2 Atlantans who harnessed the power of running to heal

Cross country camp adds training for “mental game”

Tradition, evolution of Anthem Peachtree Junior
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The Year Of COFFEE
Word from the Director

The science is settled: Climate change is real. Oops, that’s a different topic.

The science is settled: Aerobic exercise is good for you. In Atlanta Track Club’s case, that means running is good for you. That means a brisk walk is equally good for you. Pretty simple stuff, right? Maybe so, but I still occasionally wonder about the true origins of this thing called a runner’s high.

Broccoli is good for me. A beet salad is good for me. Brussels sprouts, however bad they taste, are good for me. Running is good for me. Each of these, at some level, reduces the risk of bad things happening to my body. But one of these is not like the others. And do we want it be like the others? Just think what the price of broccoli would be if there was such a thing as a “broccoli high.”

I’m a pretty simple, low maintenance kind of guy. My wife would probably claim that I’ve got a dry personality. My kids would simply say that I am boring. I don’t need much to sustain balance and happiness. Just a healthy diet of family, work and running. While running needs to sit below family and work in terms of life’s priorities, it is nonetheless an ever-present necessity. It is the ballast that keeps me balanced.

I’m not a dietitian (far from it). So don’t throw out those veggies. Keep ‘em handy as healthy snacks. But when you need a real fix of feeling healthy – mentally as well as physically – lace up the ‘ole Mizunos and get your run on. Like Adam and Sharifa, two runners who are profiled beginning on Page 8, when you’re done you’ll be ready to take on all the world throws at you.

The science is settled: Aerobic exercise is good for you.

Rich Kenah
Executive Director

In this issue, we examine The Power of Running. So we asked our staff: How has running changed your life?

Jennifer Cohen
Office Coordinator
Training runs make me feel closer to those I’m running with: my teammates, my father, my friends, and recently my daughters. When running with others, it’s easy to relax and have a great conversation. Fitting in long training runs has been a challenge in every stage of my life – college, working full time and taking care of young children – but the camaraderie and stress relief I feel from running have changed my life for the better! 

Jay Holder
Director, Marketing
So many of the great things in my life happened because I gave up being a theater kid in high school and became a cross country kid instead. I met almost all of the people I consider my closest friends through running. I met my wife through running friends. I got the opportunity to have a job that allows me to celebrate other people’s running accomplishments. This is something I think about almost every day. If I hadn’t run that first mile as a teenager, I would be a completely different person.

Natalie Cabanas
Manager, Events Marketing
Running began as a way to keep me conditioned for other sports I played when I was younger. Then it turned into a stress reliever for me. I could always clear my mind while running. As I got older, it’s how I found some of my most meaningful friends and it eventually led to me to where I work today at Atlanta Track Club. It’s touched so many avenues of my life, I’d say it’s help mold me into who I am today.
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This month:
We believe that running has the power to change lives. So we asked our social media followers, “How has running saved you?”

Robbie Besana
I volunteered at the 2017 Publix Georgia Marathon. My job was to pour mimosas for the Ultimate Peach finishers and I was inspired by all the folks who finished it that day. People from all walks of life and all different backgrounds shared their stories of why they wanted to finish a marathon. So I trained and finished my very first marathon last year at the same event, the 2018 Publix Atlanta Marathon, and was myself an Ultimate Peach. Since then I’ve done a trail 50K and the New York City Marathon and I’m scheduled to run Berlin and Chicago this fall. Running has given me a purpose and a reason to train and be healthy. It has added so many positive byproducts and instilled strong behaviors in my life.

Johnny Rabun
Last year in March I began training for the AJC Peachtree Road Race, my fifth year. I started feeling a little pressure in my chest and the more I walked, the more I had to start breathing deeper. After a couple of weeks I went to see my local doctor. She said we should get it checked out, even though I appeared to be in good shape. She sent me to a cardiologist, who did a stress test that he stopped after 30 seconds. The next day I had a heart catheterization, and the result was I needed four bypasses. Had surgery a few days later. The doctor knew that I walk in the road race, so after surgery he said that if I followed my therapy and listened to my rehab person I could walk that year, three months after my surgery. I did as I was told. My therapist pushed me hard, physically and mentally. ... My doctors couldn’t believe how fast physically and mentally I recovered. Without the motivation of the race, I would have not been as far along. I am 69 years old, and I plan on walking in the race for many more years.

Nancy Hill
Running has definitely been a catalyst for continuing my health transformation. Over the course of the last two years, I have been dedicated to changing my lifestyle and lost 137 lbs. When I hit my goal weight in October 2018, I knew I needed to find something to keep me dedicated to my health and constantly working toward a goal. You can never run too fast. Lucky for me my job participated in Kaiser Permanente 5K in November 2018 so I decided to sign up. Of course, I had never run a race in my life but it was that moment I found a true love of running. That’s when I decided I would run the Publix Atlanta Half Marathon. Everyone around me thought I had lost my mind considering I had only run one race in my entire life and it was only a 5K (which I did walk part of) but I wanted it so bad I didn’t care what people thought. Now I am so grateful to be a member of Atlanta Track Club, where I get to constantly do what I love plus I get to fulfill my dream of running the AJC Peachtree Road Race along with being a Triple Peach recipient within the next year. Perhaps, the Ultimate Peach is in my future. 😊

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THE POWER OF RUNNING
AFTER THEIR OWN HEALING, THESE TWO ATLANTANS ARE PAYING IT FORWARD
By Rita Giordano
It’s been said that it takes a village to raise a child, and ever since Sharifa Knowles was a tiny girl her one constant was the women-village at her life’s core:

Her own mother, of course, purposeful and strong. Her maternal grandmother, a veritable force of nature. Her mother’s friends – surrogate aunties like second mothers – whose laughter and strength followed her through her life. Then there were their offspring, almost like siblings. A seemingly unbreakable chain of love.

That is, until cancer came. It busted apart that chain, link by link. Three deaths in as many months.

“I was almost completely crippled,” Knowles said.

Yet in midst of that darkness, the metro-Atlanta resident who had barely ever jogged around her subdivision was struck by an idea, a notion. It seemed implausible at best: “I just said, ‘OK I’m going to train for a half marathon.’”

