

52 Marathons in 52 Weeks

**How to Run a Marathon
Every Week for a Year**

HowExpert with Karl Gruber

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Chapter 1: 52 In 52: Know Your Why

You're Going To Do What?

You're going to do what? Don't be surprised if these are the exact words you hear from almost everyone when you finally announce your plans to the world that you intend to run 52 marathons in 52 weeks – especially from your family. That's right, you plan to run 26.2 miles/42.2 kilometers once a week for a year straight. When you respond to each and every naysayer, let it be with all the passion and seriousness that you can muster, so that they know that you are not joking – you *are* going to do this!

How do I know what people will say when you announce this seemingly gargantuan running effort, one that may seem impossible? Because I did it, I have successfully run one marathon a week for a year.

From May 5, 1996 through April 27, 1997, starting at the Cleveland Marathon in Cleveland, Ohio and finishing 52 weeks later at the Big Sur Marathon in Carmel, California, I became the ninth man in the world to successfully run and complete 52 certified Boston Marathon-qualifying, organized marathons. I called it my *Super Run for the Cure*, because of a little 5-year-old boy I knew, Glen Miller Jr. of Logan, Ohio, who was diagnosed with the disease leukemia, and passed away. This motivated me to hit the road and travel around North America, Canada, Alaska, and Hawaii, to use my marathoning as a vehicle to raise

money and awareness for leukemia research and a cure.

So you can see, that as author of this writing, I walk – or rather, *run* – with integrity. I can truly say, “Been there. Done that!” Now that you understand this, I want you to know that I am here to be your guide as you go into a year or running a total of 1362.4 miles/2194.4 kilometers, filled with uncertainties, anxieties, naysayers, yet plenty of passion, determination, perseverance, and a “Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!” attitude!

When you hear those first statements of “You’re going to do what?” it is time to shake-off any self-doubt, and respond firmly that you plan to, and are going to successfully run 52 marathons in 52 weeks. Now your idea, your plan is committed to move forward. In many ways, finally saying your goal out loud to the world adds some heft to it, and puts some weight on your shoulders to do it. Subconsciously you are saying to yourself, “Ok, I told the world I am going to do this, so now I better do it!” And in the face of those first incredulous words, “You’re going to do what?” your will is either going to buckle, collapse, and give up on the idea, or you are going to gain strength and move forward toward that first starting line, with a will of steel, determined to do it. I do, however, have a feeling that if you are reading this right now, and have an interest in accomplishing some kind of humongus running feat, that you can and will do it!

Throughout this guide on how to run a marathon a week for 52 straight weeks, I will provide you with

some of my own personal experiences from my own year of marathoning. They say that “truth is stranger than fiction”, and I can assure you that I can verify this. Some of the people, places, and things that I experienced and dealt with throughout my entire year of running are just ridiculously over-the-top crazy, and hard to believe, but they all really happened. It was all a part of my journey to adding my name to the list of runners who have joined Club 52/52.

A prime example of this is an almost mystical experience that happened to me during one of my morning training runs prior to the start of my 52 marathons.

It had already been several months since I came up with the idea for my *Super Run for the Cure*, with my mission being my running 26.2 miles once a week for 52 weeks to raise money and awareness for leukemia research. I had become a member of the Leukemia Society of America’s marathon training group, Team In Training, where healthy runners trained to run a marathon and raised money along the way for leukemia research. One of the things that TNT (the acronym most people used) did was to match each runner with a leukemia patient so that it became more personal, and so that you could understand exactly how horrible this disease is. As mentioned earlier, I was matched with a little 5-year-old boy, Glen Miller, Jr. He was then a sweet, healthy-looking young boy, but over the ensuing weeks and months the leukemia ravished his body, he ended up passing away. Dealing with little Glen’s passing was tough enough, but trying to get my *Super Run for the Cure* up and running was meeting with several roadblocks. My number one roadblock was the very organization that I was going to

run the marathons, and raise money for, the Leukemia Society of America. While I had success on a local level with my Central Ohio chapter of TNT, I had little if any success in securing the endorsement and help of the national office of the Leukemia Society of America. They simply would not believe that I was legitimate, and/or that I really could do this. Many times during my year of running, I heard indirectly that people within the L.S.A. thought I was doing my run for personal gain and fame, which could not be further from the truth. Here I was, only a few weeks from marathon number one of my 52 marathons, in Cleveland, Ohio, and I was very, very frustrated, to say the least. Instead of causing me to lose faith in my upcoming mission, and wavering in my commitment to do my year of running, I became more determined than ever, saying to myself during each one of my training runs, “*I will do this!*” With this scenario in mind, on this particular morning I was running down a rough dirt and gravel road through the rugged, but beautiful countryside in Hocking County, located in southeastern Ohio. The morning fog and mist was starting to lift as the rays of sun lit up the countryside as it rose above the horizon. I was near the end of my six-mile run, lost in thought, when all of a sudden I realized that I was not alone. It was then that I looked up and saw thousands of people of all ages and creeds lining both sides of the dirt road cheering me on and clapping as they yelled, “*Karl, be our hero! Be our hero! Be our hero!*” It was then I realized that these were the spirits of leukemia victims who had succumbed to the disease throughout the ages, and they were appearing to encourage me to move forward with my mission of running 52 marathons in 52 weeks for a cure for leukemia. I was stunned as I witnessed this incredible scene, and I thought to myself as I kept

running that, “So many. So many have died.” Then I perceived a group of young, healthy-looking children running and laughing joyously in front of me. It was then that I realized that they were led by little Glen Miller, Jr., looking just as he did when I met him the very first time, healthy and happy. I never stopped running, and as I crested a small hill that led back to my home, the scene slowly faded, as did their shouts of “*Karl, be our hero!*” I stopped at the top of the hill and looked back, and in stunned silence, and dripping with sweat, all I saw were the brilliant rays of sun cutting through the wafts of mist. The only sounds that resonated were the songbirds greeting the new morning, as I turned and said to myself with a will of steel, “I will do this!”, and ran as hard as I could the last mile to my house.



Little Glen Miller, Jr. & me, circa 1994

So let us run together to the next part of this book, and learn the history and of the runners who laid the groundwork for you to do this year of marathoning.

The History of a Marathon-A-Week Running

In hindsight, I can't say that I am sure just where my idea of running a marathon a week for a year even came from. I can't recall ever even having heard of anyone doing this type of running feat, let alone having ever heard of anything called ultra running. My idea to do this was an epiphany, at least on the personal level. It was not until I got into my year of running 26.2 miles once a week, that I met many runners from the 50 States Marathon Club, who regaled me with their own massive marathon running adventures. They welcomed me with open arms, and I soon became a part of their closed circle of marathon maniacs, and shared many good times with their like week after week, in city after city, and in state after state. Getting to know these runners, and becoming a part of their marathoning community soon perked up my interest in who and how many people had already accomplished what I was attempting to do.

It all started with an ex-Marine, 24-year-old Jay Helgerson, who dropped out of the University of San Francisco to do it. From January 1979 to January 1980, Helgerson became the first person on record to run and complete one marathon a week for fifty-two straight weeks. Helgerson's year of marathoning came

via a bit of frustration. He was consistently a sub-three hour marathoner, and he had just run a 3:09:00 marathon, so he entered another marathon the next week to improve his time, and then another, and then another, and another... It was Jay Helgerson who established this new threshold of running consecutive weekly marathons.

Since Helgerson's accomplishment in 1979 – 1980, the marathon-a-week list of runners has slowly become longer and longer, especially since the beginning of the 21st Century. My investigation as to who the second through seventh runners were, who also accomplished the 52 in 52, has proved to be fruitless, even after I asked the people who should know, the 50 States Marathon Club. However, as you pursue having your own name written in the 52 in 52 record book, please understand that what you are doing is in no way new and unprecedented. With this in mind, in no way, shape, or form does this diminish what you are about to undertake as a runner. As a matter of fact (and I can say this with absolute certainty) it's *huge!*

According to the 50 States Marathon Club, *Runner's World* magazine, and other sources, here is a short list of just some of the amazing multiple weekly marathoning that has been accomplished:

Gordon Hartshorn (who was the 8th man to hit 52 in 52) ran 74 marathons in 74 weeks in 1996-'97

Larry Macon ran 106 marathons in 2010, then completed 255 in 2013

Wally Herman ran a marathon in all 50 states in 1983

Yolonda Holder ran 106 marathons in 2010 (the same year Larry Macon ran 106)

Ray Sharenbrock has completed marathons in all 50 states and Washington D.C., ten times

Julie Weiss of Santa Monica, CA., became one of the few women to successfully run 52 in 52 in 2012 – 2013.

In 2013, Jim Simpson became the first American to run a total of 1000 marathons

Rick Worley was the first to run a marathon in all 50 states, plus D.C. in one calendar year in 1997, and then went on to once run 200 marathons in 159 weeks.

In Denmark, a woman named Annette Fredskov, ran and completed a marathon every day – 366 of them, from July 15, 2012 and July 14, 2013. It should be noted that she didn't run in certified road races, but instead ran most of her marathons on a 3.48-mile loop by her home.

But the one all-time champion of multiple weekly marathons has to be Chuck Engle of Lancaster, Ohio. Here is a list of his amazing marathon prowess:

-By 2010, he had run 200 sub 3 hour marathons

- He has run a marathon in all 50 states with an average of 2:38:00

- He has won a marathon in all 50 states

- He set a world record for the most marathons won by one person - 145

To top off this amazing list of incredible distance runners is the King of the Ultramarathons (any distance beyond 26.2 miles), Dean Karnazes. Karnazes' running biography reads like this –

- Ran 350 miles (560 km) in 80 hours and 44 minutes without sleep in 2005
- Single-handedly completed "The Relay", a 199-mile (320 km) run from Calistoga to Santa Cruz, eleven times
- Ran a marathon to the South Pole in -13°F (-25°C) temperatures without snowshoes in 2002
- Ran a marathon in each of the 50 states in 50 consecutive days in 2006

Other athletic achievements include:

- Winner, Badwater Ultramarathon (135 miles (217 km) across Death Valley in 120°F (49°C) temperatures), 2004 (with five other top-10 finishes from 2000-2008)
- Winner, Vermont Trail 100 Mile Endurance Run, 2006
- Overall Winner, 4 Deserts Race Series, 2008
- American Ultrarunning Team, World Championships, 2005, 2008
- 148 miles (238 km) in 24 hours on a treadmill, 2004

- Eleven-time 100-Mile/1 Day Silver Buckleholder at the Western States Endurance Run (i.e., better than ten twenty-four-hour finishes), 1995–2006
- Ran 3,000 miles (4,800 km) across the United States from Disneyland to New York City in 75 days, running 40 to 50 miles (65 to 80 km) per day, 2011

One of the very cool things that were a product of my *Super Run for the Cure* was that I got to run with some of these amazing people, and become friends with them. Specifically I got to know Ray Sharenbrock, and my fellow weekly marathoner, Gordon Hartshorn. The most incredible, and almost unbelievable thing about Gordon was that he ran all 74 of his marathons in 74 weeks while he had prostate cancer! Gordon's streak was 12 marathons ahead of me, and he kept running week after week even after I finished my 52 in 52 streak in April, 1997. It was a really strange synchronicity that I found out what happened to Gordon after his streak of marathon running ended. I was running the half marathon in Parkersburg, West Virginia a couple years later, and I started to chat with the guy running next to me. It turned out to be Gordon's nephew, who told me that Gordon had recently passed away, finally succumbing to his prostate cancer. How appropriate that I would find this news out while I was running a race. Turns out that I ran a really good half marathon time, because I knew that Gordon was there pacing me that day.

