



“The Path From Ego to Humility”



Running has always been a part of me. I consider it to be a gift at so many various points in my life. When I was in middle school, the high school decided to start a cross-country team, not a well-known sport in southern Kentucky. The coach had approached me to come out and help start this new venture. I had always enjoyed the two local 5K's each year in our small town. I had no idea what I was doing but it was fun. I dreamed of some day winning our local race known as the “toughest 5K in Kentucky”, which was no joke, it was called the Jacksonian. So, without hesitation I joined the team, not knowing the impact it would have on me for the rest of my life.

I have always been passionate about two things – running and leadership. What I learned over my high school and college running years is that running and leadership both intertwine with each other as running creates a strong need for leadership of self. To this day, I still believe strongly that if you can't lead yourself, you will never reach your full potential in running.

I can't tell you much about any elite runners names, but I can sit down and talk leadership philosophies with you all day long. What started out as me wanting to be a good runner soon developed into me wanting to help people be the best they can be.

My focus is always on three core values to be successful – to have the desire to achieve, to be intentional in route to achieve, and to be consistent across the board. The more an individual does those three things well, the better outcomes are.

My running career has taken many turns. I was fortunate enough to earn 1st team all-state accolades as a high school athlete in Kentucky. I also had the privilege to run for Georgetown College before moving on to my passion – coaching others. I served as an assistant coach on three state cross-country championship teams. After taking a role as head coach, I helped guide two more state championships and one state runner-up team. I have been blessed to coach several individual state champions in cross-country and track. Being named Kentucky state high school cross-country coach of the year on separate occasions was also very nice.

That was all nice and satisfying, but my true fulfillment came from helping others, serving them, motivating them, believing in them to open up possibilities not only in running, but as they go through life.



I left coaching behind in 2006 to work in my other half of passion – leadership. I served as a principal and regional director for 17 years leading various large groups to academic and cultural improvements. I absolutely loved the work, creating better work situations for adults and students. Just like running, working together to create the highest ceiling of success possible. The teachers knew what they were doing way more than me, I focused on leadership and development of self, thereof. I loved working with others to improve their own leadership skills. To me, it wasn't a title – it was because I felt the need that others just wanted to have a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

With all that time, it limited my time for running, which I missed greatly. While still a principal in Kentucky, I decided to slowly get back after it and what a difference it made for me. I had spent so much time focusing on others, I forgot to take care of myself. The comeback was slow and steady and shortly into it I knew I still had it. It was fun cranking out training schedules again, doing research, searching for road races, etc. All the fun stuff that comes with being a runner.

Part of the comeback was travelling to different places and doing half marathons. So, this Kentucky boy signed up for the 2013 Jacksonville Bank Half-Marathon (now Ameris) in a place called Jacksonville, Florida. I instantly sensed what a big running community this was and set a plan in motion to find a job here so I could run year round. We moved here in May, 2014.

Shortly after moving, one day I noticed my breathing was way off. I shrugged it off to the changing of air in Florida. But it wouldn't stop, I couldn't go 400 meters without being completely out of breath. I went from running 80-90 miles a week, to could barely get through a lap around the track, something was amiss.

Six weeks after moving into this great running community I went to see a local doctor. He took an x-ray of my chest and when he looked at the results his head turned sideways with a confused look. I was diagnosed with paralyzed diaphragms due to autoimmune disease and reactive arthritis. I had three surgeries over the course of 16 months to stitch down my diaphragms which significantly limited my oxygen capacity.

It took me almost 7 years to attempt another comeback all the while learning to breathe again, running at a much slower pace and learning to love the sport regardless of the speed.



Since that time, I have completed five marathons and fifteen half marathons. I consistently run 75-90 miles a week, granted much slower than I used to, but I still enjoy it - for the love of running. I try to find a half-marathon out of town about once a month. The breathing issue will be there, all I can do is focus on what I can control and not let comparing the past with the present enter my mind. Ego can destroy one's motivation quickly, a lesson I had to learn along the way.

Back track 30 years ago, to that 5K I dreamed of winning one day. Well, it happened two years in a row. This is the picture that keeps me motivated, a headline with a picture. That person in the picture is a younger version of me and my dear Grandmother who lived to be 101 years old. I can still picture the pride in her face that day. I look at it every day when that question crops into my head of why am I doing this.

Cross Wins The "Toughest 5K in Kentucky" Saturday

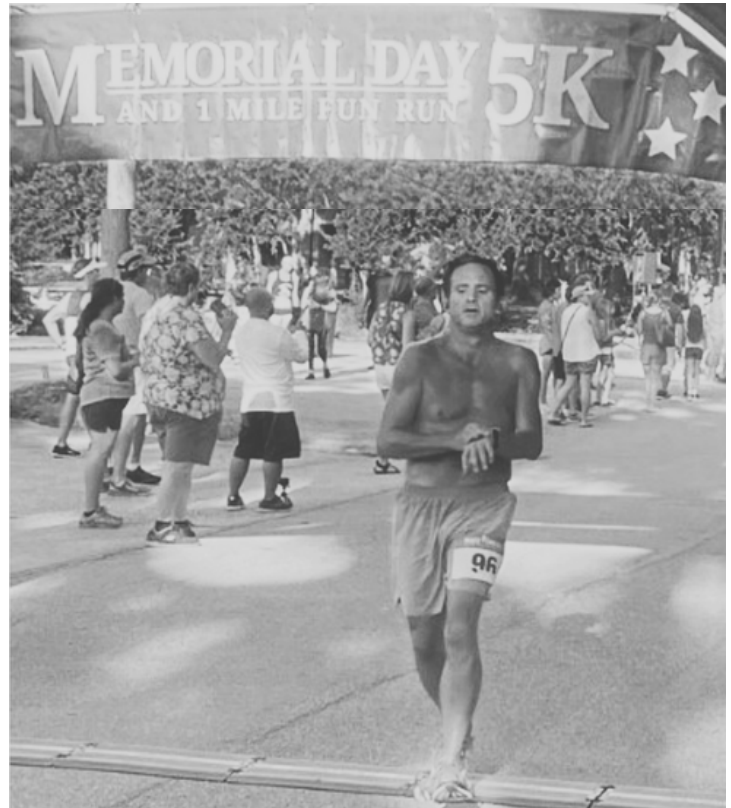


My philosophy for the comeback was simple - I wanted to be a part of what I loved. Doing so I had to humble himself enough to put ego aside and just get better each day. While difficult at first, I was just thrilled to be back out there. Ironically, my first 5K in 7-1/2 years was the Florida Striders Memorial Day 5K. My time was almost 8 minutes slower than the last 5K I ran before we moved. I didn't care, when I finished, I actually went behind a vehicle and starting crying non-stop for a few minutes. I love the sport and had missed it so much.



What's ironic is I have another picture that is posted right next to that one with a finisher medal underneath, the 2021 Memorial Day 5K. My first race back in a difficult comeback. I cherish both of them equally.

You never know the difference things like road races and clubs can make in a person's life. That's why I take so much pride in being a Strider and starting my own coaching business. I value the trust people put in me. I take that trust very personal and the fulfillment of the athletes I work with is the most important to me. You see, running is a combo - the work part and the leadership of self.



If you would like to inquire about coaching I can be reached at crossrunningacademy@gmail.com or 859-462-9916. I also have social media handles on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. My website is a work in progress but you can check out there as well crossrunningacademy.com.

Thanks for reading a shorter version of my story, I am proud to be a Strider and am excited the direction this club is heading in!

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06

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