A little over 10 years ago, the only running Adam Heiser was doing was from himself. After more than a decade of drugs and alcohol ruling his life, the once-positive young man was estranged from his family, had racked up a rap sheet full of arrests and was looking at possible prison time. He was cycling around the Atlanta area because he’d lost his license and white-knuckling his way through early sobriety when he ran into an old friend.

“Hey, man,” the friend said. “I’m glad you’re alive. I heard things got really sideways for you.”

The friend said something else, too. “He said, ‘We should do a marathon together.’”

If you’re a part of the Atlanta running community, chances are you know Heiser and Knowles. They’ve run in many other half and full marathons since those early days, and they’ve helped many others get there, too.

But when Knowles and Heiser - who will both compete in this year’s AJC Peachtree Road Race - talk about running, they don’t dwell on speed or finish times. Instead, they use words like “community” and “family.” Rather than winning, they talk about growth.

Knowles and Heiser are testaments to the power of running – its ability to heal, to restore, to enable the spirit to flourish.

Heiser now runs ITL Coaching and Performance, the training company he founded. He has built a career helping others develop into triathletes but, more importantly held tell you, to strive to be the best versions of themselves. Life is now his high; he has maintained a solid recovery, clean and sober for over 10 years.

Knowles describes herself as an introvert, but nonetheless she has risen as a role model to her students and peers alike as a teacher and education leader in the area schools. She is active with Atlanta Track Club, and she has time and again used running as a force for good. In the last year’s TCS New York City Marathon, she ran and raised $4,800 for multiple sclerosis.

Science is still decoding the benefits running holds for the human animal. Of course, it helps us become healthier and stronger physically. In addition, setting and reaching running goals can boost confidence and cultivate grit – that hard-to-define quality that enables us to persevere when others quit. But increasingly, research suggests running and other demanding physical exercise can bring about brain changes that combat depression and anxiety, facilitate mental focus and turn down some of the negative mental chatter adverse to emotional and spiritual well-being.

Put all that together and it’s no wonder that groups all over the world have tapped into running as a way to help people heal from all sorts of ills and changes in their lives. Philadelphia-based Back on My Feet operates in several U.S. cities, including Atlanta, to combat homelessness through the power of running and community support as well as employment and housing opportunities. The Girls Gotta Run Foundation uses running to create safe spaces, end child marriage and support education for vulnerable
female youngsters in Ethiopia.
Nationally and globally, the power of running has been harnessed to aid survivors of sexual and domestic violence, suicide, childhood trauma and war.
And for others, like Heiser and Knowles, it has been the way back from the abyss of addiction and the scorched-earth wasteland of a broken heart.

Growing up in the Atlanta suburbs, Adam Heiser loved sports. “I was always the first kid at practice and the last one to leave,” he said.
At Etowah High School in Woodstock, he wrestled, played baseball and golf and believed that his coaches could do no wrong. After high school, Heiser, a hard worker by nature, threw that enthusiasm into media sales. That included entertaining clients.

“It just started as a lifestyle in my early 20s, and it progressed,” said Heiser, now 42. “It really took over my life … drinking, then drugs.”
Before he got clean at age 32, Heiser spiraled through a decade of chaos: about 20 arrests, including three for driving under the influence. He spent a year or so in different jail stints. He put his family through hell. His life became a very small, dark place.

“When I was at the worst of it, I was living in a weekly motel, with all my belongings next to me. I was alone, and nobody knew it,” he said.
But it didn’t end there. In July 2008, Heiser found himself in a Florida beach town, consumed by shame and guilt. Staring out to the sea, it came to him.

“I said, ‘That’s it. I’m going to swim until I can’t, and I’m going to end it this way.’
A mile and half out, the Coast Guard caught up with him. They saved his life.
If addiction was like the movies, Heiser might have gotten clean then. But in early 2009, the police caught him with Adderall and Xanx, which he had no legal business possessing. Hit with a felony drug arrest, he was looking at possible prison time.
A friend suggested giving a 12-Step program a try. He had doubts, but he went to one meeting, then a second. That was March 20, 2009. He’s been clean and sober ever since.
Slowly, he began returning to life. That summer, riding his bike, it felt good to sweat. He started running a little, too.
Then he ran into the friend who suggested the marathon. It was going to be in December in California.
The two buddies started training together. Soon, others joined them. Running emerged as a way to connect with people after the isolation of addiction, something he stresses to the clients he trains.

“You can grow as a person,” he said.
His focus on the individual and what is happening inside them, not just how they perform, is what the people Heiser trains prize in him.

“I can’t tell you how many times we’ve had this conversation about becoming the best version of yourself,” said Jodi Sindelar, 35, a physician’s assistant who trains with ITL. “He doesn’t like the terms ‘fast’ or ‘slow’ or ‘You didn’t do a good job at this.’ It’s ‘Are you becoming the best version of yourself?’”

“He has created and every day fosters a family that helps us be both better athletes and better people,” said Kat McLeod Gurd, 42, an engineer who started training with Heiser four years ago.

“He is very forthcoming about how running saved him and how instrumental the support of the running was in keeping him focused and accountable,” said an athlete who trains with Heiser.

“He is very forthcoming about how running community saved him,” said Gurd, “and how instrumental the support of the running was in keeping him focused and accountable.”
These days, Heiser can’t fathom those who say running is trading one addiction for another. To him, they’re as different as a sunny day and a murky night. However, he has found that recovery and running mirror each other in a lot of ways.
In both, you need to be willing to ask for and accept help. And in sobriety as well as in developing as an athlete, you don’t do it alone.
“It’s a ‘we’ thing,” Heiser said.
In both endeavors, there are good days and bad days, but the key, he said, is to keep showing up.
“You’ve got to take it one day at a time,” Heiser said. “If you do that over time, you’re going to get success. You’re going to learn about yourself, and you’re going to share things with other people.”

“It was like everything came crashing down,” said Sharifa Knowles.

The year was 2011. In important ways, Knowles was blessed; she had a loving husband, two little daughters, a career as a teacher.

But instead, it was as if the gravity had been sucked from her world. From March to June in rapid succession, three of the women she loved most, who had been there for every milestone in her life, fell prey to cancer and died: Shirline “Lorna” Cross, her aunt; Paulette Dixon, her godmother; and last, Myrtle Rochester, her maternal grandmother, whose heart gave out while she was battling her cancer.

