

Andrew and Melissa Cook run in the fast lanes

There probably are numerous husbands and wives who run, but there aren't many who can keep up with this couple -- Andrew and Melissa Cook of Flower Mound.



*Runner
in
the Spotlight*

They have set the bar high for most couples to duplicate. For examples: Melissa has competed in the Olympic Trails twice, in 2004 and 2008 in the 10K and Andrew qualified for the 2008 Olympic marathon trials and has won the San Francisco Marathon three times. Andrew was disappointed that he didn't again qualify for the Trials after he "died" the last three miles of the California International Marathon and finished in 2:20:33.

Their personal best times are the envy of almost any runner. Melissa's are a 15:32 on the track in a 5K, 32:30 on the track in a 10K and a 1:13:55 in the half marathon. Andrew's track PRs are 14:10 in the 5K and 29:20 in the 10K. In the half, he has a 1:06:14 and in the marathon has a 2:19:47.

Melissa, who works for Luke's Locker, didn't start running until a sophomore at Klein High School in Spring. She had been playing soccer, but became burned out. She was rehabbing a broken foot and part of the rehab was, surprisingly, running. She quickly excelled and among her achievements was placing second in the state 3,200 meters and was a Footlocker finalist in cross country.

She went to Texas A&M and was excellent. She set school records in the 3,000, 5,000 and 10,000 that still stand. She was an eight-time All American and among her other achievements included a second place finish at the 5K national championships, beating such notables as Kara Goucher, who competed in the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and finished 10th in the 10,000 meters. Lauren Fleshman, seventh at the 2011 IAAF 5,000-meter World Championships, won the race. In the 2004 Trials, Melissa placed sixth in the 10K and was 10th in the 2008 Trials.

She said her motivation comes from being able to compete at a high level and Andrew says she has the competitive drive and fire to try and be the best. As proof of her mettle, she won the Haltom Stampede in January (2011) in 17:39.6, just six months after the birth of son Nathan. And to show that the running genes run (no pun intended) in the family, 7-year-old daughter Natalie won her age division with a 28:27. In March, Melissa was back in almost top form as she won her fifth Dash Down Greenville title with a 16:43. Andrew won the male title, despite going off course for about 100 meters, in 15:46.

Andrew, cross country and track coach at Flower Mound, said he began running when he joined the Lewisville Summer Track Club. When he was 10, he began competing in road races, running distances from the 5K to the half marathon. "I had a great time traveling around the DFW Metroplex every week. Back then there wasn't a whole lot of young kids running, so it was easy to win my age group and collect trophies." He continued his running in high school, where he enjoyed "moderate" success. He placed 11th in the state cross country meet. His best was to come as he went to Texas A&M, where he earned All American honors in cross country. He also was a national qualifier in the 10,000 on the track.



Melissa Cook



Andrew Cook

They have to find time to run between working and being parents to Natalie, now 8, and Nathan. "We had Natalie at a young age, so we have gotten used to training and being parents," Andrew said. "Of course, in college it was much easier when you could just eat, sleep, run and study. Right now, we just try our best to balance our schedules so both of us have the opportunity to train."

He said his biggest highlights since leaving college has been qualifying for the '08 Trials and winning three times at the San Francisco Marathon. "My motivation is that I love to run. It is a part of me," he said.