

Runners find writing helps preserve major milestones

Keeping a journal has several benefits for endurance athletes.

By ERIC RANSOM

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Explorers of the new world did it. So did some of the astronauts. And now, in increasing numbers, endurance runners are using journals as a way to preserve their major achievements.

Writing in race journals, athletes from marathoners to triathletes to cyclists chronicle their training and race-day experiences. And with the Internet, the athletes can share their stories instantly across the world. But why do these athletes choose to do this?

"I think when most people choose to run a marathon, it's a major milestone in their lives," said Cheryl Lowe, a marathoner, running writer and graduate student at UNT Health Science Center. "So writing about it is just a way to preserve it. And I think a lot of experienced runners look back on their races, they want to see their training in a new light so they can make changes for next time."

Kim Dunkin, a Fort Worth mom and small business owner, published 12,000 words in her race journal after completing the 2008 Primal Quest. For a comparison, an average 200-page novel is around 50,000 words.

Local triathlete Shawna Gibson published her race journal after competing the 2006 Wisconsin Ironman months removed from overcoming cancer. Her journal circulated around the message boards, and she eventually won an award for being one of the Southwest's most inspiring athletes.

Professors such as James Pennebaker at the University of Texas have published research about the healing power of the written word. Perhaps writing the race journals is just a way to help endurance athletes mentally recover from their event.

"If it's a marathon, or a 100-mile bike ride or whatever, it's usually a gut-wrenching experience," Lowe said.

Marathon money

The San Antonio Rock 'n Roll marathon will award money to the top finishers in the Texas Shootout category.

Entrants must be from Texas and have attained qualifying times of 2 hours, 43 minutes for men and 3:07 for women in the marathon and 1:13:30 for men and 1:24 for women in the half marathon.

Organizers will accept entries into the prize money challenge until Sept. 1.

Interested runners can send their running résumés to mturnbull@competitor-group.com.