

Beyond the Finish Line



Julie Mais

I hear the “beep, beep, beep,” of my alarm in the morning about an hour before the time that I would prefer to start my day. I keep thinking maybe I should change my phone alarm to something sweeter and more pleasant to wake to in the early hours of the morning, but I also know the cute sounds of birds chirping, or something like that, would be easier to sleep through.

After hitting the “snooze” button once or twice in denial of what I need to do, I pull myself out of bed, fumble my way to the kitchen and make the usual, peanut butter toast with a little bit of honey drizzled on top.

I make my way to the couch to watch the news and to eat breakfast — you know, the early morning news that comes on before the regular morning news. After my meal has settled, I change into my athletic shorts and tank top and lace up my running shoes. I grab my earbuds, set the music to something with a good beat and leave the house for what has become my semi-daily morning run.

Some mornings when my feet hit the pavement near my apartment in Kansas City, I feel proud and accomplished that I’m sticking to a commitment I made months ago. Many mornings, though, it isn’t until I round the corner and head up the last hill of my 3-5 mile run that was such a challenge to complete that I think to

myself, “good, glad I got that out of the way for today.”

Back in the spring, I was chatting with a friend about getting back to running. Six years ago we trained for and ran the annual fall half-marathon in Kansas City. Both of us were feeling a need to set a goal and start to prioritize our health and fitness. So, I decided to run the same race again. Knowing this type of thing is not easy for me to complete on my own, I recruited my mom to be my accountability partner and running mate on race day.

May came around, and it was time to start training. I would be lying if I didn’t say that the majority of this time I was internally kicking and screaming against what I had agreed to do. I’ve never been a morning person, and waking up even earlier to exercise before work is not something I was excited about. And, starting the weekend with a long run — the runs that prepare a runner for the 13.1-mile distance — is not exactly fun. However, the sense of accomplishment and the feeling of a growing endurance in my legs and lungs is something I cannot quite describe — thrilling and pride come close, though.

Hereford Advantage

This summer and early fall as the American Hereford Association (AHA) was wrapping up another fiscal year and as staff was preparing the *2016 Annual*

Report, we began to assess where the Association and Hereford breed stand. Turn to Page 33 and you can read how the Hereford breed had another strong year. Hereford popularity is the highest it’s been in recent years, and it’s such an exciting time to be in the Hereford breed — however, it wasn’t a sprint to this goal, but a marathon.

Talking to Hereford breeders and staff and learning how the breed got to this point, it’s evident that it was a long, difficult course filled with tough days and hard decisions. The path to the “Hereford Advantage,” we know today, took Hereford breeders making tough culling decisions and using the tools the Association worked hard to provide. I commend the breeders who decided many years ago on a common goal — to provide their customers with genetics that are accountable, predictable, profitable and sustainable.

Unlike a marathon race, however, there isn’t a finish line for progress. As we start new fiscal year 2017, I look forward to seeing how the choices made today affect the outcome of the breed for decades to come.

On Oct. 15, my mom finished her first half-marathon, and I finished my third and first in six years. The race had moments of fun and moments of agony as we ran the 13.1-mile hilly course. We hit our goal, but I don’t think we’ll stop there. **HW**