Knowles barely had time to begin to mourn one before there was another death.

“I felt very lost,” Knowles said. “I was not emotionally available for my schoolkids, for my own children, for my husband.”

As the months wore on and the anniversaries of each woman’s birth and death came around, her wounds were opened anew. Knowles knew she had to do something.

On June 23, 2012, the first anniversary of her grandmother’s death, Knowles signed up for the Atlanta Thanksgiving Half Marathon.

“I just said, ‘I need an outlet.’ Really, it was about solitude. I had never even run a 5K.”

But she downloaded a training program and got going. She trained alone, the spirits of the women she lost her only companions.

“I would think about them. I would talk to them,” Knowles said. “I would run and I would cry.”

But bit by bit, the depression began to lift. The running started going better, too. Her breathing improved. So did her pace. She was paying more attention to her nutrition. She felt a connection to God.

“With every run, I felt more empowered,” she said. As the race drew closer, she connected with other women runners through Facebook, and they started running together.

On the day of the half marathon, her husband, their kids, and Knowles’ parents were on hand to cheer her on. She finished in 2 hours and 30 minutes, a little better than her goal. She was exhausted, in pain, but she was smiling from ear to ear.

She was hooked. The next year, she was running and racing all the time. She got plugged into Atlanta Track Club, a women’s group called Moms Run This Town and the local running scene. She has encouraged other women to run; is a role model for her students, who all know about her running; and is an ambassador for Atlanta Track Club.

Sydene Dixon, whose mother was one of the three women who passed away, said Knowles has inspired her own running, as well as better nutrition and health.

“She’s just amazing,” said Dixon, 44, a school counselor in Florida. “I think running has become a community for her. It has given her another outlet to help people.”

In addition, the confidence Knowles gained from running branched out into other areas of her life. She took on the challenge of becoming an assistant principal in a Gwinnett County school and, more recently, district coordinator of special education.

“Running for her definitely has taken her confidence and mental toughness to a whole other level,” said her husband, Marcian Knowles, 44, who runs the Peachtree with her every year.

Knowles doesn’t believe she would have accomplished all that she has if not for running.

“I don’t know if I would have that grit if I wasn’t a runner,” she said. “It’s given me a lot of hope. It’s made me stronger physically, emotional and spiritually. It’s really given me wings.”

She has those three beloved women to thank for that gift. Nowadays when she’s heading out for run, they go with her.

“I think about how they saved me,” Knowles said. “I often think of the lessons they taught me and the memories that we shared. I can definitely feel them cheering me on. They are my angels and are always with me.”
It’s the morning of the 2018 Anthem Peachtree Junior and Ray, wearing bib number 258, is preparing for his big race. First, he warms up in the Clif Wrapper Grab booth, then moves on to a miniature slackline. Next up is a lesson in how to toss a foam javelin before heading off to tackle – in his own unique way – the hurdles.

Ready for the main event, Ray lines up for the 50-meter dash and takes off, employing an arm motion more reminiscent of Michael Phelps than Usain Bolt. After crossing the finish line, he cools down on a playground slide and then stops to feed a duck whose face feathers match his new bright red race T-shirt.

“When I see Ray maneuver over, under and around the hurdles, I can’t help but smile,” said Rich Kenah, executive director of Atlanta Track Club, referring to the family YouTube video in which Ray stars. “I see a kid who will no doubt find ways to maneuver around any barrier that life throws in his way. It’s a great example of how I see Peachtree Junior as more than a kids’ race. It’s an introduction to the sport, but it’s also about kids and their parents learning that there are many creative ways to have fun through aerobic fitness. It’s one of my favorite events – the emotions the kids feel are so pure, so innocent.”

What quickly evolved into a celebration began three decades ago out of concern.

In 1985, Julia Emmons directed her first AJC Peachtree Road Race after taking the helm as executive director of Atlanta Track Club. Afterward, she received a letter from a woman who asked if she realized that many of the children running were in tears by the time they reached Mile 5.

She hadn’t. The next year, she ran the race to investigate, and what she saw matched the letter. Small children were struggling in a sea of giant adults, who in turn had to dodge the little ones.

“Peachtree is to be a joyous event; it wasn’t for most of these kids,” wrote Emmons in the April 1987 issue of the Club’s Wingfoot magazine, in which she announced that the inaugural Peachtree Junior, a 3K for children 8-12 based on a similar kids’ race at the Bloomsday 12K in Spokane, WA, would be held on May 30 of that year. (Concurrently, children under 10 would no longer be allowed to enter the Peachtree.)

Thus, 32 years ago, the kids got their own Peachtree, separate from the adults, where they would be center stage. At the 2019 Anthem Peachtree Junior – for which registration is now under way – the children will move a step closer toward being part of the “grownup” Peachtree again, as the race moves to July 3 and ends at the same finish line as the next day’s AJC Peachtree Road Race.

“As we celebrate all things Peachtree in its 50th year, it seems only appropriate to give these kids the same finish line and T-shirt experience that the adults will enjoy the next day,” said Kenah.

The event will also be streamlined to a Mile (ages 6-14) and a Dash (ages 6 and under), in keeping with other Atlanta Track Club youth events. About 3,000 children are expected.
Back in that first year, 600 children took part in the 3K. After receiving their numbers, they assembled behind signs labeled with their ages. Organizers had expected the assembly process to take 20 minutes. It took two.

“We had forgotten that kids are far better practiced at lining up than are adults,” Emmons wrote afterward.

By the second year, 1,200 kids took part. By 1995, about 2,500 youngsters – divided into age groups – were running the 1.86 miles. Schools were conducting training programs even before Kilometer Kids was launched in 2007.

Back then, and for most of the race’s history until recently, times were not kept and winners were neither announced nor recorded.

“We didn’t call it a race,” said Penny Kaiser, for many years the technical director. “We called it a run.”

Of course, not every kid was convinced. Jeff Glenn ran his first Peachtree Junior in the early 1990s.

“I always pictured it like a race that you could win,” recalled Glenn, now 33. “I’d start out at a dead sprint with the other kids who thought they would win, trying as long as I could to stay up front. I remember the nervous anticipation of waiting for the gun to go off.”

