

## FOOD &amp; LIVING

Recommend 

Friday June 22, 2012

**Patience is a challenging virtue**by Monica Orosz  
Daily Mail staff

• *Editor's note: This is the second in a series about local runners who are training for the 40th Charleston Distance Run.*

One of the hardest things George Aulenbacher ever had to do was stop running.

For two months earlier this year, he didn't tie on his shoes and head out the door as he usually does, six or seven days a week.

It just about drove him crazy. His wife, Traci, didn't like it too much either.

The longtime runner - and principal at George Washington High School - is learning the real meaning of patience as he slowly begins to train again and make sure his injury is healed.

The culprit: an inflamed bursa sack between his Achilles' tendon and heel. In layman's terms: It hurts like the dickens.

"I know when I did it," he said, recalling the day last August when he was running up Montrose Drive in South Charleston and felt pain.

"I couldn't walk the next day," he said.

It put him out of last year's Charleston Distance Run and out of plans to run the New York City and the Boston marathons.

Typical of veteran runners, Aulenbacher figured it would be OK if he just ratcheted back his running a bit.

"I still ran on it. I wore a boot," he said. But the pain persisted.

He finally had to take some real time off earlier this year, not an easy proposition for someone who says this about running: "I like to run. That's all I do, is run."

A couple of doctors suggested his running days might be over.

"I'd rather cut off my foot," he said.

Aulenbacher has loved running since he started chasing after his dad on trails around their home in Pennsylvania, where he grew up.

His dad welcomed Aulenbacher along, but he didn't slow his pace for his son.

"I wanted to catch him," Aulenbacher said. So he became a good runner. He and his wife, Traci, an avid walker, have three children, 7, 4 and 2. Already his 7-year-old daughter, Emma, is showing interest in running and has completed three 5K races.

Though his training schedule is gradually building and he still isn't running hills, Aulenbacher, 43, is training for the Charleston Distance Run and has no doubt whatsoever about completing it.

"I'm running it," he said. "It's the 40th one. I want the jacket." (A commemorative jacket is available to participants this year.)

He bought better running shoes, fitted with orthotic inserts. He ices his foot after a run and purchased his own ultrasound machine. He realizes flexibility might be an issue, so he's working on that.

Aulenbacher, used to running 50 to 60 miles in a week, is running half that now. He has gradually been building back up, first starting with 3-mile runs and adding a mile at a time. He made it to 7 miles three weeks ago, and the next week, he miscalculated his route and actually ran 9 miles.

"I'm really working on patience," said Aulenbacher, who is determined to add the Boston Marathon to his list; he's completed three other marathons.

He likes to run with a buddy or in a group, with good runners who encourage each other to improve. He used to run often with the Tallman Track Club, a group of runners that has met up for weekly runs for years.

"We're good friends, but we're very competitive with each other," he said of his running buddies, noting his goal for the Distance Run is to beat good friend Jason Redman, the vice principal at Riverside High School. The two rib each other constantly about race times.

Aulenbacher runs sometimes with the members of GW's cross country team, having fun as they try to "beat the principal." You can bet he doesn't let them, if he can help it.

*Contact writer Monica Orosz at [mon...@dailymail.com](mailto:mon...@dailymail.com) or 304-348-4830.*

#### COMMENTS

0 Comments

[Post a Comment](#)