Of all the wild and crazy characters I met that year of running, the one that sticks out most in my mind is

Steve Boone. Steve was one of the administrators of the 50 States Marathon Club, which is based out of his hometown of Houston, Texas. My first images of Steve was him coming across the finish line of one of my marathons, and what a sight he was! Running with no shirt on, with long flowing, shoulder-length gray hair and bald on top. To top it off, he had a cigar in his mouth as he crossed the finish! I would become good friends with Steve over the ensuing year of running, and would encounter him and his cadre of 50 States marathoners, in city after city, race after race. I was even with Steve when he met his future wife, Paula, as he and I stood at a bus stop in Boston (my 51st. marathon that year), waiting to go to the marathon expo.

I am going to guess with pretty good accuracy, that you too will have some astounding, and almost unbelievable experiences throughout your year of running 52 marathons, just like I did.

So even though your head is spinning with the stunning logistics and the overall plan to run 52 marathons in 52 consecutive weeks, you can see that the trail has already been blazed for you. Rather I should say, the trail has been brightly lit by halogen lamps. This should give you the confidence to accomplish your year of marathoning, because those who proceeded you will carry you on their shoulders from their running efforts. You have the knowledge that *anything* is possible in the world of running.

The Running Legacy of Terry Fox

Of all of the runners who have established mass marathoning as something to be recognized, and who have been the greatest inspiration of all to all people around the world, it is Terry Fox. No story on weekly marathon running could ever be written or told without acknowledging this legendary effort.

While I was doing research to get my *Super Run for the Cure* up and running, I came across the story of a young Canadian hero named Terry Fox. I couldn't believe it when I read that at the young age of 19 years old, Terry was diagnosed with a cancerous tumor in his right leg. Unfortunately, his leg had to be amputated above his knee to save his life. What does this have to do with running, specifically mass marathoning? Well it seems that during Terry's recuperation after the amputation, he came up with the idea to run across Canada – from east to west coast – at a marathon a day or more, in order to raise money and awareness for a cure for cancer. So on April 12, 1980, starting in St. Johns, Newfoundland, Terry, with only one buddy in a van as his support, set off on his cross-Canada *Marathon of Hope*. Running on one good leg, and one low-tech prosthesis, he took on the challenge of running across the entire country of Canada, day after day, a marathon or more every day – all on just one good leg. At first the Canadian Cancer Society did not back his effort, that is until the media picked up on this gritty young man with one good leg running across their huge country. The Canadian media started doing daily stories on Terry's amazing *Marathon of Hope*, and how he just would not quit. Soon, every town he ran through found him

being trailed by long lines of cars filled with his fans encouraging him on. Every city brought more and more media coverage, and this was all before anything like the Internet and social media even were a flicker on the reality screen of the world. Once the notoriety and fame of his effort spread, *then* the Canadian Cancer Society came on board to support him. (This inspired me not to give up hope, as the national office of the Leukemia Society was not supporting me). After 143 days and 5,373 kilometers/3,339 miles of running, Terry had to stop his incredible run at Thunder Bay, Ontario, because his cancer had recurred, and spread to his lungs. Even though his cancer put him down, the nation of Canada responded in mass by donating \$24 million for cancer research and Terry's *Marathon of Hope*. On June 28, 1981, Terry Fox died at the age of 23 years-old. But that did not stop the effort to find a cure for cancer in the country of Canada! In 2016, the Terry Fox Foundation announced that over \$715 million had been raised in Terry's name. Since his passing in 1981, over and over and over again, Terry Fox has consistently been named one Canada's Top Heroes, all from running a marathon or more a day for 143 straight days on one good leg.

Once I had read Terry Fox's story, I was hooked! All I could think of at the time was, "Seriously? This guy could run a marathon a day on only one good leg? Think what you can do Karl, on two healthy legs! A wimpy once-a-week 26.2 mile run should be quite doable then!" His fame and legend grew so big that the television movie network, HBO, eventually went on to do a movie about Terry's life, and his run. Also, because of Terry, I found that when I ran marathons in Canada (I ran Ottawa, Calgary and Montreal), I was

received and supported fantastically by the people of Canada, simply because they understood exactly what I was doing and why I was doing it, all because of Terry Fox. I most definitely heard far less statements of “you’re crazy!” in Canada than I did in the States.

So if you are thinking of doing a full year (or more) of running marathons, look no further than the story of the amazing Terry Fox and his *Marathon of Hope* run in 1980 for inspiration. Believe me, there is no greater runner and no greater inspiration than Terry Fox.

Create a Mission Statement

This chapter is titled “52 In 52: Know Your Why”, and that is why it is so important to create your own mission statement as to the why and how of your running 52 marathons in 52 weeks. Running, in and of itself, is sufficient. It’s healthy, it keeps you fit, it’s meditative, and it is a way to self-express yourself with your lifestyle. However, when it comes to taking on something as tremendous as running one marathon a week for a year, then you need to have focus, purpose, and commitment. Your purpose and commitment are what will keep you running week after week after week, through all of the trials and tribulations you will encounter. It will keep you running through all of your victories and all of your defeats, and through the highs and lows of running mile after mile after mile. This is why it is vitally important for you to create a mission statement for yourself before you begin your run.

You may have a cause like I did, running for a cure for leukemia, you may be running to honor the memory of a loved one, or you may simply be running to prove to yourself that you can do it – maybe even break a world record. Whatever your reason of wanting to run 52 marathons in 52 weeks, take the time to sit down and write out a mission statement, like...

“From September 7, 2020 to September 6, 2021, I will successfully run and complete 52 marathons in 52 weeks with the purpose of (state your purpose/mission).”

By creating and writing down this mission statement, you will be able to respond with purpose and affirmation when someone comes up to you with the ever present statement, “You’re doing what? You’re crazy!” Not only that, but writing and verbalizing your mission statement actually adds power and emotion to what you are going to attempt to accomplish, which translate into faith and belief in yourself that you really can do it.

These days it seems that almost every race or run has some form of charity or cause attached to it, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. However, it is also ok for you to do this year of running just for yourself, because you can. The beauty of running is that, in and of itself, is a form of self-expression, a stress reliever, and a boundless extension of a healthy and fit lifestyle. Regardless of your reason to run 52 in 52, make it a point to still create your mission statement, as at some point in time during your year of running, it may be the only thing you have to hang on to. Post this statement on your dashboard, type it into your smart phone, or post it on the mirror of your

hotel room. The point is to always keep it at the forefront of your mind as you near yet another finish line.

I can verify just why it is so important to have a mission statement prepared as you go into your year of running marathons, especially if you are running for a cause. As previously mentioned, I had a few proponents who encouraged me along the way, and unfortunately the key naysayers of mine existed within the Leukemia Society of America – the organization that I was running to help benefit. However, it did not take long for me to realize that I had tremendous support from the general population of runners and non-runners that I came into contact with over the 52 weeks. My mission statement of, “I will run 52 marathons in 52 weeks to raise \$1 Million for leukemia research and awareness” most definitely caught the attention of the general populace of every single town I visited during my travels and running. Much of the time I would have a booth set-up at the pre-race expo, and person after person would come up to me with encouragement, kind words, and a donation (plus the inevitable “That’s crazy!” comment). As a matter of fact, I believe that if it weren’t for this “street level” support I received along the way, I might have become totally despondent, and even given up. I realized that once people find out that your mission is one that drives them emotionally via their own experiences, they will many times offer you unsolicited support with such things as a free place to stay, food, financial donations, and a lasting friendship. Many, many times I rolled into a town without any idea where I was going to stay, or if I even had the money to continue my trek, and I would leave town after the marathon with a full stomach, money

in my pocket, new friends, and a shiny finisher's medal hanging from my neck.

For example, my fourth marathon of my 52 happened to be the Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Marathon, which was scheduled to be run on my birthday, May 26, 1996. I had previously contacted the race director, Gayle Jacklin, about seeing if she could provide me with any support, and I let her know what my mission of running the marathons, was. As it turned out, my visit to run 26.2 miles in little Coeur d'Alene was the place that taught me all about the unbeknownst Open Door Policy of the people of America and Canada. Gayle Jacklin, as it turned out, instantly became one of my biggest supporters of my *Super Run for the Cure*. Not only did she put me up in her own beautiful home, but after she won the overall female marathon division (yes, *won!*) she then had me as the guest of honor at a cookout at her home, made a birthday cake for me, gave me a new jacket as a present, and then sent me on my way the next morning with fresh, homemade munchies she had prepared herself! What an absolutely phenomenal way for my heart and mind to be opened by this amazing support I received from not only Gayle Jacklin, but the entire running community, and the town of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho! And this was just the beginning of amazing, after awesome, after incredible experiences of support I would receive throughout the year, all because people got wind of what my mission was and threw their unconditional support behind me. This continual support that I stumbled upon in city after city, week after week was the wind for my sails that propelled me to the finish line of marathon number 52 at the Big Sur Marathon on April 27, 1997.

I think that you may be able to see from my experience as a member of Club 52/52, that having the powerful force of a cause adds deep emotion, and determination to move forward – against all odds – to accomplish running the seemingly impossible task of running 52 marathons in 52 weeks.

Running 52 Marathons in 52 Weeks Takes Passion!

So you have announced to the world what you intend to do – run 52 marathons in 52 weeks – and you’ve made the commitment by writing your mission statement. Sure, you’ve been training for weeks and months, maybe even for years as a runner to do this, but do you have the key ingredient it takes to get you through the grind of 52 straight weeks of running 26.2 miles? That key element is passion! If you don’t have the passion to do this, you more than likely will fail in this endeavor. Passion is a mixture of desire, strong motivation, inspiration, perspiration, and down-right determination to accomplish your mission. If you look at having passion to run this year of marathons from a pure emotional standpoint, you’ve got to have heart! There could be nothing worse than getting 20 weeks in of running your marathons, and simply losing interest in it, or allowing the simplest tribulations or roadblocks keep you from moving ahead to that 52nd finish line. Your passion to accomplish this mission is directly linked to your reason to do this, so make sure this is a powerful combination that will fuel your engine throughout the year. If your passion wanes sometimes throughout the year (which it most

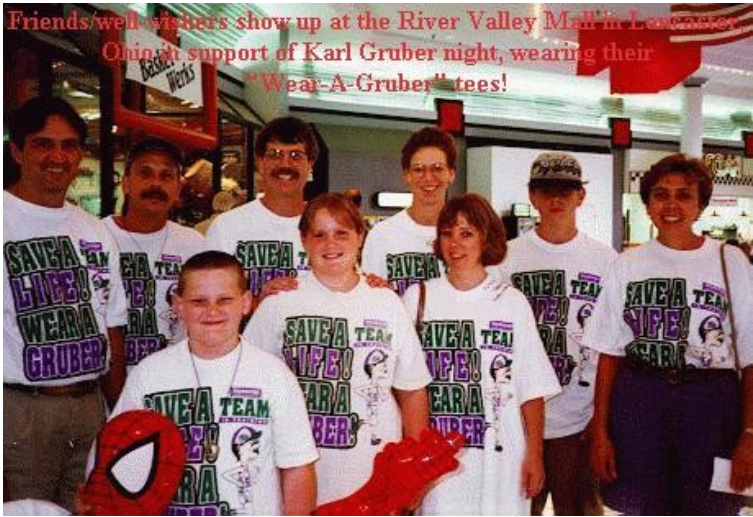
certainly will), remember to re-light the fire of your passion to keep you going. Many times the naysayers along the way can be just the fuel you need to re-ignite your passion, as your competitiveness and determination again grow brighter. Make your yearlong mantra, “I *can* do this!”

