

Soaking in the marathon spirit

By Charles Clines



When training for a marathon, especially for the first time, a person often needs to receive a shot of enthusiasm and/or inspiration. Those longer runs can become quite a chore sometimes. I've always said, and still maintain, that training for a marathon is similar to working a part-time job but without getting paid -- except for the elites, of course.

So, what does one do to keep up his/her spirits? Well, Shiner Bock sometimes helps, and training buddies, if you're fortunate enough to have someone else or a group to train with. Well, here's something else that might help raise the level of enthusiasm -- watch the Spirit of the Marathon movie.

I recently watched it and it almost made me want to train for another marathon. Almost being the key word. I have thinning cartilage in my right knee and after finishing six marathons, I've decided to shelve any marathon aspirations. But for those who are training for one or thinking about joining the ever-growing number of people who have finished a 26.2-mile journey.

The movie features several everyday people, some first-time marathoners, and some elites and shows how they prepare for the Chicago Marathon. There's commentary from such elites as Bill Rodgers, Frank Shorter and Paula Radcliffe. The training of women's record-holder Deena Kastor and Daniel Nienga also are followed. Though the movie doesn't go into a lot of detail about their training, there is enough mention to give an idea of how elites train. For example, Kastor noted she will run up to 145 miles a week. When cooking one night during training, she said she had run 20 miles that morning and six miles in the afternoon and described it as sort of an ``easy" day!

Nienga was shown in Japan, where he lives, and in Kenya, where his relatives live. It also showed the hazards of a Kenyan runner who is bringing back money to help parents as they were robbed and house burned down. Also, two relatives were killed.

Again, the movie doesn't go into a lot of detail with the training of the regular runners, but does show some of the setbacks that can befall a runner during training, such as a torn meniscus. Yet, the movie does a good job of providing the overall ``feeling" of preparing for a marathon over several weeks.

It wraps up with the subjects running the Chicago Marathon, and shows Kastor's great winning run and the disappointment of Nienga not quite winning -- again.

Even for the non-runner, this movie should be worth watching. For the first-timer, it might possibly prepare them for what's in store for them. For the experienced marathoner, it should provide enough inspiration to lace up with a new enthusiasm. And even for those of us who don't expect to run another one, it will stoke the fires to train for whatever distance.

I rented the movie from Netflix, but probably will buy it because I might need more than a one-time shot of inspiration. If you'd like to buy it, get it from Amazon.com by clicking the link on the Home Page. The purchase will help in a small way to support this website.