On July 4, young Jeff would help his mother at the Mile 4 water station, waiting for dad Gary to run past. When Jeff became old enough to run the Peachtree, mom lost her assistant. His father, now 64, still runs it every year, and Glenn does, too, when he’s in town.

2019 ANTHEM PEACHTREE JUNIOR

For the first time, the Peachtree Junior will be held on July 3, the day before the AJC Peachtree Road Race, and use the same finish line as the “senior” race.

Date: July 3  
Time: 8 a.m.  
Location: Piedmont Park  
Distance: Mile (ages 6-14)  
Dash (ages 6 and under)  
Event Swag: Short-sleeved Mizuno finisher’s T-shirt  
Medal  
Post-race snacks  
Register: atlantatrackclub.org
Soon, Peachtree Junior may be enticing the next generation. “I have a 14-month-old now,” said Glenn. “Maybe when the time comes, we’ll get him to run.”

In an effort to keep enthusiastic kids like Glenn from going out too fast, the volunteers who formed a human chain in front of every start wave would let go of each other’s hands at the start signal and then turn sideways to serve as human traffic cones around which the eager runners were forced to slow. Other volunteers were stationed along the course in such numbers that “there was never a point where a child couldn’t see an adult,” said Kaiser. “Every second of the event was monitored.”

John Prevost, a member of Atlanta Track Club who has been volunteering at Peachtree Junior for at least 15 years, can’t hide the delight in his voice as he describes the scene at his water stop. “I just love to see the kids, how they enjoy each other,” said the longtime Peachtree runner. “How they’re just oblivious to the fact that it’s a race, running along holding hands or stopping to just leisurely drink their water. Kids who have always been told not to throw their trash on the ground are looking around for trash cans. When we tell them they can just drop the cups, they look so surprised. ‘Really?’”

Each year, schools involved in the Club’s Kilometer Kids program use Peachtree Junior as a goal in training. Two of the longest-serving and most-active coaches are Dawn Jones of International Community School and Ken Almon of Baldwin Elementary; each brought around 50 kids last year.

“We’ve never gone and not had a blast,” said Almon. Both coaches extol the opportunity for their youngsters to get a chance to run with kids from other schools and other places, as well as the chance for them to meet Olympians: In recent years, the event has featured Olympic medalists such as Gail Devers, Dwight Phillips, Terrence Trammell, Chaunte Lowe and Adam Nelson helping introduce the young runners to disciplines including the hurdles, long jump, high jump and shot put.

Jones will often print photos taken on the day and post them on the school bulletin boards. The kids “love to see themselves,” said Jones. Almost as much as the grownups in the crowd love to see them. Said Prevost, who will be volunteering again this year: “It’s just a fun time watching kids be happy.”

This is another in a series of 50 stories celebrating the upcoming 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race. For more, visit peachtree50.com.
50 YEARS OF PEACHTREE

ONE CELEBRATION FOR KIDS

Make the AJC Peachtree Road Race a family celebration as your child crosses Atlanta’s most iconic finish line.

Anthem Peachtree Junior
July 3, 2019 | Mile & Dash | Piedmont Park
Open to kids 14 & under

Register at atlantatrackclub.org
“50 YEARS OF THE PEACHTREE” AT ATLANTA HISTORY CENTER UNTIL JUNE 22

By Jay Holder

Moving to the Atlanta History Center this month is the traveling exhibit, “50 Years of The Peachtree presented by PNC Bank.” The display, which highlights the history, people and legacy of the AJC Peachtree Road Race, opened on May 1 in a gallery next to the Cyclorama. It will be at the History Center through June 22.

“Tens of thousands of Atlantans are involved with the AJC Peachtree Road Race – whether that’s participating as a runner, a volunteer, or watching the race in person or on TV,” said Sheffield Hale, president and CEO of the Atlanta History Center. “As part of our commitment to being a community resource and connector, we’re excited to host the 50th Running display on our campus and help tell the important history of this community icon as we look forward to the next 50 years of Atlanta’s favorite Fourth of July tradition.”

Besides a timeline featuring a notable moment from each year of the Peachtree, “50 Years of the Peachtree” also includes a collection of finisher’s T-shirts, the trophy won by inaugural race winner Jeff Galloway, the first edition Peachtree Magazine and other rare artifacts. Following its stay at the History Center, it will go to the Peachtree Health and Fitness Expo at the Georgia World Congress Center on July 2-3.

GEORGIA LOTTERY TO AWARD $50,000 TO RANDOM PEACHTREE RUNNERS

The Georgia Lottery is awarding a total of $50,000 at the 50th AJC Peachtree Road Race as part of its Road to Riches promotion.

The Georgia Lottery will randomly select five Peachtree participants to win $5,000 and 50 participants to win $500. Winners will be notified when they pick up their race numbers at the Peachtree Health and Fitness Expo on July 2-3 or when they receive their race number in the mail. These winning participants will find special congratulations on the back of their race numbers.

“Our Road to Riches promotion and presence at the Expo will be fun for race participants and a great way for us to share the Georgia Lottery’s mission with a large audience,” said Georgia Lottery president and CEO Gretchen Corbin. “All Georgia Lottery profits benefit HOPE scholarships and grants, including the Zell Miller Scholarship, as well as pre-K.”

All registered participants in the AJC Peachtree Road Race who are 18 or older are eligible to win. Winners can visit the Georgia Lottery booth at the Peachtree Health and Fitness Expo at the Georgia World Congress Center on July 2-3 to claim their prize. Official rules of the contest can be found at atlantatrackclub.org/celebrating50.

ATLANTA HAWKS CELEBRATE 50TH RUNNING, KETURAH ORJI

On the final day of registration for the AJC Peachtree Road Race, the Atlanta Hawks celebrated the 50th Running at their home game against the Minnesota Timberwolves at State Farm Arena. Before the game, fans had a chance to register for the race or sign up for volunteer slots. During the game, the Hawks urged fans to vote for their favorite design in this year’s AJC Peachtree Road Race T-Shirt Content. And during halftime, the Hawks honored Atlanta Track Club athlete – and big Hawks fan – Keturah Orji. The triple jumper was the NCAA Woman of the Year and winner of the Bowerman Award as the NCAA’s most outstanding female track and field athlete in 2018. She’s currently training to make the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Team.