During those many moments throughout the year when I was down and depressed, and wondering out loud (usually during yet another 14 hour drive across the middle of nowhere on yet another interstate highway), I would once again conjure up the incredible image of those thousands of leukemia victims that had appeared to me cheering me on and yelling “Karl, be our hero!” during that misty, early morning training run I was doing on the back country roads of Hocking County, Ohio. I would draw courage and passion from yet another city where I once again received massive support from not only the race director, but the local people and even the media.

Running 52 Marathons In 52 Weeks Takes Money!

When I came up with the idea for my *Super Run for the Cure*, I figured I would come up with the money to accomplish this seemingly gargantuan effort by getting sponsors to foot the bill. Easy peasy, right? When much of my proposed sponsorships failed to pan out, I went to “Plan B” to find the needed money to stay on the road and run for an entire year. So what did my buddy Jerry Snider do (one of three key people who helped me throughout the year)? Why put me in

debt \$5000 before I even started running! No kidding! Somehow, Jerry had convinced a local Columbus, Ohio printing company to make up 1000 t-shirts screen-printed with not only a caricature of me on it, but the words “SAVE A LIFE, WEAR A GRUBER!” Not only did Jerry make this arrangement with the company to sell them to me for just \$5 each, but they gave them to me up front, and told me to just pay them the \$5000 as I could during the ensuing year. When Jerry first told me about this, I flipped out and said, “You did WHAT!?” I was so mad, but as the year went on and I needed finances to keep going, those 1000 t-shirts helped keep me on the road. Just how that happened was many of the marathons allowed me to set up a booth at the pre-race expo, to not only promote my effort, but sell my “SAVE A LIFE, WEAR A GRUBER” t-shirts. Before I used any of the money I made from selling the t-shirts for expenses of traveling all year long, I sent every single dollar I made on them to the company who had fronted me the shirts until the \$5000 was paid off. From that point on, I did use the t-shirt money to keep me going. However, I did not have to, but when I did sell a t-shirt, and someone wrote a check for it, I had them make it out to the Leukemia Society of America. If the buyer paid cash for the shirt, then I used it for my expenses of keeping my *Super Run for the Cure* going. After all, it was my own money that I had invested in them. (This fact, evidently, turned into a point of contention with the L.S.A., as I heard through the grapevine that some of the people within their organization thought I was just using my 52 marathons in 52 weeks to make money for myself, and gain some fame).



My t-shirt revenue, however, was not the only money that I used to keep on the road. Not only did I run through the entire line of credit that I had on the equity in my home that I owned back in Ohio, I also ended up having to borrow \$10,000 from my parents.

The whole point to this section on getting and having the financial resources you will need to get successfully through an entire year of running marathons, is be prepared. Hopefully the stories of my blind faith, lack of money, and mistakes, will inspire you to prepare a lot better than I did financially. And if you happen to be in a financial position that allows you to do it your way, and not have to worry where your next dollar is coming from, then more power to you! Believe me, your stress level will be much lower than what I endured, and you certainly won't need anymore stress while running 52 marathons in 52 weeks.



The author after his 13th marathon in 13 weeks at the Kilauea Trail Marathon on the Big Island of Hawaii, July, 1996.

Chapter 2: How To Build Your Fitness Base for a Weekly Marathon

Preparing Your Body for Multiple Marathons

One of the biggest mistakes I encounter, especially with new runners, is trying to do too much too soon. This usually results in injury, disappointment, frustration, and quitting. Hopefully, since you are considering the huge undertaking of running a marathon a week for a year, you are an experienced runner who already has a few marathons notched in your belt. You already have an inkling of what it takes to run this kind of long distance. Plus, you understand the kind of punishment and impact the marathon distance can have on your body.

One thing that I found when I was getting ready to embark on my yearlong marathon effort was that cross training really does help. For a few months before I started marathon number one, not only was I doing my regular long runs, but I was also doing plenty of weight training, cycling, swimming, and even aerobics. You must also learn to vary the intensity of your athletic training so as to teach your body how to handle different stress loads.

In his book, *Lore of Running*, Dr. Tim Noakes states, “*The concept of different training intensities*

producing different training effects allows the tailoring of individual training goals...Marathon runners must shift their lactate turnpoints to higher running speeds; these runners must increase their capacities for fat oxidation so that they can 'spare' carbohydrate stores during racing."

Noakes then goes on to say about cross training, *"Some evidence suggests that arm training added to normal leg training may enhance performance during leg exercise more than leg training alone."* He also points out (in regards to adding swimming and cycling to their training), *"Elite triathletes have shown themselves to be not only exceptional swimmers and cyclists, but also runners of very high class."*

I will add that as you finish one marathon, and then go on to the next one, and the next one, and the next one, you more than likely will experience some things with your body that you might not have previously encountered. By this, I mean expect to be beat up. Knowing that every foot strike during a run produces three to four times your body weight in impact, times 26.2 miles, times 52, it's a lot of pounding. Basically I felt "beat up" for an entire year. I had many aches and pains, but fortunately no serious, streak-stopping injuries. Still, you finish one marathon and generally only have from five to 6 days to recover, which is not a great amount of time to recover completely. Between my twenty-second marathon, the Turtle Marathon in Roswell, New Mexico, which was run on Labor Day, Monday, September 2, 1996, and my twenty-third marathon, the Moose Chase Marathon in Jackson Hole, Wyoming scheduled for Saturday, September 7, 1996, I only had five days to recover. I also had some

very long distance driving to do during those five days to get from one race to the next. I can seriously say that I got to Jackson Hole hurting pretty badly (but again, no injuries). I am fortunate, however, that I have been blessed with some pretty phenomenal recovery capabilities, in that if I am able to get at least one or two good night's rest, I am ready to run. So during your 52 in 52 year of running, you need to prepare yourself to run fatigued, with an achy and very sore body, and that is where your base training needs to kick in.

Establishing an Endurance Base

Having been there and done that, let me give you some insight in how I went about establishing an endurance base of fitness that allowed my body to run long distances for long periods of time. Up until I decided to go ahead and run 52 marathons in 52 weeks, I had only run a total of nine marathons, which is not a lot by many endurance runner's standards. I did, however, create a rock-solid endurance and fitness base for myself by consistently putting in some good weekly mileage – usually 35 to 50 miles or more per week. (again, not a lot by some runner's standards, but you find out what works for your body). The key element to training for weekly marathons is learning how to put in the much longer runs with regularity, this way your body eventually adapts to running longer with more frequency. About five to six months out from the start of the first of my fifty-two marathons, I ran a twenty-miler (or more)

almost every weekend. This prepared me well for the year of marathoning to come.

Of all the things that has really helped get me prepared to perform well as a marathon runner, is a 26 week marathon training program by Benji Durden that I had found published in *Runner's World* magazine 1992 issue.

Benji Durden's marathon credentials are impeccable. He was one of America's top elite marathon runners in the early 1980's, and was a member of the 1980 U.S. Men's Olympic Marathon team. With a personal best marathon time of 2:09:57, he also ran twenty-five sub 2:20:00 marathons within ten years.

Durden's 26 week marathon training is *the* most demanding program I have ever come across, and did it ever get me ready for a year of weekly marathons! First of all, most marathon training programs run from 16 to 20 weeks long, whereas his program is a half-year long, and slowly but surely creates that rock-solid fitness and endurance base that is needed. His easy days are easy (30:00 easy-paced training run), but his hard days are *hard* – I'm talking hill repeats one day, then a couple days later interval workouts, and each weekend features an ever increasing long, slow distance run (which he does by time, not distance). About half-way through the programs he replaces the hill repeats with 800 meter repeats track workout, plus, he starts incorporating races of ever increasing distance every few weekends to replace your long distance run. Whew! Finally, Durden's program calls for running seven days a week for a full six months! I am a big believer of incorporating races of longer and longer distance during your marathon

preparation simply because it teaches your body how to run fast and harder for longer and longer distances, which is what you are going to need when you are racing 26.2 miles. Plus, the benefits from doing so will greatly increase your cardiovascular and aerobic fitness that you would not gain from simply running long, slow distance training runs only. This is a great way to build that endurance fitness base you are so going to need during your year of marathoning.

Here is Benji Durden’s 26 Week Marathon training program:

KEY:

- Sunday long runs are in minutes and hours
- Tuesday and Thursday workouts are warmup “**wup**” & warmdown “**wdn**” (i.e. 15 minutes warmup then run 3 hill repetitions followed by 15 minutes warmdown)
- Thursdays are intervals (i.e. 15 minutes warmup, then 2 repetitions at “**t**” – threshold pace with each rep followed by 3 minutes easy “**e**” pace, then 15 minute warmdown)
- In Week 13 you Tuesdays switch from hill repeats to 800 meter repeats at threshold pace)

	Su n	Mo n	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	*Lo ng	Ea sy	Hills/Trac k	Eas y	**Tempo	Ea sy	Ea sy

Week 1	40:00	30:00	15:00 wup/wdn; 3 hills	30:00	15:00 wup/wdn;10t	30:00	30:00
Week 2	1:00:00	30:00	15:00 wup/wdn; 4 hills	30:00	15:00 wup/wdn; 2(5t/3e)	30:00	30:00
Week 3	1:20:00	30:00	16:00 wup/wdn; 5 hills	30:00	16:00 wup/wdn; 1(12t/6e)	30:00	30:00
Week 4	5k to 10k race	30:00	16:00 wup/wdn; 4 hills	30:00	16:00 wup/wdn; 2(6t/3e)	30:00	30:00
Week 5	1:30:00	30:00	7:00 wup/wdn; 5 hills	30:00	17:00 wup/wdn;1(15t/8)	30:00	30:00
Week 6	1:50:00	30:00	17:00wup/wdn;6 hills	30:00	17:00 wup/wdn; 2(8t/4e)	30:00	30:00
Week 7	5k to 10k race	30:30	18:00 wup/wdn; 5 hills	30:30	18:00 wup/wdn; 3(5t/4e)	30:00	30:00
Week 8	2:00:00	30:00	18:00 wup/wdn; 6 hills	30:00	18:00 wup/wdn; 2(10t/5e)	30:00	30:00
Week 9	2:20:00	30:00	20:00 wup/wdn; 7 hills	30:00	20:00 wup/wdn; 3(7t/4e)	30:00	30:00

