



Back, l-r: Sarah Lester, Mychal Reynolds, Brian Reynolds. Front: Matthew, Sophia, and David Reynolds. Photo: Amy Makechnie

Meet Ultra-Marathoner Brian Reynolds

By Amy Makechnie
For the Beacon

Turning 40 hasn't slowed Brian Reynolds of Andover. If anything, he's getting faster...and tougher.

Brian has been running since sixth grade. He's qualified for the famed Boston Marathon three times, and he's run three ultra running events – "ultra" meaning anything longer than a traditional marathon race of 26.2 miles. His first ultra was a 50K (31 miles) in 2004 and his second was a 50-miler in 2006, which he ran while enduring plantar fasciitis. It was a long and painful race that required weeks of recovery. But he did recover, and came back stronger than ever.

Brian credits Jen Braley, who organized "Andover's Biggest Loser," for helping him recover. He was motivated to lose weight with a group and kicked up his running mileage. He jokes that running so much also let him eat. While participating in the weight loss competition, Brian increased the frequency of his running from four or five days a week to seven, leading him to feel strong and fit enough to sign up for a 100K (62 miles) in South Woodstock Vermont, which took place earlier this summer.

On July 17, the night before the race, Brian drove to Vermont (his kids in tow) to pick up his number and set up a tent – that's right, a tent! That's because the race would start at 2PM the next day and he would be finishing well into the early morning hours. At least he hoped so.

Race rules afford runners 20 hours to complete the course, but Brian had the following mindset:

At a minimum, finish in less than 14 hours.

It was realistic to finish in 12 hours.

A dream would be to break 11 hours.

Brian explains, "When I approach a race this way I can stay mentally focused and not let myself slip away from a singular goal."

The next day, July 18, Brian stood at the starting line. He says it was important not to psyche himself out. "62 miles is a long way. However, as I stood at the starting line I was thinking '5.6 miles to the first aid station, that's doable.' Then at that aid station it's 3.8 to the next one, and so on. It's not a 62-mile race, it's a bunch of four or five-mile runs with a little party mixed in at each break."

The weather on July 18 was pretty close to ideal: 70's and not too humid.

However, the course was off main roads; a combination of dirt roads and horse trails. With all the rain this year, several spots on the trail were wet and muddy. Add the many runners and horses previously on the trail, and footwork was pretty tricky.

Zeke Zucker, an accomplished ultra runner and part of the race committee, had told the runners the Vermont course was full of "PUDS" (Pointless Ups and Downs). Brian says, "Needless to say there were many, many hills. Several of them were more than two-miles long. The good thing was that, after a long climb, we were almost always rewarded with a beautiful view...it was spectacular."

Brian was especially appreciative of the support along the trail. "There were 18 aid stations and it was like coming into a NASCAR pit stop; someone takes your camelback (a hydration system runners wear like a backpack) and fills it and someone gets you food."

What does one eat while running 62 miles? Choices included water, sports drink, and a selection of high calorie and salty foods like potato chips, M&M's, candy, boiled potatoes with salt, cookies, sandwiches, and fruit. Brian says that at one aid station there was a barbecue serving cheeseburgers. "Those really hit the spot around dinner time."

There were two medical check stations where all runners were weighed. Too much weight gain or loss disqualified a runner. "They're very careful about helping people manage their fluids and electrolytes so they can have a safe race," Brian adds.

Since Brian only drank water, and no sport drinks during the race, he had to pay close attention to his electrolyte levels. He wore a camelback filled with water, brought electrolyte pills to help with hydration, and carried Fig Newtons and CLIF bars for emergency use.

Only about half of the race was run during daylight. When the sun went down, runners were only able to stay on course with glow sticks marking the course. Brian says seeing those lights was amazingly comforting in the dark of the night.

"It was the hardest at night in the last 20 miles. There were times when I was sore and tired and thought 'it's the be-

ginning of the end,' but eventually I'd pass someone or get passed...and realize it's a bad patch, nothing a cookie or some Coke won't cure."

Runners were allowed a "pacer," (a companion to run the last 20 miles.) Although he thinks he could, perhaps, have run faster with a friend by his side, Brian is, "Overall happy I made it through on my own."

Brian did make it through, and made it through well. It was Sunday morning, July 19, at 3:05 AM, when Brian crossed the finish line. He didn't have his "dream day," but he did finish near the top of the field, in fourth place. He completed the whopping 62-mile race in 13 hours and 5 minutes. (The winner was a 39-year-old Massachusetts man who ran the race in just over 12 hours.)

Of the 19 runners who entered the race, only two did not finish. Of those who did finish, some faced some extreme adversity. Two runners who went out faster than Brian got lost. Both found their way back, but one wore out quickly, became confused, and had to walk much of the way. "The cool thing was that he could have quit and he didn't. For him it was as much about finishing as it was about winning."

After finishing the race, Brian crashed in his tent for five hours. He awoke around 9AM to, "very stiffly," walk to the finish line to join the excited crowd in cheering on the remaining 62-milers. Runners from the premier event, the Vermont 100-Miler, were also coming to the finish line. The 100-milers had started July 17 as well, but at 4AM instead of 9AM,, and had a 30-hour time limit. This worked out so all the runners of both the 62-mile and 100-mile events could finish the race by 10AM Sunday morning. The last runner for the 100-miler received a standing ovation. His name was Karsten Solheim of Arizona with a time of 29 hours, 54 minutes, and 40 seconds. Oh, and he's 72-years-old.

These days Brian runs everyday, often logging between 40-70 miles a week of what he calls "fairly easy running." A typical running week looks something like this:

Monday, Tuesday: Easy one hour
See Brian on page 40



Isn't it Time
for a Change?

Consider Woodcrest Village...

Are you ready for a change? Woodcrest Village Assisted Living will provide you with one of the most positive changes you've encountered. A friendly enjoyable atmosphere, beautiful apartments, daily activities, common relaxation areas, endless amenities and a supportive and professional staff that is second-to-none. Come visit Woodcrest Village assisted living and find out how you can make positive changes in your life.

Assisted Living in a
Gracious Village Setting

356 Main Street, New London, NH 03257
(603) 526-2300 www.woodcrestvillage.com



WOODCREST
VILLAGE

ASSISTED LIVING