



PHOTOS BY GREG ALLEN

Master Sgt. Drake Davidson, 27th Services Squadron, began a running regimen while on duty in Iraq and continues at Cannon. He has run seven marathons and hopes to complete 50 by his fiftieth birthday.

MARATHON MAN

NCO takes his love of running marathons from the desert of Iraq to the high plains of New Mexico and beyond

By Janet Taylor-Birkey
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Most people might think the last thing they would want to do in the desert is run, but for Master Sgt. Drake Davidson, 27th Services Squadron, that is where he found a new love: marathon running.

"I was in Iraq and needed to lose some weight, so I started working out everyday," said Sergeant Davidson, who works at the fitness center. His 90-minute workouts led to running, and the running led to reading articles about running.

While Sergeant Davidson considered running a marathon, the running magazines gave him the impetus to try.

After comparing things he was already doing with tips from the magazine, he realized he could run a marathon. And with that, he was off.

That was two years and seven marathons ago. After running in 11 marathons, Sergeant Davidson will be eligible to participate in the 50 States Marathon Club, where runners seek to run a marathon in all 50 United States.

And then there is the time-limited goal that also includes the number 50.

"The marathoner's goal is 50 by 50 – fifty marathons run by 50 years of age," Sergeant Davidson said, giving him about a decade to get in the remaining 43.

While running is free, the cost of entering marathons, transportation and needed clothing cannot be excluded. "You have to have the

right gear; shoes that fit your feet, gear that repels water."

A question some might ask is, "What does a marathon runner get out of the training and running?"

Running with a team that raises money for leukemia and lymphoma research allows Sergeant Davidson to help others, but maybe the greatest reward is the pride that comes through meeting self-imposed challenges.

"We are all ordinary people, but [running] gives you a chance to do something extraordinary, to do something a little bit more than you are used to doing, and other people are used to seeing," Sergeant Davidson said. "For me it's just like the ultimate mental challenge."

Training for a marathon is the same as anything else, he said, consisting of the three steps of deciding, devising and executing.

The first step, deciding, is always the most difficult, Sergeant Davidson said, but it lays the track for success or failure. "Once you decide it, get your head around it, and say, 'Okay, this is what I'm going to do,' the rest is easy."

After deciding what to do, decide how to do it. He advises to time the first run and increase miles gradually, using a variety of workout equipment to increase cardio rates, add diversity to work outs, and save knees.

Sergeant Davidson advocates not running all the time and usually runs only on Saturdays. "I don't run a lot of miles: too much pounding on my knees is not that good. I have to save my running for when it's time to run."

Execution of the plan is the last step to completing the runner's goal, but it's also where others can help reach a seemingly impossible target.

"You can do way more than you think you can do. Believing that you can do it comes from going just a little bit farther, a little bit faster. If you don't complete the distance, stay there for another week."

His final piece of advice is succinct: get support from family and co-workers. "If they don't support you, you're not going anywhere."



Before he begins a run, Master Sgt. Drake Davidson, 27th Services Squadron, stretches, makes sure his running shoes fit well and drinks a lot of water.