Week 10	10k to 15k race	30:00	20:00 wup/wdn; 6 Hills	30:00	20:00 wup/wdn; 4(5t/3e)	30:00	30:00
Week 11	2:30:00	30:00	22:00 wup/wdn; 7 hills	30:00	22:00 wup/wdn; 2(12t/6e)	30:00	30:00
Week 12	2:50:00	30:00	22:00 wup/wdn; 8 hills	30:00	28:00 wup/wdn; 3(8t/4e)	30:00	30:00
Week 13	8k to 10k race	30:00	24:00 wup/wdn; 4 x 800	30:00	24:00 wup/wdn; 4(6t/3e)	30:00	30:00
Week 14	3:00:00	30:00	24:00 wup/wdn; 5 x 800	30:00	24:00 wup/wdn; 5(5t/3e)	30:00	30:00
Week 15	3:15:00	30:00	26:00 wup/wdn; 6 x 800	30:00	26:00 wup/wdn; 2(14t/7e)	30:00	30:00
Week 16	15k to half marathon race	30:00	26:00 wup/wdn; 5 x 800	30:00	26:00 wup/wdn; 3(9t/5e)	30:00	30:00

Week 17	3:2 5:0 0	30: 00	28:00 wup/wdn; 6 x 800	30:0 0	28:00 wup/wdn; 4(7t/4e)	30: 30: 00 00
Week 18	3:3 5:0 0	30: 00	28:00 wup/wdn; 7 x 800	30:0 0	28:00 wup/wdn; 2(15t/8e)	30: 30: 00 00
Week 19	8k to 10k race	30: 00	30:00 wup/wdn; 6 x 800	30:0 0	30:00 wup/wdn; 3(10t/5e)	30: 30: 00 00
Week 20	3:3 0:0 0	30: 00	30:00 wup/wdn; 7 x 800	30:0 0	30:00 wup/wdn; 4 (8t/4e)	30: 30: 00 00
Week 21	3:4 0:0 0	30: 00	30:00 wup/wdn; 8 x 800	30:0 0	30:00 wup/wdn; 5(6t/3e)	30: 30: 00 00
Week 22	15k to half marat hon race	30: 00	32:00 wup/wdn; 7 x 800	30:0 0	32:00 wup/wdn; 6(5t/3e)	30: 30: 00 00
Week 23	3:0 0:0 0	30: 00	32:00 wup/wdn; 8 x 800	30:0 0	32:00 wup/wdn; 3(11t/6e)	30: 30: 00 00

Week 24	2:30:00	30:00	32:00 wup/wdn; 9 x 800	30:00	32:00 wup/wdn; 4(9t/5e)	30:00	30:00
Week 25	2:00:00	30:00	45:00	1:30:00	30:00	30:00	25:00
Week 26	Marathon race	rest	rest	rest	rest	30:00	30:00

As you can see this is a very long, very strenuous program, which is exactly why I like it – it is meant to get you tough and ready for the rigors of running 52 marathons in 52 weeks. The easy days (30:00 easy-pace run) are exactly that – easy – to allow you to recuperate from the hard workouts. The hard days – hill repeats, intervals, and track workouts – are *hard*. Trust me, this twenty-six week long program will whip you into shape for any marathon(s)!

How to Peak Your Marathon Fitness

So as I just discussed, using an intense, demanding marathon training program such as Benji Durden’s 26 week program, is one excellent way to build a strong endurance base. When you are three to four weeks from the beginning of your 52 marathons, you need to bring that running fitness of yours to a peak. This

involves simply (to put it in the vernacular), “seeing what you’ve got!” To do this, I suggest you find a training course, hopefully one that challenges your running abilities with lots of big hills, and plenty of flats. This type of course will show you if you have the needed power to plow through hilly courses, and if your speed is there when the flat portions of a racecourse present themselves. When I was in final preparation for my years of marathons, I lived in the southeastern section of Ohio in a super hilly county called Hocking Hills. I had a 7 mile super hilly, dirt and gravel road course that ran high above the lake we had right there in my community. I am not kidding when I tell you that some of these hills I ran were monsters and very intimidating. If I could run this loop in under an hour and not bonk, then I knew I was ready to rock!

So find your own personal “peak fitness course”, and see what you’ve got. When you can run it hard and still feel good afterward, you are ready for your marathon challenge

Chapter 3: How To Plan & Race 52 Marathons In a Year

Creating Your Race Schedule

It is pretty easy to conjure up the word “challenge” when considering what you are intending to do – run 52 marathons in 52 weeks. You want a challenge? Well start trying to figure out your upcoming 52 marathon weekly schedule.

Several of the key factors in setting up your schedule, are:

- Travel logistics – Is it feasible to schedule each marathon close geographically to the next race?
- Budget – Can you afford a Hyatt or a Motel 6? Camping or sleeping in the back of your vehicle?
- Fitting in your desired-to-run marathons – Is Boston on your list? New York? L.A.? Honolulu?
- Are you doing this alone or with another person(s)?
- Driving or flying? – Whatever can make traveling cause less wear and tear on your body, and eliminate un-needed stress.
- Race director cooperation – prepare for some to get totally behind you, and others to not even acknowledge you.

- Promotions and marketing of yourself and your effort – check with all sports-oriented/running companies.
- Sponsorship – Companies like PowerBar, ClifBar, and Gatorade are a good start.
- Support from assistants and/or friends and family – proper support from reliable people will really take a huge load off your shoulders so you can focus on just running.

These are just some of the factors and difficulties you will face when trying to arrange your fifty-two marathons, not to mention unexpected roadblocks you will more than surely encounter along the way.

When I was making plans for my fifty-two marathons schedule, I initially planned to make it a worldwide running adventure. First I approached the owner of Marathon Travel in Boston to help set-up my planned worldwide race schedule. I also was in negotiations for months with a professional sports agency who handled everyone from pro golfers to Indy Car race drivers, to help finance my running project. However when these aggressive plans all fell through, I had to go back to the drawing board and create a schedule that ran within the borders of North America only, plus Hawaii. When you have a very strong passion to accomplish a feat like running 52 marathons in 52 weeks, you forge ahead no matter what. My suggestion is first to secure sponsorship from companies (in my case, I was sponsored by PowerBar and also by Kroger Food & Drug) to help cover the cost and hopefully with the travel and logistics, too. And don't necessarily count on the very organization or cause you are running for to support you either. I

ran my 52 in 52 for the cause of raising money and awareness for leukemia research and cure, but the National Leukemia Society never endorsed me, and only sporadically gave me any support. Nevertheless, if this happens, you have to forge ahead undaunted if you really wish to accomplish this.

One very important issue to consider when you head off to marathon number one of your fifty-two is will you have any help from friends, family, and supporters? From my experience, it may have been my feet and legs that ran the marathons, but I would not have been successful if it had not been for a few key people along the way to help me out. I know a couple runners who have completed a large number of marathons in one year as a solo act. They did it, but it was much, much harder for them to accomplish it. Having some key allies and assistants along the way to help you out will take considerable stress off of your back. One much needed way to gain help is by contacting each and every marathon race director on your schedule, and asking for their help in any way, shape or form. During my year of running I asked each race director if they could give me a complimentary entry (saving on costs), supply me with complimentary or discounted housing or hotel room, and put me in contact with their local media so I could promote the cause I was running for via my year of marathoning. In this regards, approximately 75% of all of the race directors and organizers did help me. In some marathons like Ottawa, Coeur d'Alene, Steamboat Springs, and Disney World, the red carpet was literally rolled out for me, and I was welcomed with open arms. Other towns like Columbus, Ohio Marathon (my hometown race), and Montreal Marathon, I was almost complete ignored. So be

prepared to reach the highest of highs, and the lowest of lows when it comes to a helping hand from every race. Even though I had been promised free accommodations and help with promoting my Super Run for the Cure, by the Maui Marathon, just days before I arrived in Maui, I was informed by the race director that they were pulling the offer, because they found out that I was not officially endorsed by the National Leukemia Society's home office. (Thanks to my friend, Jim Lovell, the head timer of the Maui Marathon that year, he put me up in his hotel room so I had a place to sleep).

Also, if you can secure any kind of sponsorship that will cover some or all of your expenses (gas, hotels, entry fees, airline tickets, food, etc.) along the way, do so! Approaching sports nutritional companies like I did with PowerBar, is an excellent place to start.

Finally, it is so important to decide if you are going to fly or drive most of the time. Again, from experience (I drove 65,000 miles and flew 60,000 miles during my year of running) I know this to be a very important consideration. One would think that flying would not be quite as tiring or wearing as driving, and it is to an extent, but airline travel in this day and age is almost like running a marathon with the hoops all of the airlines make you jump through to get to your destination. Deciding your mode of travel before you start your fifty-two marathons can save you a lot of stress and anguish.

Location, Location, Location

The location of your next marathon, and then your next marathon, and your next marathon, etc. is all important in planning which races you are going to do. My hat is off to those rare individuals who have done such things as run seven marathons in seven days on seven different continents! For me, and for you, however, attempting to set up each marathon so it is regionally close to the one you just ran should help reduce your travel fatigue, and help you recuperate better. The problem with this is you'll always have those races you really want to run on your schedule, but they are physically very far away from your last marathon. My worst possible example of this issue for me was when I ran the Honolulu Marathon in Hawaii, and then my very next marathon was on the east coast of America at the Kiawah Island Marathon in South Carolina! I both flew and drove from Honolulu to get to South Carolina, and it took me six days across several different time zones to get there. My last solo drive of this insane road trip lasted twenty hours on non-stop driving, from Abilene, Texas to Kiawah Island, South Carolina. I finally arrived in Kiawah around seven in the morning (a half day late from when they were expecting me). The marathon race committee was kind enough to furnish me with free housing in one of Kiawah Island's wonderful vacation condos. I went to bed for eight hours, got up and went to the pre-race carbohydrate dinner, then went back to bed. After a good night's rest, the next morning I was ready to race another 26.2 miles, and ended up running 4:11:11. This, of course, is an extreme example, but really did happen. This was a direct result of my eternal love for the

Hawaiian Islands, and I just *had* to include them in my running itinerary. During my year of running, five of my 52 marathons were run in Hawaii – the Kilauea Volcano Trail Marathon, the Kona Marathon, the Honolulu Marathon, the Maui Marathon, and the West Hawaii Marathon (run on the Kona Marathon course). So as you are planning out your schedule, try to avoid such crazy travel plans, but I warn you, it simply may not be possible. Of course your race schedule and travel plans may rest squarely on what kind of budget you have. My 52 in 52 marathoner friend, Julie Weiss, somehow managed to return home every week after her race – no matter where it was located – sleep in her own bed for the week, and then fly out to her next marathon to run. Plan your race schedule, then run your race, that is where your real focus should be.

Dealing With the Details of Running 26.2 Miles Once Per Week

As you go through your year of running fifty-two marathons the word “logistics” will become quite familiar to you. Once again, let’s resort to a checklist of things that you will need to pay attention to on a daily and weekly basis.

- Food – both daily meals, and your much needed sports nutritionals such as electrolyte drinks, energy gels

- Running shoes – how many pairs are you going to need to get you through the year of running 1362.4 miles? Running shoes generally have a life span of only 400 – 500 miles. I was very fortunate to have a local Columbus, Ohio running store, FrontRunner, give me five pairs of shoes via Brooks Running, and I ended up putting on a new pair every thirteen marathons.
- How much travel time in between races? Is it enough time to allow recovery from the last marathon? As noted earlier, this may not be possible all of the time.
- Running clothes – do you have enough running clothes to get you through the year? Hot weather clothing? Cold weather clothing? I ran in everything from freezing rain in Houston, to the intense heat and humidity of Kona, and the sideways blowing snow and wind of Ottawa, Canada – so be prepared for anything!
- Running gear – water bottles and belts, sport hats, sunglasses, sun block, anti-chafing balm, GPS watch. Be diligent about this! It is amazing how easy it is to forget the key things you need to wear and carry when running another 26.2 mile run.
- Housing – hotel, friend's house, sleep in the car? My running friend, Gordon Hartshorn who ran 74 marathons in 74 weeks in 1996 – '97, slept many a night in his car before a race.