Orji’s fans can meet her at the Peachtree Health and Fitness Expo on July 2-3.

Photos: Jay Holder, Courtesy of Merhawi Keflezighi
DEAR PEACHTREE...

Compiled by Jay Holder

The field is set for the 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race. In this milestone year, Atlanta Track Club saw record interest in the race from both members who receive guaranteed entry and those who attempted to register via the lottery. Hundreds sent emails sharing their excitement and reasons for running the world’s largest 10K. Below are just a few of their stories.

“I’m running this year’s race for the first time. In January, in cliché resolution fashion, I made a commitment to begin running. It’s a goal that I’ve been able to measure and track against. I feel myself becoming faster and stronger each time I go on a run. My grandfather was an avid runner and ran the Peachtree Road Race every year for decades up until he passed away from pancreatic cancer. This year I’m running in his name, and can only hope he is there with me in spirit to be my inspiration.”
- Sarah, 28, Atlanta

“I first ran the Peachtree back in 2013. Coming out of a scary bad relationship with a new sense of freedom, and preparing to purchase my first home, the Peachtree was a symbolic accomplishment of new beginnings for me! Crossing that finish line was like crossing over into a life without doubt and fear! This time I am running to celebrate all the amazing joys in my life, as a new business owner, with the support of my husband, who will be holding our new and first baby son (born March 6, 2019)! Crossing the finish line this year will not only be my body’s maternity bounce-back goal, but also proof that when you decide to choose love over fear in your life, you can receive your happily ever after!”
- Inda, 38, Fairburn

“I was super excited to be selected in the lottery this year. This will be my second time doing the Peachtree. The first time I ran it (2015) was also the day I met my wife. I was dog-tired but it’s un-American to turn in early on the Fourth of July!”
- Randy, 34, Smyrna

“I’ve always been a runner, and coached Girls on the Run for many years while my daughter participated. Eventually she aged out of the program, but we kept running together. Last year, she asked if we could run a 10K in every state. Last year, we started on our grand adventure to run in all 50 states in the next four years (it’s going to be a stretch, that’s for sure!). She’s a regular high school kid who plays varsity tennis. I work full time and travel frequently for my job. So finding time to train and races that work in our schedules is tough. The Peachtree is a bucket list race in its own right. And running in Atlanta on July 4 will definitely be an adventure for these Colorado girls.”
- Teresa, 47, Denver, CO

“On February 9, 2019, I was working out at the gym when I suddenly began to have chest pains. I was able to drive myself home, but I knew something was not right. My wife called 911 and the EMTs were at my home within six minutes. About 20 minutes later, I was being wheeled into the cardiac catheter lab, where the doctors determined that one of my arteries (Lower Anterior Descending aka “Widowmaker”) was 100 percent clogged, so they inserted a stent to open the artery up. By all accounts, I was lucky to have made it to the hospital when I did. As I attend cardiac rehab three times per week for the next few months, I’m envisioning my ability to start and finish the Peachtree with my new lease on life. I won’t be setting any records with my participation, but the fact that I have this opportunity is a gift.”
- Derek, 54, Marietta
Who gets to compete at the 2020 Olympic Games? In March, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) – the governing body of international track and field – announced new qualification standards that introduced some uncertainty to the United States’ team selection process for Tokyo.

Atlanta Track Club is organizing the U.S. Olympic Team Trials – Marathon in February 2020 as part of its commitment to further Atlanta’s reputation as Running City USA, and this recent news has led to a flood of questions about what these changes mean for the Trials.

The modifications are aimed at reducing the number of athletes competing in track and field events in Tokyo. In 2016, 155 men and 156 women started the Olympic Marathon in Rio. In 2020, only 80 men and 80 women will be allowed on the line. To reduce the fields by 50 percent, the standards were tightened.

Since 1968, the top 3 men and women across the line at the Olympic Marathon Trials have stamped their tickets to the most prestigious sporting event in the world. Yes, there was nuance: They must also have earned an Olympic time standard, but that time has historically been closely aligned with the standards set by USA Track & Field for entry into the Trials themselves. In 2016, the Olympic time standards for the marathon were 2:45 or faster and 2:19 or faster, respectively, for women and men. These were also the times athletes needed to be eligible for the Trials.

The IAAF contends that even though there will be fewer athletes at the Tokyo Olympics under their recently announced changes, there are more ways for an athlete to secure eligibility:

- For women, running a time of 2:29:30 or faster between January 1, 2019, and May 31, 2020
- For men, running a time of 2:11:30 or faster between January 1, 2019, and May 31, 2020
- A top 5 finish in an IAAF Gold Label Marathon (of which there are none in the U.S. other than the three World Marathon Majors races).

Any of those automatically makes an athlete eligible to compete in Tokyo should their country decide to send them.

But, wait, there’s more.

The IAAF also says that you can make yourself eligible for one of the marathon slots in Tokyo if you are ranked among the top 80 marathoners in the world. Athletes are ranked based on a number...
of factors including time, difficulty of course and depth of competition. Placement in the world rankings will be finalized at the end of May 2020.

What does this all mean for the race that will be held in Atlanta on February 29, 2020?

At this moment, the answer is not clear. Rich Kenah, the executive director of Atlanta Track Club – which is serving as the Local Organizing Committee – is concerned that the changes will render the Trials less relevant for participating athletes and create confusion for fans and the media.

“USA Track & Field’s make-or-break selection system of a top 3 finish at the Trials while attaining a reasonable qualifying mark allows every participant and spectator to dare to dream regardless of an athlete’s seed time at the start line,” said Kenah. “I hope the powers that be reconsider the damage this will do to the Olympic movement in the U.S., the organizations committed to organize Trials events and, most importantly, the athletes who are chasing their Olympic dream in 2020.”

As of this writing, USATF’s Long Distance Running (LDR) committees are discussing the selection process for 2020, and Susan Hazzard, managing director of communications for USATF, said the organization is hoping to preserve a system that sends the top 3 place finishers in the Trials with the Olympic standard to the Olympics. Hazzard said the organization is optimistic that American athletes will meet the new standards and is encouraged that, as of late April, nine already have.

