

**Emily Van Dyken could be classified as a natural runner,  
as her faster times have proved**



*Runner  
in  
the Spotlight*

Emily Van Dyken, who grew up in Washington state, has raced to the front of the line after turning her focus to running about three years ago. One of her most recent overall female titles was the challenging Lake Benbrook Half Marathon in January, which she ran in 1:25:48.7. She set her half marathon personal best in 2012 at the 3M Half Marathon in Austin when she finished in 1:22:56. Among her feats were placing 12th overall female and first in her age division at the Pikes Peak Marathon, and she set a female course record at the El Scorcho 25K at Trinity Park in Fort Worth with a 1:49:19. Here's how she has progressed during that time as she has embraced running.

By Emily Van Dyken.



I began running casually as a sophomore in college. I say casually because it was always less than 25 miles a week and I wasn't fast. During the next couple years I ran off and on. In 2009, I undertook a bigger task and signed up for my first marathon with Team in Training. It was a very slow time, but I enjoyed the training and the buildup.

I had never run over 6 miles when I started the program so it was a rewarding and a completely new experience. About a week before the marathon, I developed a metatarsal stress fracture. Needless to say I had to take about six weeks off after the marathon. My running was again off and on until fall of 2010. Upon returning from a trip to Europe, I decided I really wanted to try and see how well I could do in running.



I started running six days a week and began to get faster. This was very exciting for me as I never realized I had some potential. About this time, I decided I needed a coach. I knew about James Newsom (co-owner of Fort Worth Running Company), but didn't know how to get him to coach me.

I decided the only way to get him to notice me was to just run faster! So I began running with their group, and after a group run in which he and I progressively increased our speed to finish at a pretty nice clip, he finally noticed me. Bingo! I e-mailed him some questions, and we started working together. He'd give me suggestions, workouts, etc. and prepared me for the 2011 Cowtown Marathon in which I bettered my previous marathon time by over an hour.

Upon finishing Cowtown, I asked him if he'd be my coach to which he agreed. Since then my running has improved steadily. James is a phenomenal coach, very patient with me and focused on the big picture. He never gives me a workout I can't do. He is extremely knowledgeable and wise and I constantly turn to him for advice. On a more personal note, we began dating about a half-year later and he is officially my favorite person in the world. For the most part, running has only been a constant high for me. I absolutely love it. I love the discipline of training, the hard workouts, the slow runs, and of course the races. I love the process. I tend to like running alone, but have done many workouts with James and more recently with my good friend Oumama Lingamfelter. Although the majority of running has been incredible, I've come to learn through experience that running is also demanding of the body in a way no other sport I've done. Perhaps due to my newness to running, over the past three years I've had three metatarsal stress fractures and plantar fasciitis. Needless to say, this was very difficult. Yet because of my injuries, I

began biking as cross training. This progressed to an interest in triathlons, due in part to James' newfound interest in the same. I completed four triathlons last summer and continue to incorporate biking and swimming into my training. I usually manage to get between three and six hours on the bike (trainer) and two to three swims a week. I wish I could do more, but I keep my weekly mileage between 80 and 90 so I start to get stretched a little thin if I do much more cross training. Along with this, I'm a pianist so the pressure to practice is always there. I have to admit music has taken a bit of a back seat since I began running so much, yet I try very hard to keep playing as much as I can. It helps that I am a music teacher, and am daily surrounded with music, which keeps me in the groove of practicing. I can't very well demand my students practice when I don't! I'm currently working on a program of original works, which I hope to perform in April. Meanwhile, my goal in running is to become as fast as I possibly can be. I'm excited and feel like I'm still just discovering it. And knowing that I have a coach who I completely trust only reinforces my enthusiasm and determination to reach my full potential. And if I find it sooner than I'd like, that is OK. I'll just start biking more! Life is so fun.

I went to Zillah (Wash.) Christian High School for freshman and sophomore years and then went to Yakima Community College for junior and senior years to graduate with my AA. We have a program in Washington that's basically like dual credit in Texas. I then went to University of Idaho for my undergrad in Piano Performance. In 2007; I moved to Texas to attend TCU and completed my masters in piano performance 2009.

My running highlights would be 3m Half Marathon in 2012. It was one of those races when everything came together at the right time. I ran a 122.56, my current PR for a half. This past summer, I ran the Pike's Peak Marathon, placing 12th overall female and 1st in my age group. It was one of the most difficult, yet rewarding races I've ever done. I also loved the Blackland Triathlon ,which took place two weeks after Pike's and took first place. And in a painful sort of way, El Scorcho 25K was a highlight. I ran it for the second time in 2012 and posted a new course record. My personal bests as of Feb. 1, 2013 – 5K -- 18.41; 10K -- 40.15 (hoping to better that at Cowtown:); half -- 122.56; marathon ---13.21.