Paying attention to the many, many details that will help get you through 52 marathons in a year can and will be one of the most important things you can do to be successful.

Chapter 4: Time To Run A Marathon A Week!

Tying Off Loose Ends Before You Start

Believe me, before you leave home, hit the road, and head to your first marathon, there will be many, many “loose ends” that you will need to tie-off. For example, since I was not going to be back in the home I owned during my yearlong run, I had to find a renter for one year, so I could continue to make the mortgage payments. Do you have a dog or a cat? More than likely you will be unable to take them along, at least not for the entire year. What do you do with him while you are off running? Finding a relative or friend who you can trust your beloved pet to stay with is one of those loose ends. I was able to have my parents, who lived in Cleveland, Ohio, take care of my beloved Bo, my Golden Retriever. But when they no longer were able to care for him after just six months, I was fortunate to be able to turn to one of my most trusted Super Run supporters, Edie Bailey, from East Amherst, New York, outside of Buffalo, who lovingly took care of Bo for the final six months of my run. What about your job? Do you quit it or take a leave of absence? In my case, I quit my job that I worked as a disc jockey for sixteen years at WHOK-FM in Lancaster, Ohio. Then there are those weekly marathoners like Julie Weiss, who not only returned home every week to Santa Monica, California, but also worked her daily job Monday through Friday, every week, for fifty-two weeks! Much of how you do this depends on your budget.

Another perhaps surprising loose end you may need to deal with (not only prior to the start of your year of running, but throughout the entire year), is dealing psychologically with your naysayers and critics. To run 52 marathons in 52 weeks, not only your body must be strong and fit, but so too must your mind and self-confidence. I doubt if you will ever get rid of your critics, no matter how great your cause is that you may be running for, but if you can stay mentally strong and not let their criticisms bring you down, then you will succeed. A number of times before I even started my year of running, and throughout the year, I had a few people and organizations swear that they were going to help and support me, only to be let down by them in critical times. So this is not to say that you will not have down times of depression and frustration, but when you can maintain your enthusiasm, passion, and belief in yourself and your mission, you will bounce back strong. Let their doubts bounce right off of you as you cross yet another finish line after running 26.2 miles again, and again, and again.

More loose ends to consider before you start your marathons are some of the practical things. If you intend to drive to many of the races, is your vehicle road worthy? There's nothing worse than having to use up your precious energy prior to a race than having to change a flat or having a mechanical breakdown. One absolutely crazy instance of this that took place during my marathoning year was in Dayton, Ohio. I was driving to run a certified Boston-qualifying marathon on a 400 meter track at Vandalia, Ohio high school on a freezing January morning. I was towing a trailer, and I ran out of gas about five miles from the track. In order to make it to

the start of the race on time, I had to run a mile to a nearby gas station, then run back with a full gas can, then take the gas can back to the gas station, *then* I had to run 104 ½ laps on a track to complete yet another 26.2 miles! Your mode and quality of travel can be a deal breaker if not attended too properly.

If you have a family – wife and kids – how is this going to affect your relationship with them? Do you have their support? Not having your family’s support can most certainly cause you unneeded stress. These are all very practical, but important considerations.

Hitting the Road for 52 Weeks

Whoa, it’s hard to believe, but it’s time to hit the road and head to marathon number one! You’ve put in all of the logistical, marketing, practical, and promotional work, and most importantly, all of the run training you needed to do, now it’s time to run!

I will never forget the moment when I locked the door to my home knowing I would not return to it for an entire year, as I took off for my first marathon. It was a mixture of raw excitement, self-doubt, total confidence, fear, and happiness that I was *finally* headed out to do what I said I was gong to do – run 52 marathons in 52 weeks! When you too reach this point you just have to adopt the attitude of not looking back, stay fully confident, and then go do it. In a lot of ways, you may be going into your 52 weeks with blinders on (the kind worn by horses during a race to keep them focused and undistracted). I had absolutely

no clue what I was in for – numerous fourteen to sixteen hour solo cross country drives, and driving 65,000 miles and flying 60,000 miles – by myself.

“A ship is safe in harbor, but that is not what ships are made for.”

Getting Up to Speed

Obviously the above subtitle is a good play on words for a runner, however, it is ever so important to consider. You’ve put in the necessary training, but now that you are going to on the road for a whole year, just how do you get up to speed for fifty-two marathons? Exactly how should you approach this? Author of the book, *Running For Mortals*, Jenny Hadfield, suggests, *“The key to successfully racing multiple long-distance events in a short period of time is to change your paradigm and look at it from a different angle.”* I like her suggestion, as you really do have to change your perspective on how you are going to successfully accomplish this feat. The first consideration for you should be how are you going to run all of these marathons? Are you going to race each and everyone like, Chuck Engle, a.k.a. “Marathon Junkie”, who is capable of running dozens and dozens of marathons in a year at an average pace of 2:38:00, and winning most of them?

While Engle has my total admiration and awe, most running mortals are simply incapable of accomplishing something so stratospherically incredible. The Dean Karnazes’ and Chuck Engle’s of

the running world are exceptional indeed, but you may not be included in their category. My suggestion is to approach each marathon you run from the bigger picture of successfully finishing each race and getting to the end of the year injury-free, and happy that you did it. This means, of course, slowing down your overall pace for each marathon, and being ok with a bit slower finishing time than you are used to. It is all about getting to that finish line of marathon number fifty-two. This can be easier said than done, especially if you have a competitive attitude (after all, you are running in a *race*!)

During my year of running my fifty-two marathons, I averaged a finishing time for most of my races between 4:00:00 to 4:15:00, but in five of those marathons I ran a sub four-hour marathon. Even though I am not a fast, elite runner, I have a very competitive attitude when it comes to sports, and at one point during the year I ran four sub four hour marathons in a row. After the fourth one, my left knee started to ache really badly after each race, and it was then that I knew that I had to back off my pace for all of my upcoming marathons. By doing so, I did not push my body so hard, and eventually the knee pain simply faded away during the subsequent weeks. Again, referring to the subtitle, “Getting Up To Speed”, in this case, actually means pacing yourself to successfully make it to that last 26.2 mile marker.

Chapter 5: How To Endure Multiple Marathons In One Year

What You're In For – Experiences Extraordinaire!

So there I was running my twenty-fourth marathon in twenty-four weeks, the Atlantic City, New Jersey Marathon. I was cruising along and running well somewhere around mile fourteen. Suddenly a motorcycle rider came up and pulled right in front of me while I was running. Sitting behind the driver and facing backwards was a reporter from ESPN television network with a video camera in his hands. Although I was initially surprised to see them, I quickly remembered that the ESPN running show hosted by former Olympic 10k runner, Marty Liquori, had informed me that they were going to catch up with me at this race to do a report on me, and find out how my run was going. The motorcycle kept pace right in front of me, and the man with the camera started yelling out questions to me about my *Super Run*, and I just kept running, and yelling back my answers and smiling pretty for the camera. The other runners around me kept looking at me as this was going on wondering just who the heck I was, and why ESPN had chased me down. The motorcycle was soon gone, and once the runners around me found out that I was on a mission to run 52 marathons in 52 weeks for leukemia, and that this was my 24th marathon in 24 weeks, started to cheer me on, high-five me, and encourage me to keep going. As if that was not

enough, when the finish line of the Atlantic City Marathon came into view on the boardwalk right in front of the Trump Casino, I realized that I still had a chance to break 4:00:00 in the race, I sprinted to the finish line with an official time of 3:59:46, for my third sub four hour marathon in three weeks. My experience with ESPN did not end there as I came to a stop after crossing the finish line, one of the ESPN camera crew walked right up to me and handed me an ice-cold beer as a congratulations. Not only that, the interview and video from the motorcycle camera later aired on Liquori's show on ESPN called *Running and Racing*.

This was just *one* of the most amazing, unbelievable, mind-blowing experiences that happened to me throughout my year of running 52 marathons in 52 weeks. I write about it because I want you to understand that as your year of running – mile after mile, marathon after marathon – will more than likely unfold some of your very own memories of a lifetime. Literally, expect the unexpected, enjoy every single moment of the year, and above all, *keep running!* They will be experiences that you will carry with you for the rest of your life.

Dealing With Exhaustion & Injuries

This may sound ludicrous to some, but it sure worked for me. Before I started, and throughout my entire year of marathoning, on a daily basis I chanted as my mantra,

“Injury and illness are not an option!”

I am a strong believer in the power of the mind, and using affirmations such as this one, when repeated over and over with regularity, because they will sink deep down into your subconscious and accept it as status quo. Obviously my “mantra” may not work for you as a 52/52 marathon runner, so come up with something simple and straight forward that works for you, and keeps your mind and body in sync throughout the year to be successful. This, of course, does not preclude doing anything and everything practical to also keep you moving forward week after week, marathon after marathon. Things like becoming friends with ice to reduce muscle inflammation and joint pain. Either ice packs or ice baths, post-race, can work wonders. Very cold temperatures reduce the inflammation that is caused by your body sending more blood to heal the microscopic tears that result in your muscle fibers when you run – especially 26.2 miles.

One of the more difficult things to deal with as a weekly marathoner is exhaustion. More than likely, exhaustion will become your constant companion throughout the year, but this is one of the reasons you trained for so hard and long - learning how to endure, and how to run with tired legs and body. Your exhaustion factor can be multiplied too by the wear and tear of traveling for fifty-two weeks straight. I’m sure that even Julie Weiss, who was able to sleep in her own bed every week throughout her 52/52 year, also had exhaustion as a companion. The key is to catch a nap and a good night’s sleep whenever and wherever you can. I can tell you that I slept in more than a couple roadside rest stops during my year of

running, than I care to remember – but it kept me going.

The Grind of Weekly Marathons

Even if your passion for running a marathon a week for a year remains at a peak the entire time, there is no way to get around the fact that it can and will become a grind. It is the nature of the beast for this to happen. After all you are asking of your body to do something that the everyday person thinks is impossible. Without exaggeration, I probably spent around \$500 (or more) buying coffee to keep me awake and heading to my next race. Little things like drinking coffee, or keeping your mission in the forefront of your mind at all times are key players in enduring the grind of the year. Once again, this is where you have to fall back and trust your training that you did in the months prior to your start, to get you through it all. Visualization worked wonders for me, as I started to get ground down to the point of feeling like a piece of burnt toast. Over and over and over again, I would visualize in my mind's eye, in high definition, the scene of me successfully coming across the finish line of marathon number fifty-two, and knowing that I had really done it.

How & What to Eat for 26.2 Miles x 52

Over time and through experience, every runner eventually figures out just which food and drinks work for them. What works for me, may cause gastrointestinal issues for the next runner. What tastes good to me, helps me recover, and be energized, may not be the correct nutrition for you. I get in trouble with sports nutritionists all of the time when I tell them my most favorite post-race nutrition is pizza and beer. This combination works wonders for me, but especially when it comes to the beer, you still have to be moderate in your consumption, because it does promote dehydration. Everyone who has just run 26.2 miles has a deficit of liquid in their body, so if beer works for you, so be it, but compliment it with way more water and sports drink.

