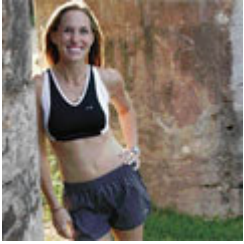


Highlights



Kristin Armstrong's Marathon Success

After her divorce from Lance Armstrong, the author discovers her own athletic potential and the healing power of running
by Kristin Armstrong

I am not an athlete.

I have washed clothes for an athlete, massaged an athlete, bandaged wounds for an athlete, cheered my heart out for an athlete, prepared pasta al dente for an athlete, but never in 32 years did I consider any athletic potential living within the confines of my own body.

This body has undergone quite a metamorphosis from the clothes-rack purposes of my early twenties to the respectable status of bearing and nursing my three children in my thirties. After the birth of my daughters in November 2001, I was busy and tired, yet restless. Maybe I wanted to flee the weight of my responsibility. Maybe I craved clarity and wanted to erase the fog that often hung over my head. Be it an escape, a challenge, or an opportunity to be alone, I began to run. And last December, four days before my divorce from cyclist Lance Armstrong, I did something I never thought I could do. I ran my first marathon.

I'm lucky to have two great friends and athletes as my running partners. Kristen Turner (K.T.) is an Ironman finisher, personal trainer, and mother of two. Paige Gressett Alam is a veteran of 14 marathons and a mother of two. Starting in September, we hit the road every Saturday at 6 a.m. to run the hills of central Austin, Texas, anywhere from five to 22 miles. They created my training program and led me through it (with help from our friend and coach Cassandra Henkiel). I never wanted to know much, not the distance, our pace, none of it—a welcome escape from the pressures of too many other decisions. I met them at the appointed hour, took GUs and hydrated when they told me to, and put one foot in front of the other until they told me I was done.

I loved the morning runs, starting out in the pitch dark, praying for firm footing and deliverance from danger. Because we went so early, and were finished before most of civilization was brewing coffee, the running had a surreal quality to it. Almost like it never happened at all. But the ache in my knees when I carried my twins upstairs or the salt on my steering wheel later in the day would remind me that I had made my private journey long before I punched my mommy time card for the day.

The conversations you have on a long run are unlike what you have when you're chasing toddlers, refilling sippy cups, or retrieving pacifiers. I now got to hear and tell stories in detail, broken only by the occasional need to run single file. There is something to sharing a private burden or relating a painful experience while chugging down the road. It's less about advice or validation. The wisdom, tears, and laughter we shared gave me an insight and appreciation for my friends that I have not had since I was in college. And it's a good thing, too. Because come race day, I ended up needing these friends more profoundly than I expected.

The marathon was the Dallas White Rock, on Sunday, December 14. I woke at 5 a.m. to eat my ritual pre-long-run peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Paige and K.T. prepared the clothing, GU packets, ibuprofen, pace bands, time chips, and Chapstick, and pinned our numbers to our shorts. I was blissfully unaware as I let them tell me where to slather BodyGlide so my clothes wouldn't chafe and make me bleed. Bleed? Huh? My only rules were that if I lost a toenail or had to go number two, I was done.

It was below 30 degrees at the start. The pre-race prayer asked for protection from bonking and injury, and reminded us to run with endurance the race set before us. It took about five miles to find my usual stride, but we were pushing faster than I was used to. I wondered if I should have asked more questions.

The marathon gets its name from White Rock Lake, which we looped around on the second half of the course. I joked that it was really an ocean. With each mile, I felt my surge become more of a sputter. A guy in front of me had what looked like an artillery belt packed with gels, PowerBars, and water bottles, which caused his blue shorts to ride up his behind. I focused on that to hold on to any semblance of my sense of humor—always important in a crisis situation. We finally made it to the end of the lake and turned up what they call "Dolly Parton Hill." That was at about mile 20, the proverbial "wall." I thought about Lance and his ability to withstand pain. And I thought that he might even be proud, and a little surprised, to see me hauling my tired body and toting my invisible pack of sadness over all those miles.

At mile 22 I could feel the rumblings of a revolution in my legs. By mile 24, I was getting cramps in my calves. I tried to dredge up breathing methods from childbirth classes. It helped just about as much as it did during labor (not at all). I fantasized about an epidural. I was breaking down, crying and

Continued on other side...

Food, Fun, and Fitness (in that order!)

*Join us for our 2nd Annual
Client Appreciation Picnic
Sunday, September 11th
At Devil's Lake State Park*

Bring the family or friends there will be lunch, canoeing, biking (b.y.o.b.), kayaking, rock climbing, sunny spots on the beach and shady spots under big oak trees. For those of you planning on doing the triathlon the following weekend, it will be a great opportunity to get a feel for the course. It's a time to enjoy the end of summer, spend time with great people, and get away from the world for a while.

Devil's Lake Triathlon September 18th

Swim ½ mile—Bike 15 miles—Run 5k

This triathlon can be run in teams with each person doing one event. We would like to encourage all our clients to participate in one of the events.

Swim ½ mile—Bike 15 miles—Run 5k

If you want to do more than one event or the whole thing that would be just great! There will be sign up sheets on the bulletin board. If you are interested in doing an event just put your name under that event. We can then form teams for the competition.

Swim ½ mile—Bike 15 miles—Run 5k

We will especially need swimmers and bikers for this competition. This is a great way to get your spouse involved as well!

***See "I'll Race... Someday" on the reverse side of this newsletter ***

Kristin Armstrong cont...

hyperventilating, when I looked at Paige and said, "Can I really do this? Am I okay?" I thought my calf muscle was going to rip. Paige is the warmest person I know. But this was Paige the athlete. She said evenly, "Yes, Kik. You can do this and everything else. Now do it." And I kept running. Straight through the finish line into a pile of hugs and tears, in 3 hours, 48 minutes.

