981-1985, raced very little 1985-89, started again in 1990;

Family: wife Melanie, kids Megan (5), Ben (4), John (1), #4 in October.

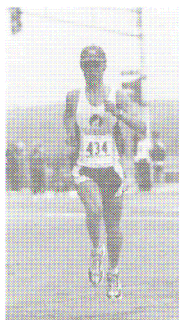
Occupation: litigation attorney at Pierce Atwood in Portland, ME.

Pre-Training Warm-up: Stretching: 5 minutes tops

Log Book: Yes. Only essentials, distance, time and details for any speed workouts including time of intervals and time of rest.

Daily workouts: 80-100 miles year round. 2-3 hard days per week. When marathon training, hard days are long run of 15-20 starting at 7 minute pace, finishing at 6 minute pace or below, medium long run of 13-15 at the same pace, and one track workout of 6-8 miles at 5:10-5:15 with one minute rest, 2-4, 2 miles at the same pace with two minutes rest, or straight tempo run of 3-6 miles at the same pace. Will try to fit in 3 runs of 10-20 miles at 5:30-5:35 pace in any given training period. At this point, I do very little running faster than 5:10 pace.

Favorite/best race: Vermont City Marathon. Have run there five times and have only run well once, but it's a great race, and makes for a great weekend in a great city. The epitome of what a small city marathon should be and exactly what I would love to see in a



Byrne Decker

marathon here in Portland.

Beach to Beacon is also a great race, but at the wrong time of year for me, unfortunately.

Favorite race course: Stu's 30k. Hilly, challenging course over a great distance. Used to be a great race for New England's best to battle it out.

Favorite workout: 3 mile tempo at 5:10 pace followed by 6-9 miles easy, followed by another 3 mile tempo at 5:10 pace.

Favorite running route: Maine marathon course

Running Hero(es): Locally, there is no runner who can help but admire Joan Samuelson. It is mind boggling to think of how much she has accomplished in the sport, while training alone in Freeport, Maine.

Who inspired you to run?

Nobody in particular. I started running cross country to get in shape for basketball.

Why do I run?

Because, unlike team sports, one can stay competitive after college and it's a sport that can be balanced with work, family and other interests. It's also a very social sport where top competitors are in the same race as recreational joggers, and for easy training, people of all abilities can train together. Our noon running group contains upwards of 12 guys at all different levels. In October, we are all going to Ireland together.

I do disagree, however, with the notion that people who work full time and have families can't reach their running potential. This is not like gymnastics where one has to spend 8 hours per day in the gym. To run 100 miles per week requires less than 2 hours per day. Except on rare occasions (which I admit do arise) that time can be accommodated into the daily schedule. This is especially true for those of us who sit in an office rather than do some type of physical work. In my view, the only true limits on running potential are talent and dedication. If I never run faster than 2:26 for the marathon, it's not because I work hard and have a family.

Michael A. Musca



We Need Your Input

NEWS•RUN features news of interest about fellow MTC members. If you have some news to share about yourself or someone else in the club, please pass along the information by calling Mike Doyle at 871-0051, sending e-mail to midoyle@mainecul.org, or by mail to:

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