One thing that never changes when it comes to running, especially endurance running, is that complex carbohydrates are the key to your fueling and recovery. You may already seem to have a good grasp on this, but please understand that food is fuel for your muscles and workouts. Complex carbohydrates are the most important food fuel for exercise. This is because your body breaks down the food and sends these complex carbs directly to be stored in your muscle fibers, with any excess stored in your liver (which is only drawn upon when your muscles are depleted of it's fuel) Even if you have food allergies you should still be able to pinpoint specific foods that will help fuel your body before, during and after your marathons. As with any diet, you should find a balance of protein, fats, and carbohydrates, whether

in your daily food intake or as you specifically fuel for your pre, during, and post run. Most distance runners absolutely crave some form of carbohydrates, especially after running a marathon. Most any marathon finisher's chute you will see people chowing down on cookies, bagels, and bananas.

Registered Dietician, Nancy Clark, points out in her book, *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*, "Carbohydrates are important not only for endurance athletes but also for those who train hard every day and want to maintain high energy. If you want a low-carbohydrate diet, your muscles will feel chronically fatigued. You'll train, but not at your best." So as a runner of one marathon a week for a year, if you haven't figured out by now that you need to eat lots of carbohydrates, you better start now.

As for fueling during your run there is a dizzying array of energy gels, bars, and chews to choose from and can be found in your local running specialty store to your grocery store to the local corner convenience store. I am not going to say that this one or that one are the energy food you should buy and use as only you will be able to determine what works for you, keeps you running well, and very importantly, allows you to recover well, too.

When it comes to energy food products, however, never depend on them only as your main source of nutrition. As author, Monique Ryan, states in her book, *Sports Nutrition for Endurance Athletes*, "*Because you regularly participate in endurance training for your sport, your daily food intake has a significant impact on your health and recovery.*" Your main source of energy should always come from

your daily intake of whole, healthy, real foods such as poultry, fish and meats, fresh, colorful veggies, sweet potatoes, milk, and eggs, and more. As with any intake of food, avoid the sugar, salt and fatty fast foods so readily available. Ryan suggests that your sports diet should consist of 35% grains, 25% fats, 20% fruits & vegetables, 15% protein, and 5% dairy. When it comes to the wonderful world of energy foods, use them to supplement your energy stores necessary for performing long and well as a marathon runner.

I am not a dietician, and I do not even remotely suggest that my brief comments here on how to eat to run well are the definitive “say all, do all”. I am, however, a runner who has logged tens of thousands of miles of running to fine tune what works for me nutrition-wise to keep me going mile after mile after mile. So be willing to experiment with different foods and food combinations to see just what works for you.

Chapter 6: Perseverance: Running 26.2 Miles Once a Week

Dealing With Non-Running Roadblocks

It is hard enough expending the energy to run 26.2 miles once a week for a year, let alone dealing with the non-stop travel, however, you will be surprised at where, when, and how roadblocks spring up along the way. As I mentioned earlier, I used my fifty-two marathons as a vehicle to raise money and awareness for leukemia research and a cure, so I was running with a real purpose and passion. Unfortunately, we live in a world of naysayers and critics who regard anything they perceive as “impossible” with disdain, and the people who attempt it. I had plenty of critics along the way, and I can almost guarantee that you will, too. Even if you are just running your fifty-two marathons just for yourself, and not for a charity or cause, there will always be somebody ready to tell you that you can’t do it, or that you are stupid for doing it. Even if you have a powerful self-confidence, and have the attitude of “I don’t care what anyone else thinks of me”, you will find that these criticisms can weigh you down psychologically. The answer to this roadblock is to just keep going – keep putting one foot in front of the other for 26.2 miles week after week after week. You literally have to be like the old adage of letting the criticisms roll off you like “water off a duck.” If you don’t do this, then you will be allowing other people to determine the outcome of your year of marathoning.

However, the fact remains that it is your feet, your body, and your mind doing the running, and not them. So just keep moving forward to the finish line of marathon number fifty-two.

Even though I touched on the subject of money earlier, I really can't emphasize enough that if you don't have a big enough budget to last an entire year, it can be a big roadblock to running 52 marathons in 52 weeks. Plain and simple, it is not inexpensive to run a marathon a week for a whole year. I suggest that before you start that you sit down and calculate approximately how much money you are going to need to accomplish running an entire year of marathons, plus the traveling. Garnering some sponsorships along the way can lighten your financial load, especially if it is a major sponsorship. In my case, having PowerBar and Kroger as sponsors was a big help, and does take some stress off your back. There were a number of times that I rolled into a town with no idea where the money to continue my year of running was going to come from, but then, I'd leave town with a fresh supply of money and sponsorship to keep me on the road, and plenty of money donated toward my cause of leukemia research.

One of the non-running roadblocks that can sometimes blindside you is arriving at your destination only to find out that pre-arrangements that you made either fell through, or simply never even materialized. This happened to me at the 1997 Maui Marathon. I arrived only to find out that the race director had pulled the offer of a free hotel room, and any media coverage. In cases like this you have to scramble to find accommodations, and perform your own promotions and marketing. When I arrived in

Los Angeles for their marathon, the help that had been promised me was not at all what I expected, and I expended a huge amount of energy just trying to pull together a decent hotel room, and promoting my year-long running effort. Even being the positive soul that I am, always looking for and expecting the best in any and every situation, I still needed to maintain that attitude in order to make things right, and keep my streak of marathons going. Especially if you are deep into your year of marathoning, unexpected roadblocks can seem trivial, although annoying, there is no way you are going to give up and stop running.

Getting & Maintaining Support

When it comes to having the support you need to keep running 26.2 miles once a week for a year, especially if you are running for a cause or charity, you will be surprised at how supporters can come out of nowhere. My 52 in 52 was for the cause of leukemia, and because this deadly disease has touched so many lives across all borders of the globe, I had thousands of people to support and cheer me on along the way. Julie Weiss, who ran her 52 in 52 for pancreatic cancer research, experienced this support on an even much grander scale that I ever did. She is a master of using social media and used it with smashing success in keeping her supporters informed about her effort throughout her year of running. Consequently even more sponsors and races came on board to support her, promote her effort, and keep her running. So if you can, learn how to become a master of social media for promotions sake. It's called the "world-wide web"

for a reason – it touches everyone in almost every corner of the earth, and is now a key component for gathering the support you need for your year-long running mission. Even if you are running just to run it, social media will still help you to obtain and keep a supportive audience, which can always lead to some form of sponsorship. Even without the Internet, there are always those running types who simply admire your effort, and will come to aid and support. One of the beautiful residual effects of my running fifty-two marathons for leukemia, is that now, many years later, people still come up to me and say, “Aren’t you the guy who ran 52 marathons in 52 weeks for leukemia? I remember meeting you in Calgary, and I really appreciated what you were doing because my father died from leukemia!”

Damn It! I’m Doing This No Matter What!

I’ve mentioned about “the grind” of getting through an entire year of weekly marathons, and there can be no doubt that you will experience it. There are so many elements and issues that come at you throughout the year, that you will eventually find yourself worn down by it all – physically, mentally, and even spiritually – but that is when you have to rise up where you stand and literally say, “*Damn it! I’m going to do this no matter what!*” It is a powerful, energetic statement and reaffirmation to yourself that you *are* going to complete this! No matter what seems to stand in the way, you are going to accomplish this! Again, no one else, only you are the one doing this

year of running, so only you are the one who is going to tame this beast – this running of 52 marathons in 52 weeks – and it’s going to be your legs that do it, backed by your own dogged determination. And count on having to make this statement of determination to succeed more than once during your year. I certainly had to yell this out loud to myself many, many times over the ongoing fifty-two weeks. Even if this statement of “I’m going to do this no matter what” doesn’t resonate with you, find a statement or something, anything that does align with your determination to keep you going. Maintaining this determination to succeed is not an option, but instead is mandatory to your final success.

The Last Step: An In-Depth, Personal Retrospective

Again, simply because I can speak with authority and integrity as having “Been there! Done that!”, I think it is very important to take an in-depth, personal retrospective of your year of marathoning. Earlier in this book I discussed that before you begin, you should not only know why you want to run 52 marathons in 52 weeks, but also that your why should be rock-solid enough to keep you from crumbling and failing during the year. However, your year of running in hindsight can look and feel a lot different than before you starting running. Here I am many years after my 52 marathon streak, and there are still days when I look back and try to understand the things I did, the decisions I made, and all of the emotion, feelings, and thoughts that come with it. For me, it is

almost an epiphany that some of the things that I thought were a failure during the year, really turned out to be victories. Also, many of the key reasons on why I decided to move forward with my *Super Run for the Cure* project were magnified in that I am now able to see that it had a far bigger positive influence and effect on the world than I ever thought was possible. Since the mid '90's when I ran all of my marathons to raise money and awareness for research for a cure for the deadly disease of leukemia, the treatments have taken quantum leaps and bounds forward in reducing the death rate of it's victims. Even though at the time of this writing there is no cure for leukemia, the rate of remission for it's sufferers has also taken off beautifully. The treatments have come so dramatically far, that many of the people who were struck with leukemia just twenty years ago, and did not make it, today, might be in full remission, and living a happy, healed life right now – just like my little friend, Glen Miller, Jr. This is an excellent example of how much your own personal passion and effort can have effects, hopefully in a positive manner, far, far greater than you will *ever* be able to know. I know my 52/52 fellow club member, Julie Weiss, who ran her year of marathons for pancreatic cancer (she lost her dad to the disease), had massive success via her effort in helping to find a cure, and positive effects on thousands of pancreatic cancer patients. Plus, she did not stop there, as she has continues to use her marathoning efforts beyond her original yearlong effort, to continue the work for PC awareness and a cure. She has taken the use of her marathon running to the next level as a high profile tool for promotion and awareness of PC.

As for your own personal year of 52 marathons in 52 weeks, you really don't have to use your running for any cause at all – just be aware that your running effort, in and of itself, will serve to promote general awareness and good will toward a healthy, fit, and strong lifestyle to all who come in contact with you.

Chapter 7: 52 Marathons In 52 Weeks - Done! Now What?

I Actually Ran 52 Marathons In 52 Weeks!

So finally, the time has come where you have fifty-one weeks of running marathons behind you, and the finish line of your very last race looms large. You've persevered through thick and thin – through the aches and pains, the non-stop travel, the thousands of people you have met and run with, dozens and dozens of ice baths, hundreds of thousands of calories consumed, tens of thousands of dollars spent, survived logistical nightmares, to successfully run and complete a 26.2 mile race once a week for fifty-two straight weeks. Yes, you did it! Congratulations!