It was more than a novice athletic achievement, it was a journey of friendship, the healing power of sport, and the confidence of achieving a goal I once considered reserved for those with more talent and resolve. It was a reminder that with good company and hard work, regular people can do something special. And it was special. In my past life I gave everything I had to make a dream possible for someone else. On this day I gave everything I had to make a dream possible for myself.

It's an odd thing, when your body says no and your mind and your spirit say yes. It's frightening and empowering and clarifying and beautiful all at once. It was the past year of my life, shortened into a span of 26.2 arduous miles. It was the culmination of experiences, the knowledge that my body can be pushed past its breaking point, just like my heart. In both instances, when you come to the end of yourself, God's grace is all that sustains. And it is enough.

SEPTEMBER STUDIO CLASSES

TUESDAY 6:30 PM
PILATE'S

WEDNESDAY 12:00
BASIC YOGA

THURSDAY 6:00 AM
BASIC YOGA

FRIDAY 11:45 AM
PROGRESSIVE YOGA

PILATES FOCUSES ON CORE STRENGTH, USING THE MAT, SWISS BALLS, AND MEDICINE BALLS.

BASIC YOGA IS DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE ALL ABILITIES AND LEVELS. THIS CLASS FOCUSES ON FLEXIBILITY AND RELAXATION

PROGRESSIVE YOGA WILL BEGIN TO SLOWLY INCORPORATE MORE ADVANCED STRENGTH POSES AND INVERSIONS AS THE STUDENTS PROGRESS. A GREAT COMPLEMENT TO BASIC YOGA.

I'll Race... Someday

By: Michael Lohre, ACSM, MS

Edited by: Rebekah ©

I have quite a few clients who are recreational joggers and I'm always after them to do a race. When I broach them on the subject most of my clients get excited about the idea of picturing themselves in competitive condition, the envy of friends and family for being capable of such an undertaking. However, when I suggest registering for a specific race in a month or two, attitudes usually do a 180-degree turn. I hear many excuses, I'm not in good enough shape or I'm really busy this month. But they always reassure me that they will try one next season.

Certainly most recreational joggers are capable of jogging or run/walking a 5k or 3.1 miles. Why then, do they avoid these competitions? The biggest fear is not that they won't finish, or fear of becoming exhausted or dehydrated. It is the fear of competition and being judged by others, the fear of destroying how they see themselves. Just as the image of successfully completing an event can put our self-image on a pedestal, having an unsuccessful race could be the destruction of that image. I think these fears are similar to skipping the game of kickball as a kid because of the fear of being picked last. I know first hand that entering your first competition can be terrifying. I've been through it and I am here to disarm some of this fear and give you some very positive reasons to compete. I don't believe everyone needs to be a competitive athlete, but I do know that most people benefit greatly from occasional, healthy competition.

Most individuals that take up jogging do it for a reason. They are interested in losing some weight, becoming more toned, or increasing self-esteem. Now jogging is a great way to accomplish all of these things, but it takes time and consistency to change the human body. As adults it is sometimes very difficult to break our routine and make time to develop new habits even when the benefits are so lofty. This is where entering a competition becomes very useful. I try to get my clients who are attempting to implement a jogging program to register for an event months ahead of time. It is amazing how consistent clients become once they have made a commitment to race. This is not a verbal or mental commitment. What I am talking about is the ritual of filling out the form, signing the liability waiver, writing the check and sending it off. At this point it is no longer a private commitment, you have just made it public! Many of my clients who have "planned" on doing a race have not found the motivation to train consistently and have found excuses or previous commitments that interfere with the competition. Contrarily, those who are fully registered train religiously and run successful events.

Another important benefit of racing is acquiring the colorful tee shirt that accompanies most races (yes, even the ugly ones). What that tee shirt symbolizes is your accomplishment and it contributes greatly to your self-esteem and building your self-image as a runner. Self-image is a difficult thing to manipulate and it is important to consciously break our typical patterns in behavior to remold this image. If you currently view yourself as someone who is unathletic, unworthy of competition, or afraid to take chances such as showing up on race day, it's imperative to remold those negative self-images and take steps towards becoming the person you want to be. Preparing yourself for a competition with realistic expectations and successfully meeting your goal is a great way to begin shattering poor self image. Receiving your tee shirt and wearing it proudly reminds you and others that you had the ability to overcome your anxieties, the discipline to successfully train for the event, and the stamina to complete it. It says, "I am a runner!"

I have saved the most important reason to race for last. It's really fun and you are left with an overwhelming sense of accomplishment. There is something very special about a race, the anxiousness before, the excitement at the start, the perseverance through the middle when you thought about quitting (everyone does), and the elation at the end. Those of you that have raced know the feelings. If I haven't persuaded you to sign-up for a competition yet try to be a spectator first, support a friend or support everyone that crosses the finish line. The thrill of racing is contagious and the energy of the event captures spectators who witness the courageousness of the participants. Many times those that finish last touch me more than the winners, because I know the real courage is often displayed by those coming in at the end. For those of you fearing being laughed at for finishing last on race day, go to a race and see how many people are laughing at those who cross the finish line last. Those folks have guts and heart.

Have I convinced you yet? Don't put competing on hold, find a race and sign up today (badgerlandstriders.com has a great race calendar with several events every week). The mental hurdles are the toughest to overcome, but once conquered you will have one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. If you don't need to beat a specific time, finish in front of your friend, or the old guy next to you (watch out some old guys are really fast), you will free up a lot of unwanted tension. Instead focus on enjoying the day, keeping consistent form and pace, and having the best race that you can for that day. 99% of contestants aren't going there to win, they are going to test themselves and enjoy an event filled with excitement and camaraderie—be there with them!