



Sweaty She Monday (8/17/09): I Had Forgotten Why ...

By Susan Farago

Weekly Sweaty She postings can be found on "Sweaty She" on Facebook.com or at www.susanfarago.com.

These past couple of years have brought a lot of changes: Leary and I moved into a condo and completely downsized our lifestyle, I left IBM exactly 12 months ago after a 10 year "corporate career" to pursue a "non-corporate" career, and friends I used to see on a regular basis I now see much more infrequently.

But since 1998 when I ran my first half-marathon, no matter the amount of chaos or change in my life, I could rely on my training schedule to keep me anchored. The schedule provided some semblance of daily direction. It gave me an excuse to figure out new and creative ways to prioritize the rest of my life around "the workout". Then last year something changed. After countless triathlons and running races, for the first time since 1998 I was no longer enjoying my training. Fun had been replaced with competition. Inner challenges had been replaced with outward pressures to "do better". Quite frankly, I was no longer in the mood to continuously push, push, push based on what I "should" be doing or because of someone else's performance expectations. The schedule had literally been relegated to the bottom of my pile of "things to do". What happened to the fun? Where did my "self" go? What was I doing? I had forgotten why.

I had forgotten why I started running in the first place.

It was my senior year of college and I was studying abroad in France. I didn't want to go to a health club to exercise (and deal with the French men) so I started walking, then walk running, then running.

I had forgotten why I did my first triathlon.

It was a combination of turning 30 and my pants no longer fitting AND receiving a jury duty form in the mail and under "hobbies" I had to leave it blank because I was too focused on climbing the corporate ladder and had no life (which is why my pants no longer fit).

I had forgotten why it was so fun to plan my first long run.

I had my husband drop me off at the Arboretum and I ran all the way home to Lakeway – 22 miles in total. I knew I needed protein and carbs but it had to be small enough for me to carry – so I fueled with almonds and candy conversation hearts (I know...I know...what was I thinking). What amazing memories of that long run and Leary driving along RR620 to make sure I wasn't laying in the ditch somewhere (thankfully he also brought REAL food!)

I had forgotten why long runs and bike rides were so fun with friends. It was because they were “chat” based, not “performance” based. And how wonderful were the honest, funny, deep (and not so deep) conversations where any topic was open for discussion.

I had forgotten why self-discovery was so important to me. That there were so many new, exciting, and different activities to try. Activities that would make me uncomfortable (but in a good way) and that would push me (but on my own terms – me versus me, or me versus the clock). And that I didn’t have to rely on others for self-discovery. I could make up things I wanted to try or do and then just go do them!

This past weekend I was reunited with my “why”. I raced the Sweet and Twisted sprint distance triathlon at Pace Bend Park – the same place I raced when I did my first ever triathlon in 2000. The familiar roads, terrain, and water - it all came flooding back to me – the fun, the laughter, the feeling of how great it was just to be out there in an all women’s race again, just doing my own thing. My goal for the race was to enjoy myself. And as two other women from my age group passed me on the run, for the first time in a long time, it didn’t matter. I just let them go rather than chase them down. On this day, I wasn’t racing...I was enjoying.

Surprisingly enough, I ended up coming in 3rd in my age group at that race. And as I received my trophy, I started scheming how I could do better next time. There’s always a next time. But it wasn’t so I could beat those ahead of me, it was because I knew I wanted to push myself harder – me versus me, me versus the clock, me on my own terms and no one else’s.

Everyone has different motivators for what they do and why they do it. For some it’s personal challenge and for other’s, like my Mom, their response to the “why” is, “Because it’s there!” And yet for others, competition is what fuels their why.*

We all have reasons for what we do whether they are externally imposed or internally driven. So *Go.Do.Be.* - but don’t forget the why.

*For an interesting look at the nature of competition and the negative effects check out, “No Contest: The Case Against Competition by Alfie Kohn (1986).

Thoughts or comments? Go to the Discussion Board on Sweaty She Facebook to comment on this article OR to see more “Sweaty She Monday” postings, visit www.susanfarago.com.