Well over 400 athletes are expected to compete in the Trials. Thus far, seven American women and two American men have earned automatic qualifiers for the Olympics: Aliphine Tuliamuk and Roberta Groner from the Rotterdam Marathon on April 7; Jordan Hasay, Des Linden, Lindsay Flanagan, Scott Fauble and Jared Ward from the Boston Marathon on April 15; and Molly Huddle and Emily Sisson from the London Marathon on April 28. All but Huddle finished in the top 10 of their respective fields, but Huddle’s 2:26:33 in 12th place makes her eligible for selection on time.

Tuliamuk was the first to qualify, with her third-place finishing time of 2:26:48 in Rotterdam.

“The new standard put a lot of pressure on me to perform,” said Tuliamuk, the 2017 AJC Peachtree Road Race champion. “When I first saw the new standards, I thought ‘there goes my Olympic dreams.’ Then I realized if I had a good race, I could run well under the standard.”

Tuliamuk hasn’t ruled out running another marathon before the Trials, but said Atlanta is her focus and that her goal will be to finish in the top 3 regardless of how the team is ultimately selected.

“If I went to the Trials and didn’t finish in the top 3 but made the team because someone who didn’t have the standard beat me, I don’t think it would be justified,” she said.

For Jared Ward, it’s not just about fairness. It’s about simplicity.

“For the sport, I think that clarity and ease of story are some of the highest criteria in the book,” said Ward, who achieved the standard with his 2:09:25, eighth-place finish in Boston.

But Ward thinks concern over the impact of the new standards may be unnecessary.

“If someone is strong enough to finish in the top 3 in Atlanta, they are probably going to have enough races under their belt to get in through the rankings,” he said.
PEACHTREE IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

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Imagine you’re a high school cross country runner trying to get to the next level. You’ve put in the miles, you’ve gained the fitness and you’re improving in practice, but you’re 16, so you just can’t shake the hormone-induced nerves. You step to the line jittery, and by the time the race is over you’ve beaten yourself, yet again, and failed to achieve your goals.

To help young athletes learn to break that cycle and develop as well-rounded runners and athletes, Atlanta Track Club will bring Abby Keenan, a certified mental performance consultant (CMPC) with Intrepid Performance Consulting, to the Club’s Cross Country Camp this summer as the middle school and high school campers prepare for the upcoming fall cross country season.

“Last year, we received feedback that campers were interested in learning more about the mental side of the sport: How to race, how to train, and how to stay motivated,” said Enrique Tomas, the Club’s senior manager of youth running. “So we figured that a performance consultant was the right way to give kids the tools they need to compete at a higher level.”

Tomas also noted that bringing Keenan in on Monday would allow her to work through team-building activities within the groups. Because campers don’t all know each other, these exercises will give kids the chance to learn about each other and develop relationship skills early in the week.

As a young swimmer herself, Keenan trained well in practice but was unable to perform on the bigger stages. In becoming a CMPC, Keenan was determined to help young athletes close that gap by assessing the issues holding them back.

“With younger athletes, we really focus on helping them establish the connection of what performance [means to them],” Keenan said.

Keenan notes that for each athlete, the issue may be different – for some it’s nerves, for some it’s fear of success, while for others it might be the struggle to tap into motivation at practice.

“We want to give them the opportunity to become leaders within their small groups and see what that feels like, so they can carry it back to their teams in the fall,” Tomas said.

“We want to know that person, what they’ve tried, what’s worked, what hasn’t worked,” Keenan said. “A lot of times we have ineffective thoughts that don’t set us up for success, so if we can be more effective and have a game plan for what we’re going to be thinking and be confident, then that’s something we could definitely work on.”

At camp, Keenan will lead two main sessions, one a presentation focusing specifically on techniques to help runners improve their race day preparation, routines and self-talk, and the other a team-building workshop to put those skills into action.

Keenan notes that part of the joy of working with younger runners and athletes is helping them develop skills that will translate down the line. Although the stigma surrounding mental health has been slowly fading in recent years, teenagers of this generation are more likely than ever to suffer from anxiety, depression and other mental health issues.

“If they can learn those techniques and be able to apply them to training and competing, then we start to help them reflect after the meets,” Keenan said. “It opens the conversation to ‘how do you use this skill at school? How do you use this skill for standardized testing? How do you use this for a job interview?’ It’s not just sports, it’s other things, too.”
AMERICAN LEGION POST 29
PRESENTS THE 5TH ANNUAL
VETERANS MEMORIAL 5K RUN
HONORING OUR HEROES—PAST, PRESENT, FALLEN
SATURDAY, MAY 25, 2019
MARIETTA SQUARE, 1 CHEROKEE ST, MARIETTA, GA.

PURPOSE:
All funds raised assist our local veterans and military families as well as supporting the
SHARE Initiative at the Shepherd’s Center in Atlanta and the GA National Guard
Family Support Foundation.

REGISTER:
Online by midnight Wednesday, May 22, 2019 at itsyourrace.com OR
post29marietta.org/5krace OR mail to Gary Jenkins, PO Box 81777, Atlanta, GA 30366. AJC Peachtree Road Race Official Qualifying Event

FEES:
Runners: $30 through May 13, 2019; $35 through May 23, 2019; $40 on
race day [cash or check only]. Phantom Runners: $25 t-shirt only

PACKET PICK-UP:
American Legion Post 29, 921 Gresham Ave, Marietta, GA 30060
Thursday, May 23 from 4pm-8pm OR Friday, May 24 from 9am-noon

POST-RACE:
Awards ceremony, food and beverages will be provided.

AWARDS:
Male and Female Open and Masters. Top three finishers in the
following age groups: 10 & Under; 11-14; 15-19; 20-24; 25-29;
30-34; 35-39; 40-44; 45-49; 50-54; 55-59; 60-64; 65-69;
70-74; 75 & Over. Ribbons to all 1K and Tot Trot finishers.

ENTRY FORM

Name: ___________________________________________________________ Age _____ Male _____ Female ______
Address: ________________________________________________________ City ________________________ Zip _______

Race (check one) _______ 5K _______ 1K _______ Tot Trot _______ Phantom Runner (I am only getting a t-shirt)

T-Shirt Size (circle one) Youth M Youth L Adult S Adult M Adult L Adult XL Adult XXL [add $2.00]

Registration fee: $__________ In consideration of acceptance of this entry, I waive any and all claims for myself and/or my heirs for any injuries I may incur as a result of my participation in the Veterans Memorial 5K Run; thereby releasing all sponsors and volunteers associated with this event from liability. I understand jogging/running is a strenuous sport and I further state that I am in proper physical condition for this event.

