

**Dr. Thomas Kleuser is an orthopedic surgeon who runs a lot; in 2013, he expects to complete his 100th marathon at Cowtown**

By Charles Clines



*Runner  
in  
the Spotlight*

When training for the Cowtown 10K in 1987, orthopedic surgeon Dr. Thomas Kleuser, told his wife Mary Ann that those who were running the marathon are "crazy."

Well, nine days before Cowtown, Dr. Kleuser noticed that about 10,000 were going to run the 10K and about 1,000 were expected for the marathon. "I said that was a lot of people by (be able) to get a PR,"

he said. Soooo. He contemplated joining the "crazies" and increased his long runs to 4, 6 then 15 during those last nine days. "After I did the 15, I said there were only 11 more to go."

So, he embarked on his first marathon in '87 and the marathon bug bit him right in his running shoes. "It was near the finish and I was kind of whipped, but it was exhilarating," he said. "I thought it was kind of fun and I wanted to do more of them."

He since has logged 24 more consecutive Cowtowns, 24 consecutive White Rocks and 22 of the past 23 Houston marathons. It was the '89 Houston where he set his marathon PR of 3:21. The only Houston he missed in that stretch is when he attended a cousin's wedding. When he finished the 2011 Cowtown, he had completed his 91st 26.2-mile trek.

He also has added finisher's medals at New York, Boston and the Marine Corps, among others. It soon dawned on him that he was on a streak and he started building on the number of marathons, often running four, five and six a year. Dr. Kleuser, now 60, is planning to reach his 100th marathon at the 2013 Cowtown. "But I don't plan to stop there. I don't have a stopping point," he said.

Asked if it seems a little unusual that an orthopedic surgeon, who has operated on many damaged knees, would run so many marathons? He has a great answer.

"There is no scientific evidence that running bothers healthy knees," he said. But he adds that runners with bow legs, or if knock kneed, has a previous knee injury, arthritic knees or other physical traits that can cause abnormal strides, then running could potentially be harmful. "I'd recommend those people to back off and find something else (to do for exercise)."

Dr. Kleuser, in fact, doesn't just run. He also bikes and swims and competes in triathlons. He has participated in about 60 of these events. After the fall running seasons, he reduces his running miles and increases his time on the bike, and he believes that helps keep him refreshed and prevents running burnouts.



Although it might seem a bit unusual for an orthopedic surgeon to run as much as Dr. Kleuser, his preparation for running a marathon is definitely different from most runners. He carbo loads, but not on pasta or any other food, but does it with liquids. If a marathon is on Sunday, he'll drink two cans of Ensure Plus on Friday, 10 cans on Saturday and two cans Sunday morning, and he takes Gu with him during the run. He figures he has pumped his body full of carbo, calories and other nutrients while not having to digest any food. The other benefit is that "I'm so hungry afterward that I'm ready to eat anything they have," at the post-race food court.

Dr. Kleuser said that although he ran track and cross country at Nolan High School, he did run in college and didn't start again until he was 35. He expected to return to his high school form virtually overnight. "It doesn't work like that," he quickly discovered. But he obviously stuck with it and put in his runs at night when their children were in school. Once they graduated from school and left the house, he switched to morning runs. "I run each morning about 6, then I shower and head to the office," he said. Dr. Kleuser isn't the only runner in the family. Mary Ann has run two half marathons and son George once ran a 1:11 half marathon at Houston.

His advice for anyone wanting to exercise is to find something you like to do, whether biking, swimming, walking or running, and stay with it for month. After a month, "you should be able to realize if you can or can't do it." If you can't, he said find something else you like to do. "If you like to run marathons, great, but you don't have to."