

Corey Gallagher

Corey Gallagher was a very active child. So when there was an opportunity to put him in the running program at St. George Elementary School in St. Vital, he was entered. That led him to participate in his first Manitoba Marathon relay in Grade 2! At age 12, he entered his first Manitoba Marathon half, running under 1:30. Not surprisingly, he won his age class. It would not be his last victory. Far from it.

By age 14, he had lowered his time in the half marathon to 1:23. His Mom was looking for coaches or clubs for him to join because there was not much of a running program at Glenlawn Collegiate. Corey had to ask around to find out when the school division's cross-country races were happening, and missed the first race of the season. To form a Glenlawn team, Corey recruited athletes from hockey, basketball and volleyball, many of whom were not sure that running was something they liked. It turned out that they, too, were good at it, and the team was quite successful.

Corey remembers one year when he was in a volleyball tournament in Calgary, the same weekend as the provincial cross-country championships. After playing volleyball on Saturday night, he flew home alone to Winnipeg late and got up early enough the next morning to drive to Killarney in time for the start of the race.

By Grade 11, Glenlawn had a competitive track team. Corey competed in the 4 X 100 m, the distance medley, the 1500m and the 3000m. He finished 2nd in the latter two events in Grade 11 and won the 3000m in Grade 12 in 2005. He returned to the Manitoba Half Marathon in 2005 and in a hot race, he placed 2nd in just under 1:18. The next year, he did the Fargo half marathon in 1:16:10.:16 in 2009.

Corey joined Claude Berube's track team at U of MB for one year, but was not that happy with his performance. He quit hockey, which he had been playing at the MMJHL level. After that year, he went back to playing hockey and did less running. When he finished his junior hockey eligibility at age 20, he obtained a job at Canada Post and had much less involvement in running in particular and sports in general.

He found that without running and without hockey, his weight ballooned to near 200 lbs. He realized that he needed to make better lifestyle choices. At the end of 2010, he was dating a runner on the U of MB team and she and he started running together. This regenerated Corey's interest in running and he started to get some good results. The next June, he came second to Brian Walker in the MB Marathon half, in 1:12:59. The next few years he won the Police half marathon and the Thunder Bay Fire Paramedic half marathon.

In about 2012, Corey's running made a quantum leap in performance. He improved his best half marathon time and then sought out Alphonse Bernard to be his coach. With that support, he was able to get his half marathon time down to just over 70 minutes. He ran the Puma Series against the Walker twins and managed to finish 2nd in the 5 km. Realizing that he had the potential to be a leading racer, he entered almost all or all of the MRA races, as well as the parallel series that Athletics Manitoba was putting on. He sometimes raced back to back weekend days and one day did three races, an hour apart, in Assiniboine and St. Vital Parks and at the U of MB.

Corey is perhaps best known for his success in the Beer Mile, winning the first world championship race in Austin, TX. The Bison runners had done beer miles as a lark at the end of the indoor season, partying on Friday night while shoveling the snow off the Pan Am track and then doing their beer mile on Saturday morning. Corey struggled with it at first and then perfected his consumption method. As he got more into it, he was on the Internet comparing performances with star beer milers from around the continent. Eventually, Corey found himself in Austin, TX on a Formula 1 track competing in the world championships. The second year of the world championship, he finished second in 4:48. He got sponsorship from Underarmour for 2 years and Nike after that. He went on to compete in London, UK twice and in Vancouver. One of his beer miles was the half-time show at a soccer game in San Francisco. His time of 4:54:38 was the world record when he ran it. His best time was 4:48:62.

Corey did not abandon the roads for the beer mile. People had been cajoling him for years to enter the full marathon at the MB Marathon and in 2018, he did. As with much of his career, it was an unqualified success. He won that marathon in 2:37:47. He found marathon training and racing stressful and turned to trail running. Again he was a winner, setting the Mantario 40 mile record, being the first ever to finish the course in under 8 hours. He likes the variable terrain in trail running because it allows him to ignore his watch and just enjoy the journey.

For his most satisfying achievements in running, Corey rates winning the 2018 Manitoba Marathon in his first (and only) marathon, and winning the 2014 beer mile world championship at the top of an impressive history of accomplishments, which includes twice winning the Manitoba Marathon half marathon race.

As with the rest of us, it's not all roses. Corey has had some adverse race experiences. He was in the national 10 km championships and went out with the leaders before realizing the pace was too fast for him. "The hills got me," he says. Another time, in a similar experience, he went after the Manitoba Marathon half marathon record and broke down at 5 miles. But who hasn't had a race like that?

Corey's best 5 km time is 15:10; 10 km in 30:30; 10 mile in 51:50 and half marathon in 1:10:09. Corey proves that even if our running community does not have the competitive depth it had in its golden era in the 1980's, there are still some worthy elite runners here!

These days, Corey gets his fitness from looking after his daughter born in late 2020.