My 52nd marathon was the April 27, 1997 Big Sur Marathon in beautiful Carmel, California. Not an easy course to run because of the hills and wind, but perhaps one of the most beautiful marathon courses in America to run. I had run this race once before my year of marathoning and fell in love with it. I knew immediately when I was making out my yearlong race schedule, and saw that it fell perfectly in place to be my last marathon. For me, Big Sur was the perfect place to finish my marathons. I had a small group of eight of my helpers and supporters who decided to run my very last marathon with me that day. Although I was pretty beat-up physically and exhausted from fifty-two weeks on the road of running (“Injury and illness are *not* an option!”), I was pumped up to have this key group of friends running me through my last

26.2 mile race of the year. Even though we were running a pretty slow pace, we had a blast, as I was making the most of marathon number fifty-two. We zig-zagged through the course, threw a football to each other, sang some songs, laughed and high-fived people along the way. I think many of the runners who ran near us thought we were wacko, but once they found out that I was running my 52nd marathon in 52 weeks, they joined in the fun. Despite the fatigue that permeated my legs and body, we picked up the pace when the very last finish line of my year came into sight. I burst across the finish line at Big Sur only to have someone hand me a surrogate check for \$1 million dollars made out to the Leukemia Society of America (symbolic of the money I had raised that year), and then, I was immediately interviewed by a local Northern California TV station. To add to the spectacular finish, my family had come to witness my finish, so I was able to share my joy and elation with all of them. We capped off the night with a huge party that my supporters had arranged, and I would be lying if I told you that I didn't have a huge hangover the next morning.

With your 52 in 52 marathon effort, you may not necessarily have as spectacular a finish as I was fortunate enough to have, but you most definitely will have to take the time to celebrate the fact that you did it – you *really* did it! Recover from the effort, and then have fun! Revel in your accomplishment, because in the grand scheme of things you will have written your name on a very, very tiny list of people on the planet who have ever been able to say, “*I ran 52 marathons in 52 weeks!*”

The Highs & Lows of Being Done

As I mentioned, the very next morning after completing marathon number fifty-two at the Big Sur Marathon, not only did I wake up with a huge hangover, but I was also coming down with a cold. It was almost like my body was saying to me, *“Ok, I’ve given you my all, and then some, for an entire year to run these marathons. Now I’m taking some down time to recover and rejuvenate.”* The flight back to my home in the Columbus, Ohio was both a blur of fun and rejoicing, but also one of a fog of non-direction as I started to say to myself, “Now what?”

Although this “now what?” fog may not immediately envelope you, it most certainly will at some point. After fifty-two weeks of intense focus, and physical and mental effort on running fifty-two marathons, suddenly it’s over. It was as if you were in a tunnel focused only on the next race that lay ahead of you, and the ultimate goal of accomplishing fifty-two marathons. Now suddenly the blinders have been taken off, and you are out of the tunnel and into the sunlight again. It is certainly bewildering to no longer have that goal lying in front of you. There is a feeling of freedom and satisfaction of being on the other side of successfully accomplishing what at one time loomed as a gigantic, seemingly impossible feat. Once on the other side of your success, be prepared to enter into a period of uncertainty, and even floundering in your daily life, as you may struggle trying to fit back into your normal flow of life. This does not have to be a bad thing, as it gives you time to not only bask in your success, but it also gives you the opportunity to refocus on what your next goal or mission is going to

be. Your post fifty-two weeks of marathoning should be a time of allowing your body to recover, heal, and grow stronger. After all, you did ask of it to do something that way beyond the scope of normal physical activity, and it deserves some down time. This is also truly for your mental state. As I stated, this is a time for your mind to refocus, and gain clarity on what lies ahead for you.

On to the Next Running Challenge!

For you, now that you have successfully joined Club 52/52, you may choose to go on to yet an even greater running challenge. Maybe you may move into the ultra running world, and start to race the 50 and 100 mile races. There is a 100 mile race every weekend somewhere in the world (although I would not recommend running fifty-two 100 milers in fifty-two weeks). It all depends on how much you've got left in your body after running 1362.4 miles in one year.

I thought it might be helpful to you if I recommended some marathons that you might consider putting into your 52 in 52 schedule. This is in no way a comprehensive list of 26.2 mile races, but simply races I have experienced, and can give you some first hand experiential knowledge about.

Chapter 8: Karl Gruber's Recommended Marathons

January

- Disney World Marathon, Orlando, Florida. I was fortunate to run one of the very first marathons Disney put on in 1997. The race committee treated me like a world-class racer with a complimentary hotel, and entry. The racecourse had many turns in it, and the weather for January in Florida can range anywhere from close to freezing to the upper 80's.
- Carlsbad Marathon, Carlsbad, California. This race was the original "San Diego Marathon" back before the Rock 'n Roll Marathon came to San Diego in 1998. This is not a large race, but much of it runs right along the Pacific Ocean and through the beautiful Carlsbad neighborhoods. The course also features some rolling hills.
- Chevron Houston Marathon, Texas. Started in 1972 (before the U.S. running boom), I enjoyed running Houston because the population of the city turned out in droves. Every street was lined with thousands of spectators.
- Maui Oceanfront Marathon, Hawaii. At one time there used to be only one Maui Marathon, but now there are two or three. While this race is one of the newer ones, who cares? It's in Maui! The course runs entirely on the leeward side of the island all along the beautiful Maui Pacific Ocean coastline, and finishes in the

town of Lahaina. It is highly likely that you will see numerous whales jumping out of the water while you are running. Also, many famous Japanese TV & movie stars are known to come and run in Maui.

- Rock 'n Roll Arizona Marathon, Phoenix. The Rock 'n Roll Marathon series has literally swept the nation, and most every one of these R 'n R marathons are very well organized and run, and this one is no exception.

February

- Golden Gate Trail Marathon, Rodeo Beach, California. While I ran a couple other California trail marathons, I'm sure this one is similar – Gorgeous scenery of the Pacific Ocean, Golden Gate Bridge, and the Marin Highlands, plus massive and long hills – mostly run on rough dirt trails. If you are planning to do 52 in 52, then I'll warn you that a trail race can be a real rough patch in your yearlong streak. A beautiful challenge, but think twice before signing up.
- NXP Austin Marathon, Texas. Another race I have threatened to run, but have yet to do so. Another well established race, and a course that features lots and lots of hills.
- Last Chance for Boston Marathon, Columbus, Ohio. This race was established several years ago before the date was changed as being the very last day you could qualify for the Boston Marathon. It is run on a one mile loop in an

office park, and the weather is usually very cold. This does not deter the runners, and if you need a race where the logistics are minimal, then this is the marathon for you.

- Cowtown Marathon, Ft. Worth, Texas. This is a surprisingly nice marathon as it runs through some of the nicest Ft. Worth neighborhoods. The only negative I remember about running this race is many of the streets we ran on were hard concrete.

March:

- Rock ‘n Roll USA Marathon (formerly called the National Marathon), Washington D.C.. This race is one of the newer members of the Rock ‘n Roll Marathon series. While the Marine Corps Marathon in D.C. is the grandfather of the marathons in the Capital of the U.S., and even though I have not run this race, I can tell you that any race run in D.C. is worth it simply because you get to run by all of the historic monuments and buildings.
- Big Island International Marathon, Hilo, Hawaii. Again, in my mind, *any* marathon you can run in the tropical paradise of Hawaii, is ok by me! This race is run on the windward (east) side of the island of Hawaii, and runs right through some of the most lush tropical settings you will find anywhere. Also, it is all run right along the Pacific, and be prepared for lots of hills! Oh yes, and more than likely some rain – Hilo is America’s most rainy city! I know that

you will get top-notch timing in this race, as my longtime friend, Jim Lovell (owner of JTL Timing) is the head timer of the race. He is famous for having your finishing time printed out for you on a small card within minutes of your finish! Aloha!

- Sketchers Performance Los Angeles Marathon, California. Since I ran this race they have changed the course many times. This is a major race, and now starts downtown, runs through most of the multi-cultural barrios, each with its own unique neighborhood party to cheer you on, and then in beautiful Santa Monica right on the ocean.
- Yuengling Shamrock Sportsfest Marathon, Virginia Beach, Virginia. This is an old marathon first run in 1973, and now boasts 30,000 runners (there's a half marathon, too). Usually run right around the St. Patrick's Day holiday, so you will see lots of green during the weekend. The race course itself runs out and back right along the Atlantic Ocean coast, and then loops back on the military base, Ft. Story. A well run marathon with lots of tradition, but be aware that you may have the wind in your face for much of the race.

April:

- Athens Marathon, Athens, Ohio. The city of Athens, Ohio, located in beautiful Southeastern Ohio, is most famous for having Ohio University in town, but it is also home to one of

America's oldest marathons. This race has been around for 50 years, and considering it is located in one of the hilliest sections of Ohio, surprisingly the racecourse is almost all flat. Almost the entire race is run on a bike trail that parallels the Hocking River, and has a great finish that ends right on the Ohio University varsity track. This was number 49 of my year of running 52 marathons, and I still love running in Athens every year, because it is an excuse for me to go to Jackie O's Brewery afterward.

- Boston Marathon, Boston Massachusetts. What can one say about Boston except that it is the Holy Grail of running! It is the marathon that every runner around the globe desires to qualify for and run. First run in 1897, it is one of the oldest of marathons in the world, and believe me, it is a tough course! This was number 51 of my 52 marathons, and I was fortunate to say that I competed in it. Caution: They don't call Heartbreak Hill by that name for nothing!
- Big Sur Marathon, Carmel, California. This was the very last marathon of my 52 marathons, and I chose well. Long considered one of the prettiest and most scenic course in the U.S., it is also a very challenging and hilly course. Runners are bused 26.2 miles south of Carmel on Highway 1, right along the Pacific Ocean coastline. You then run north for the entire 26.2 miles with the ocean and some incredible vistas on your left for the entire run. Caution: Big Sur weather conditions can add to the hilly course – strong winds, and occasionally fog. If you want to include Big Sur in your 52 in 52 race calendar, you better apply now, because

this race sells out far in advance, and you can only enter via lottery or run for a charity cause.

May:

- Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon, Pittsburgh, PA. I have only run the half marathon on this course, and I can guarantee you that this course will challenge you with numerous hills. The month of May offers a massive numbers of marathons throughout North America, however, the race is a good choice as it has excellent organization, and takes you by all three of Pittsburgh's sports stadiums (hockey, football, and baseball).
- Capital City Marathon, Olympia, Washington. This race was number three of my 52 marathons, and is a small race usually run in typical state of Washington weather – somewhat rainy, and cool temperatures. This is a loop course, and another hilly race, however, it is all downhill from mile 24.5 to the finish line.
- Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon, Cleveland, Ohio. 40 years in the running, the Cleveland, Ohio marathons is one of my favorites. Not only is it my hometown marathon, it was my very first of my 52 marathons that started off my *Super Run for the Cure*. It is not the flattest of courses, but also not super hilly. Well organized, and run in a city with world class major league sports teams, plus the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame. Also, I am now one of the

race announcers, so I hope I get to call your finish! Make sure to let me know you are doing the 52 in 52 challenge!

- Scotiabank Ottawa Marathon, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. This race was number two of my 52, and run in the gorgeous, historic national capital of Canada. In my book, being the home country of Terry Fox, and marathon in Canada rocks! As I mentioned earlier, because of Terry Fox's *Marathon of Hope* that he ran in 1980, Canadians have a true appreciation for long distance races and events. The spectators will keep you going. Caution: The weather in Ottawa in May can fluctuate widely – from sideways blowing snow and wind, to 80 degrees fahrenheit and sunshine.

