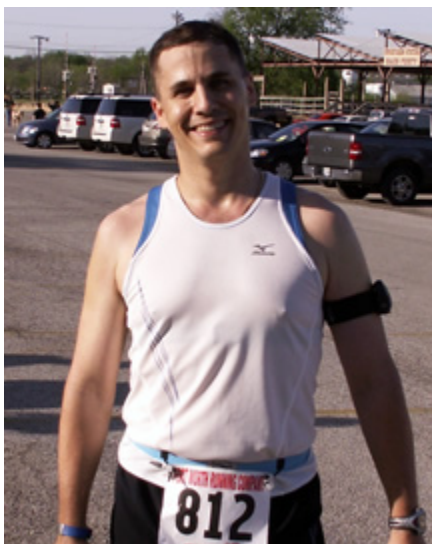


One man's journey from 'Fat to Fit'

By Fiona Green



While most of us know the basics of getting in shape – eat less and exercise more -- few people have studied the process in as much detail as 33-year-old Greg Takacs. Last October, he embarked on a journey ‘From Fat to Fit’ that he has chronicled on his website aptly entitled gregstransformation.com.

The site is fascinating. It is easy to get lost in the various articles and diary entries, so much so that after 20 minutes or so you realize that instead of reading about someone else’s training regimen, you could have actually gone out and run a 5K. There is information on diet, weight training, race strategies, pacing, body fat percentage – you name it – Greg has it covered. He even has photographs of himself at different stages of his transformation, which shows him slimming from his high of 245 pounds to 164.

His commitment to training is clearly a reflection of his personality. Whatever he does, he wants to do it well. For two and a half years he was part of the volunteer fire department in Willow Park. As a certified firefighter and first responder, he logged hundreds of hours going to fire calls and car accidents. He explained that this was a huge burden on his family as these calls were unscheduled and unpredictable, yet, no matter what he was doing, he would always respond. His firefighting career ended in August 2008 shortly after the birth of his daughter.

Taking up running in January, he logged a 24:04 5K at Lake Benbrook on January 30, then steadily improved his times, even placing first overall in the Fort Worth Can Academy’s 5K on May 22. He ran a 5K in 18:13 at the Firemen’s Run in Fort Worth on May 29, followed on Monday for a second place overall finish in the American Heroes 10K in Arlington. It should be pointed out that these results are not typical. Hungarian born Greg is no couch potato turned athlete overnight. He is simply rediscovering his natural talent. This talent first showed itself many years ago. At age 13, he was the national champion in Hungary in Cross Country (4500 meters) in his age group. His proudest achievement was a national third place in the 13-14-year-old age group for the 10K, which he ran in 35:14. He also ran a marathon at age 13 in 3:26:14.

Once he started high school, he quit running altogether but kept his eating habits. This combination led his weight to steadily increase until it peaked at 245 pounds in 2000.

The turning point for Greg came when a young girl at his son’s day camp poked him in the stomach and announced "You're big!" In Greg’s words, “That little poke ended up being a huge nudge.” Around that time, his wife's company was organizing a 10,000

steps a day challenge and offering free pedometers to participants. He started walking in his neighborhood and enjoyed monitoring his distance on the pedometer. Shortly afterward he stumbled upon the website www.bodybuilding.com. On the site's message board there were dozens of 'Fat to fit transformation pictures,' images of men and women who had lost impressive amounts of weight and become super fit in the process. This was all the motivation he needed.

Greg's transformation began in October 2009 with daily workouts on an elliptical trainer.

Coworkers aided him with training tips, providing him with answers to his many questions. His enthusiasm has rubbed off on his family. His wife, who is a great cook, makes sure that family meals are always healthy and nutritious. She has introduced little changes like using whole wheat flour for home made pasta instead of white flour, offering a granola bar instead of a brownie as a snack or going with a leaner cut of steak instead of the ribeye. His 5-year-old son has been inspired to follow in dad's footsteps and was planning his first 5K.

For cross training, Greg visits a gym twice a week for weight training to develop upper body strength. He also enjoys pool workouts although he considers those to be more relaxation than anything else.

When asked what he likes most about running, Greg had this to say:

'Running is a great hobby. You can do it as an individual; you don't depend on anyone else's schedule. You can run in teams to make it a social event and the goals you set out to do are yours only and you're in control of them whether you will make them or not. People are generally supportive of your goals and I really enjoy the racing aspect where I get to meet new people of different ages with different capabilities with one common goal; to get to the finish line as fast as they possibly can, or for some people just to get to the finish line.'

His future race goal is to qualify for Boston with a 3:10 or faster at the Tyler Rose Marathon on 10/10/10. He calls this his C2BQ (couch to Boston Qualify) plan. He started his 18-week marathon training in June, a plan that consists of several longer races such as the Carrabba's Classic Half Marathon in San Antonio in June and El Scorcho (25K) in Fort Worth in July.

Judging by his progress so far, reaching that goal should be a piece of cake -- or in Greg's case -- a piece of a granola bar.