Signature (parent or guardian must sign if under 18 ) ________________________________________
With the NBA playoffs heating up this month, it’s a fitting time to catch up with one of Running City USA’s most basketball-savvy citizens, J.E. Skeets. Originally from Toronto, Skeets is the host of NBA TV’s successful daily show and podcast The Starters, in which he and his friends and show mates break down all the on- and off-court drama throughout the NBA season. Between consuming countless hours of basketball, Skeets consistently finds the time to run around Atlanta, including a recent training cycle that ended with a 3:07:18 finish at the Boston Marathon in April. Read on to learn more about how he finds the time, what he thinks of running in his adopted home and more.

How do you balance training for a marathon and the workload of creating a daily TV show? It can be difficult. Luckily, I can get runs in in the morning for the most part. I can’t get out there six days a week so I focus on making my training runs really mean something and not just do pointless mileage. So I do three or four days of running and I try to do it in the morning before I head into the office to make the show – you start working on the show around noon and then it goes live on TV around 6 p.m.

What brought you into running initially? And has it been helpful in exploring Atlanta since you moved down here? I had just gotten into it in Toronto the summer before we moved here (in 2013). A little bit of it was just trying to stay fit, and some of it was boredom. So I went out to the Night Terrors Run Club in Toronto and sort of got the bug and got into running a little bit more, and that carried when I moved down to Atlanta. It is the best way to see a city, to understand a city. And then the other part was joining run clubs down here; there was the West Midtown Run Club and Atlanta Track Club and it was a good way to meet people as well.

What do you get out of running and what keeps you coming back? Definitely what’s kept me doing it is that I sort of use it as my meditation. I’m on my computer like most people what feels like 24/7. I’m on my phone, I’m watching a lot of basketball, and when I run I feel like I unplug a little bit. It clears my mind and I feel better, and after a couple of days of not running, my wife will be like ‘you gotta get outside.’ It’s just become such a part of my daily and weekly life and it keeps me sane.

I know Matt (Osten, producer of The Starters) recently completed the Publix Atlanta Marathon. Was that due to your influence and has that extended to anyone else? I definitely think I could take some credit for getting Matt into the running game and helping him as much as I could, which was really cool and it was really neat to see someone else try it.

The crazy thing that blew me away was when we did a live show and a meet-and-greet in Toronto a couple of weeks ago, I was amazed by how many people just in the couple of minutes of talking to them told me ‘I’ve been following your running’ or ‘I’m just getting into running.’ I think a lot of it is that I’ve been sharing my training on Instagram and Twitter. But a lot of people online write back and say ‘You’ve inspired me to get back into it or take it up’ so it’s been sort of mind-blowing to me that sharing what I’m doing got some people back into running or trying it for the first time.
WHEREVER YOU GO
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EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

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To understand runner's high, we need to start in an unlikely spot: the poppy plant.

As early as 3,400 B.C., the opium poppy was cultivated in lower Mesopotamia and was referred to by the Sumerians as hul gil, or "the plant of joy." Opium, a resinous secretion obtained from the poppy plant, has long been known to relieve pain and for millennia has been used to treat a variety of conditions. In the early 1800s, Friedrich Sertturner, a pharmacist assistant, isolated a compound from opium that was noted to be 10 times more potent than opium itself. Named after Morpheus, the Greek god of dreams, Sertturner called his discovery morphine.

Morphine, and other opiates, stimulate specific receptors in our brains to control pain and produce pleasurable effects. But why would our brains have receptors that respond to the secretions of a poppy plant?

Researchers asking this same question surmised that there must be something produced by our own bodies that affects these receptors, and that the interaction produced by opium must just be a coincidence. In the 1970s, Dr. Hans Kosterlitz identified these naturally occurring molecules produced by our pituitary glands. Researchers called these molecules endorphins, derived from "endogenous morphine" – meaning internally produced morphine. This name gives a good idea of what endorphins do for us: their release causes pain relief and a sense of well-being.

Endorphins are released for a variety of reasons and in response to a wide variety of stimuli. Associated not only with pain relief, endorphins are responsible for the pleasurable feelings associated with other activities like eating, drinking, sex and exercise. Given their wide-ranging effects on our bodies, since the 1970s there has been increased research directed at endorphins, their receptors and medications that may mimic their effects.

The running boom of the 1970s coincided with the discovery of endorphins. There was thought that perhaps the anecdotal reports of euphoria and analgesia described by some long-distance runners may be related to these newly discovered molecules. As research has progressed, there has been conflicting results.

In 2008, German researchers scanned the brains of athletes before and after a two-hour run. They noted that after exercise, in certain portions of the brain important for mood and emotion, receptors were more likely to have been bound by endorphins. More recently, other researchers have suggested that different naturally produced molecules, endocannabinoids (think the same receptors targeted by cannabis) may play a role.

Regardless of the exact mechanism, the body's response to prolonged exercise appears to be real.

Dr. Joseph Powers is a fellowship-trained, board-certified sports medicine physician at Northside Hospital, specializing in nonoperative orthopedics and sports medicine. Visit northside.com/orthopedic for more information.
BIG CHANGES START SMALL.

Choose healthy, organic options at a small price for big benefits.
1. Smoothie

Store-bought smoothies can be loaded with sugar and lacking in protein. Making your own gives you control over the ingredients and allows you to customize based on your preferences and what's in season. A great post-run smoothie should contain 1-2 servings of fruit for quick energy plus fiber to keep you full. For protein, add a cup of Greek yogurt or a serving of a high-quality protein powder. Choose unsweetened nut milk, soy or dairy milk, water or even coffee as your liquid base. Throw in a handful of spinach or your favorite leafy greens to boost antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. Optionally, add a spoonful of nut butter, nuts, seeds, or avocado for a dose of anti-inflammatory, heart-healthy fats.

2. Parfait

Layer Greek yogurt or cottage cheese (for protein) with berries or your favorite chopped fruit (for carbs). Sprinkle with granola and/or nuts for an added crunch and greater satiety.