June:

- Suja Rock 'n Roll Marathon, San Diego, California. As I mentioned earlier, the original San Diego Marathon was run in Carlsbad for many years prior to this race, however, when this marathon started in 1998 (the original "Rock 'n Roll Marathon), it became *the* marathon in San Diego. I was at the very first running of this race in '98 (as a coach), and I can verify that they had some major issues that first year (They ran out of water early in the race, and even had a train come across the course at mile 26, thus halting the entire field until it passed!) Since that problematic first year, the Rock 'n Roll marathon most definitely

pulled its act together, and has since become a wonderful event. I feel the same way about running in San Diego as I do about running in Hawaii – *any* race run there is worth doing!

- Grandma's Marathon, Duluth, Minnesota. This is another marathon that has long been on my list of races to do. Although I have not run this marathon, I know it is considered by many as one of the best marathons in the Midwest to run. This is a point A to point B race, with a few rollers in it, and is said to be a beautiful course run entirely along the shores of Lake Superior.
- Charlevoix Marathon, Charlevoix, Michigan. This is another race that I have had the honor of being the race announcer for, and it is run in northern Michigan in the beautiful little resort town of Chalevoix right on Lake Michigan. This is a small race, not many very fast runners, so if you feel like you have a chance to win or place, check out this marathon.
- Mayor's Marathon, Anchorage Alaska. This race used to be called the Mayor's "Midnight Sun" Marathon, which was strange, because it actually was run first thing in the morning. This was number eight of my 52, and running this race is simply a great excuse to go to beautiful and wild Alaska in the summer! Usually run right around the Summer Solstice, you will experience bright sunshine at 11 o'clock at night. Part of the course is run on old Army tank roads, so they can be uneven, and rutted, otherwise, and enjoyable race with good support.
- UCC Coffee Kona Marathon, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii. I would be totally remiss if I left off my list my favorite Hawaiian marathon run in

Kona on the Big Island. Originally started and run for many years by my Big Island buddy, Jim Lovell (owner of JTL Timing), and initially ran on much of the famous Iron Man World Triathlon Championship marathon course. Now the race is actually held about 25 miles north of Kona at a resort town called Waikoloa Village. I will make no bones about it, this race will be hot, hot, hot, with nowhere to hide from the sun. You will be running right by vast lava rock fields that reflect the sunshine. Once you get out on the famous Queen K Highway, you more than likely will encounter the famous Big Island winds. Don't expect a P.R. here, but as I always say, "Who cares? You're in Hawaii!"

July:

- San Francisco Marathon, California. This was marathon number 11 of my 52, and whereas the Los Angeles is hugely supported by the city, when I ran S.F., I don't remember all that many spectators out cheering on the course – hopefully that has changed. Don't forget, this marathon is run on the streets of San Francisco, so that means plenty of hills to deal with, but you get to run over and back on one of America's greatest treasures, the Golden Gate Bridge! If it's not fogged in on race morning, you are in for some really spectacular views. Once you are done running, you get to enjoy one of America's most beautiful and interesting cities.

- Deseret News Marathon, Salt Lake City, Utah. This is one of the older marathons in the U.S. having first been run in 1970. It is similar to the St. George and the Steamboat Springs Marathons in that it has a big elevation drop over 26.2 miles. This one starts on a local mountaintop outside of town, and drops a total of 3200 feet by the time you hit the finish line right in Salt Lake City. So if you need a faster racecourse because of the overall elevation drop, plus some great scenery, this race is for you.

August:

- Paavo Nurmi Marathon, Hurley, Wisconsin. This race was number 15 of 52, and is named after the famous Finnish 20th century distance runner, Paavo Nurmi. This race has successfully been organized for almost 50 years by the local Hurley, Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce. Located way up in the northern tip of Wisconsin, right on the border of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, when you are running you will think you are somewhere in upper Canada as there is nothing but mile after mile of pine trees.
- Pikes Peak Marathon, Manitou Springs, Colorado. I can't say this is a recommendation that you run this race, so much as a warning not to if you are doing a streak of 52 marathons in 52 weeks. This race starts at 6000 feet, and ascends at just over 14,000 feet, all run on

rough dirt and rocky trails, plus there is not a whole lot of oxygen available at that elevation. I had considered doing this race as part of my 52 marathons, but so many people warned me not to because the difficulty factor could cause me harm and stop my streak. I'm sure it is a beautiful course, but only run this trail marathon if you are in pure beast mode!

- Santa Rosa Marathon, Santa Rosa, California. I have had the good fortune of spending a lot of time in the home of Wine Country, in Sonoma County, and I can tell you that you will not be disappointed with this race. You will be running past the vineyards of some world famous wineries, and through the historic city of Santa Rosa. The bonus is that you get a bottle of wine with your marathon race entry!

September:

- Jackson Hole Marathon, Jackson Hole, Wyoming. This race was number 19 of my 52, and also one of the prettiest of all the courses I have run. Run at the base of the spectacular Teton Mts., they bus you 26.2 mile outside of town, and then you run back into town with much of the course run right long the Snake River. The finish is run on grass for the last mile, and finishes in Teton Village at the base of their world-class ski jump! A spectacularly beautiful race in a spectacular place, and well worth running.

- Kauai Marathon, Koloa Kauai, Hawaii. As you already know, any race run in Hawaii is ok by me, and this is one that is still on my bucket list of races to do. This race features incredible views of the Kauai coast running past lush tropical forest, and finishing right near the beach (like everything else in Hawaii.) Yet another Hawaiian marathon not to be missed!
- Erie Marathon, Erie, PA. While there may be many marathons with far more spectacular scenery, Erie is a good race, especially if you are doing 52 in 52. Erie was my 20th. marathon of my 52, and it is nice because it is two 13.1 mile loops that are flat and fast run around Presque Isle State Park right on the shores of Lake Erie. This is a great place to qualify for Boston as up to 30% usually hit their qualifying times on this course.
- Air Force Marathon, Dayton, Ohio. This race is only 20 years old, but now draws a field of a few thousand. Run mostly on the Wright Patterson Air Force Base just outside of Dayton, the starting ceremonies are usually pretty amazing, featuring a flyover by a Stealth B2 bomber. Unfortunately, since much of the race is run on the Air Force base, and being a restricted area, there may not be that many spectators to cheer you on.

October:

- Boulder Backroads Marathon, Boulder, Colorado. While I say that a lot of races have a

beautiful racecourse, when I say this course really is beautiful, I really mean it! I ran this marathon a few years after my 52 in 52, and while it was a somewhat challenging course, I loved every minute of it! Close to 24 of the 26.2 miles was run on open country dirt roads north of the town of Boulder, in horse ranch country. With the sun coming up over the distant mountains, you will be enthralled with the very real Colorado beauty as you run this one. The finish is also beautiful as it finishes right at the reservoir just north of town. When they say “back roads” on this one, they are serious!

- St. George Marathon, St. George, Utah. Of all my 52 marathons in 1996-'97, this was my fastest race of all of them. Of course it helps in that the entire course is run downhill for 26.2 miles. This is one of those races that has long been rated as one of the best marathons to qualify for Boston. The start of the race is 26.2 miles out of town up on a mountain road, and it has long been a tradition to have big bonfires for the runners to stay warm around pre-race. Yet another racecourse with phenomenal scenery throughout the entire run.
- Chicago Marathon, Illinois. The Chicago marathon not only has one of the largest fields of runners in the world (upward of 50,000), and is so flat, that the marathon world record has been held there a number of times. This race starts and finishes in famous Grant Park, and will surely be a memorable event for your year of 52 marathons.
- Nationwide Children's Hospital Columbus Marathon, Columbus, Ohio. Being a long time resident of America's 15th. largest city,

Columbus, Ohio, and one of the race announcers for this event, I highly recommend this race! In the running for almost 40 years, the Columbus Marathon has turned into a world-class race. Columbus is also recommended as a great course to run a fast time. Well supported, well directed, and large galleries of spectators for most of the 26.2 miles.

- Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Having twice run this marathon myself, I can say with all certainty that this racecourse in Toronto rivals Chicago as one of the flattest marathons you will ever run. With big prize money up for grabs for the elites, some of the fastest runners in the world come to Toronto to not only enjoy this world-class city, and try for a world record. This is Canada's racing at its best!

November:

- TCS New York City Marathon, New York. NYC is one of the world major marathons, and any runner worth their salt, will want to do this race. The course itself is harder than you might think, and don't forget the massive field of runners can easily slow you down. Also, the logistics of getting to the start of the race and queuing up for the start can be a nightmare – still, it's New York!
- City of Oaks Marathon, Raleigh, North Carolina. I never said that I wouldn't

recommend races that are hard, and this is one hilly course. I recommend running this race in gorgeous Raleigh, because you run through the rainbow colors of the fall foliage on the oak trees, but there are some very long hills to deal with here. Run this one for another notch in your 52/52 belt, but don't look for a p.r.

December:

- California International Marathon, Sacramento, California. Once again we focus on a marathon course that offers an overall downhill elevation change, and a great place to run fast and set a personal record. This is a point A to point B run course.
- Kiawah Island Marathon, South Carolina. The number 33 marathon of my 52 races, and I thoroughly enjoyed this race. Much of the race was run right on a well-groomed bike path and past the ocean and beautiful golf courses. They also had an awesome carbo-loading dinner pre-race, and wonderful hospitality to boot.
- Honolulu Marathon, Hawaii. The Grandfather of all the Hawaiian marathons, Honolulu! The start is at 5:00 AM on Ala Moana Blvd. right on the ocean (like everything in Hawaii!) A massive international field of close to 50,000 entrants fills the street as a huge display of fireworks are shot off over the water as the race begins. Expect plenty of tropical sunshine and heat once the sun comes up, and a lei and a big finisher's medal at the race's end. Highly

recommended – ice under your cap, and plenty of fluids and sun block are in order.

After the successful conclusion of my *Super Run for the Cure*, I was done running for a while. My body was pretty beat up after fifty-two weeks of running, although no major injuries. I actually, for the first and only time in my adult running life, stopped running for a full six weeks. During this time I was still in the state of celebrating my successful year of running, and my body really needed this time to heal and recover. Once I started back up running, I really enjoyed going out to run only one to three miles at a time without my watch on, and just run. Although I have run a number of marathons since I finished my 52 in 52 in 1997, I found that I had left a lot of me out on those fifty-two marathon courses. Prior to the start of my year of marathoning, I was a consistent sub four-hour marathoner, but I had given my all, and I permanently left some of my speed out on those courses. But that is ok with me, as I have now, for a long time, simply enjoyed running for the sake of running – and that is perfectly ok with me.

For you as a successful member of Club 52/52, you may still have a vast reservoir of running left in your legs, and you're raring to go again. Referring again to the amazing mass marathon runners like Chuck Engle, Dean Karnazes, and even Julie Weiss, they just keep running more marathons, and longer and longer distances.

So find that next running challenge after your fifty-two marathon goal is behind you, and, by the way, *congratulations!* You did it!

"Super Run Victory Swig!" - 52 marathons complete after running Big Sur! 4/27/97



The author, Karl Gruber, after finishing his 52nd marathon in 52 weeks. To date, he has completed 78 marathons, and continues to run on a daily basis for health and fitness, along with writing about and coaching running, where he resides in Columbus, Ohio.

About the Expert

Karl Gruber is the 9th man in the world to run 52 marathons in 52 weeks. He was inspired to run a marathon every week for a period of a year to raise awareness for leukemia. Now, Karl shares his incredible lessons through this "52 Marathons in 52 Weeks" guide. Gruber is also published author, speaker, and life coach.

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