

Cathy Buchanan takes new training regimen to heart and sees her times dramatically improve



Runner
in
the Spotlight

Last summer, Cathy Buchanan was barely dipping below 24 minutes in the Trinity 5000 Summer Series events. When this year's series was conducted, a new Cathy showed up. Her times showed considerable improvement as she cut them by two minutes or more. Now, she's flirting with breaking 21 minutes. It's been quite a jump for Cathy, a 49-year-old masters runner from Fort Worth.



She has been improving so fast that her personal best in a 5K was reset after only one day. She ran a 21:11.3 at the Kolache 5000 in West on Sept. 4 and came back the next day to eclipse that time by almost 10 seconds at the Fort Worth Runners Club Labor Day Run, which earned her the female masters title. Her goal is to break 21 minutes for the 3.1-mile distance.

So, what has happened in the past year? Faster running shoes? A magic pill? Actually her improvement has been a result of better training under the guidance of road warrior Laura Nelson, this website's female Runner of the Year in 2010. Laura watched Cathy run last year and believed she had potential to be better than how she was performing. So, Laura, who has been a highly successful ultra runner before focusing on shorter distances, devised a training plan for Cathy. By following Laura's advice, which among other things increased her mileage from about 10 or so to more than 40 a week, she started showing speedy results. Her times began dipping into the 22-minute range at the end of 2010.

Because of Cathy's improvement, her dedication and her genuine love of running, she is the newest Runner in the Spotlight.

Cathy said Laura had watched her when they occasionally would be at the same track doing speed work. "After my track running partner moved out of town, Laura told me she had been watching me and saw potential in me...and that I could run faster than what I was doing; that I had good leg speed."

Part of the training plan was to include more easy miles in between hard workouts "to burn calories and help drop off some of the pounds, which would also make me faster." Laura also recommended some weight training to help prevent injuries.

"I really admire Laura and all that she has accomplished and knew that whatever she advised me had to help. I wanted to train just like she does. Soon after, my times indeed started to improve."

Laura drilled into Cathy that she had to believe in herself if she wanted to continue to improve. "The more I would improve, the more I started to believe," Cathy said.

Cathy began running about 10 years ago. She initially had started walking with a friend of hers who had begun a Weight Watchers program. Cathy's friend eventually lost about 100 pounds. "We would walk the 5Ks together," Cathy said. "When she moved away, I decided that I wanted to try running them and, I think I finished my first 5K in around 30 minutes."

She was motivated even more when she almost placed in her age division at a smaller race. “I then became motivated to try to run faster.” However, Cathy said she didn’t know anything about how to train. “I would just go out and run three miles about three times a week, and occasionally run a 5K...I had no idea there were even races everywhere every weekend. It wasn’t until the past five years that I have even been competitive at all.”

She said husband Martin has encouraged her running and “I love it and am addicted to it like most runners. Although he doesn’t run himself, I think he loves the racing and the running community as much or even more than I do. He...pushes me and believes I am capable of more than what I believe I can do myself. Now that I’m doing more miles and running longer, he has started biking along with me on my long runs on days that I am not running with a friend.

“I have so many running friends that support and encourage me, but another of my most faithful supporters and good friend is Priscilla Reese. She is a personal trainer and also is very knowledgeable in many areas and has helped me to improve my health and my running.”

Cathy has two grown daughters and works part-time four days a week, so finding time to train is not much of a problem. She does her long runs early in the mornings and her track workouts in the evenings.

“I have pushed hard faithfully all through the summer in hopes that I would see a payoff this fall...I have maintained better times over the summer than I ever have so I am looking forward to the cooler temperatures in hopes of faster times.”

Cathy’s favorite distance is the 5K, but she has run a variety of distances, including a 21-mile trail run. “I have never run a marathon and although I have several friends and family members who say they believe I will do one, that has never been and right now is not a desire of mine.”

Meanwhile, believe that Cathy will nail her goal of beating 21 minutes.