3. Popsicle

Most store-bought popsicles are high in sugar with little to no protein. Instead, make your own by blending together a base of simple, nutritious ingredients such as seasonal fruit, Greek yogurt and/or milk plus optional add-ins such as peanut butter, avocado or cocoa powder. Blend ingredients and pour into popsicle molds. Place in freezer for 3-4 hours or until frozen for a quick, delicious post-run treat that’s also kid-friendly. If you opt for a store-bought popsicle (hello convenience!), look for versions that are made with yogurt and contain at least 5 (ideally 7+) grams of protein per serving, such as Yasso or Enlightened.

4. Produce + Protein

This is a convenient concept that you can customize based on preference and seasonality. Just choose any fruit and pair it with a protein source. Try a peach, apple, orange, grapes or melon plus string cheese, a few slices of deli turkey, stick of jerky, two hard-boiled eggs, ½ cup cottage cheese or a protein bar. Though higher in fat compared to protein, a handful of nuts or a few tablespoons of nut butter will also do the trick.

5. Chocolate Milk

There’s a good reason you often find chocolate milk served at post-race aid stations. Not only is it delicious, chocolate milk provides the ideal ratio of carbs and protein for recovery. It’s also packed with key runner-friendly micronutrients such as potassium – an electrolyte needed for muscle and heart contraction – and calcium and vitamin D for bone health. But with so many options now available in the dairy aisle, it can be confusing. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- When it comes to post-run fuel, dairy milk offers the ideal nutrition profile. Adding chocolate syrup boosts the carbs/sugar.
- If you’re looking for a non-dairy milk alternative, try soy or pea protein-based beverages.
- Most coconut, almond and rice milks do not contain protein, unless they’ve been fortified.

Give these ideas a try for a summer of running hard and refueling smart!
All Comers Track & Field Underway

All Comers Track & Field is back! The meets kicked off on May 7 at Cheney Stadium and will be held every Tuesday through June 17, first at Emory University and then at St. Pius X Catholic High School.

The events contested at each meet are posted at atlantatrackclub.org. The Grand Prix 100 meters will take place at Emory on Week 3 and the Grand Prix shot put will be held during Weeks 4 and 5. Registration for All Comers Track & Field Meets is free and open to all, with events for all ages from youth to masters each week. Atlanta Track Club members taking part in the Grand Prix Series must register individually for both the 100 meters and the shot put.

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Eric Heintz to Lead New High Performance Department

Atlanta Track Club has created a High Performance Department to guide the future of the Club’s youth and adult training programs, enhance the performance of the Club’s elite and masters teams, and spearhead efforts to measure the effectiveness of the Club’s programs and of the benefits of running and walking on the overall health and wellness of Running City USA.

The new department will be led by Eric Heintz, who has been head coach for cross country and track and field at the Marist Schools since 2006. During his 13-year tenure, Marist teams won 24 track and field and cross country GHSA State Championships and 32 individual GHSA State Championship.

Heintz will lead a Club staff that includes 2008 Olympian Amy Begley and All-American Andrew Begley, who will continue to coach Atlanta Track Club’s Elite Olympic Development and Masters Teams as well as thousands of runners each year in the Club’s In-Training programs, and Holly Ortland, an exercise physiologist. Ortland, who worked with the late Dr. David Martin, will study the health benefits of running and walking on both children and adults as Atlanta Track Club continues its mission of a moving toward a healthier and more-active Atlanta.

Come Walk with Us in May

Beginning May 8, Atlanta Track Club is teaming up with Livable Buckhead to host weekly Wednesday walks from the Grand Hyatt in celebration of Buckhead Walks! Each free group walk begins at 7 a.m. and takes participants on an approximately 2-mile route through the Buckhead neighborhood and along PATH400. The walks will be hosted by an Atlanta Track Club staff member and a new topic will be covered during the walk each week. Topics include injury prevention, safety and the history of the AJC Peachtree Road Race.
1. **Consistency.** With consistent training, the body will get used to moving and working out. If you start and stop training, it takes longer to build up fitness. I recommend starting with three days a week of running or walking, then after a few weeks adding variety and intensity. One day will be your longer run, one day a workout and the third day an easy run. (A workout involves increased pace and intensity. For instance: 10 hill repeats of 20-30 second each, or a “fartlek” of one minute fast, one minute slow x 10.) Once you’ve established that as a routine, you can add a fourth day or crossing training to your week.

2. **Sleep.** Rest is just as important as working hard. The body needs time to process the workout and repair any injuries. Without proper rest, the ability to train is limited. As you increase your mileage and intensity, you might find that you need more rest than usual. Everyone is different in the amount of sleep they need; 7.5 hours is typically recommended.

3. **Pre-Run Nutrition.** You can work as hard as you want, but without the right fuel you won’t get as far as you want. Usually, the limiting factors include not fueling before the run or not being hydrated. A small snack of 150-200 calories (a piece of toast, half a banana and almond butter, or a Clif or other energy bar) before the run helps to keep you going. With hydration, water is great but don’t forget to add electrolytes.

4. **Stretching.** A warmup and dynamic stretching before the run or walk will tie together the hard work and rest, and ensure that your muscles are ready for the task at hand. The muscles work hard and will need to be released after the run.

5. **Know your body.** Following a plan is great until you cross the line into injury. Learn the difference between soreness and pain. Soreness is typically a general uncomfortable feeling in a region of muscles, rather than discomfort in one small spot. Soreness usually goes away after you warm up with a mile or two of running and walking. It can also be there when you wake up, but disappear once your day gets going. Pain is usually on one side of the body. It can be general over a group of muscles, pinpointed in one spot, burning, sharp or a constant pressure area. Pain usually causes a change to your gait while walking, running or using the stairs. If pain is present, it’s best to not work out until it is gone or no longer affects your gait. If you can’t bear weight while standing on one leg, or jump up and down on one leg, you should not be running or walking for fitness. Knowing your body also includes finding those weak spots or consistent injury areas and working with someone to correct them.

No one training program is right for everyone, but the fundamentals of taking care of the little things is universal.
Celebrate the 4th of July and experience the golden miles of the 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race in the Limited Edition Peachtree 50th Rider WAVEKNIT™. Find this red, white, and blue custom-designed running shoe at store.atlantatrackclub.org, mizunousa.com and Atlanta run specialty stores.

#MizunoPeachtree