

James Slade

I started running in 1999 and ran my first marathon in 2000 in Victoria with my sister. I have been involved in running as a member of Roadkill as a competitive age group runner, but now I just run to keep fit enough to keep up with the grandkids.

I became involved in running to set an example for my two kids. They were just very young but I knew that I wanted to show them how easy it is to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

When I started, I wanted to go slowly because every year I used to go for a run, I would go too fast or too far and get injured without fail. Consequently, I decided to find a 1 km loop around my house and just run that once every day. My neighbour, Cesne Rodney, invited me to join her Mb Marathon team. I knew I needed to train smarter, avoid injury and get in shape if I was going to complete the 6km leg of the Marathon relay. I found my 1 km route, ran that daily and worked my way up to 4 km. I guessed that if I could run 4 km, then the excitement of the day would carry me for 6km. It worked.

My most satisfying achievement is hard to pick! I like to think that encouraging others to take up running has been satisfying, especially when they start running faster than I did. It's all about adding depth to the field!

My most favourite memory is, I didn't win often, but I loved to be in the race with the good athletes! One time I remember finishing 6th overall in a race and I didn't even place in my age category...now that's depth! It was a real privilege to be running with these guys.

My best finish times were:

- 5k - 17:20
- 10k - 37:37
- half marathon - 1:28
- marathon - 3:09:48 in Kelowna

My favourite race was the Las Vegas marathon. I ran it the same year I ran Boston and Manitoba, 2008, which was the only year I ran 3 marathons and I loved all of them! We had a large contingent of Manitoba runners at every race, but I have to say my all-time favourite, and the race I ran more times than any, has to be the Great Grain Relay. It happens early in the year, it's indoors so weather doesn't matter, they have awesome music blasting the whole time and there's a beer garden after! Richard, Carrie, and Steve do such an amazing job I looked forward to that race every year when I was an avid runner.

Can you have a worst experience running? My worst was getting injured, it was never fun, and some runs took me too far too fast when I was trying to recover from an injury, but my marathon in Kelowna was one of the worst for sure. This was the only marathon that had me walking! I had missed the first mile marker and knew that my pace felt good so I just kept it up. I missed the second mile mark but still felt good. When I eventually found a mile marker, I was feeling great and was maintaining my 10k pace. Clearly this was not going to last the whole race. By km 33 I was done and I had to stop and dry heave for a long time. Well, time is relative, but it felt long. I knew I had to walk to keep moving and as I came close to the next water

station, I could hear one of the volunteers yelling at me “You can do it!” That perked me up and I guess I had recovered enough to start running again. I finished the race running, and with my best time of 3:09:48. So even when it’s bad, it’s still pretty good!

As an MRA board member and president for almost 10 years, it is important to mention some of the highlights:

The hurting for Haiti event in 2010 to raise funds for Haiti’s earthquake survivors. We compiled a team of 5 runners. Donovan Hale approached the MRA with the initial idea to run from Winnipeg to Calgary as a relay team. We invited experienced runners and the team that came together was Donovan Hale, myself, Bill Diehl-Jones, Chantal Givens and Wade Taylor. There were a few other support crew, notably Chantal’s neighbour, Peter, who drove one of the support vehicles and Flavio Carvalho, from Wellington Remedial Massage School, who was our massage therapist for the team and did his very best to keep us in one piece as we each ran 30 km per day for 10 days.

Also, while on the Board, we created the MRA Runners’ Hall of Fame which sat in the Winnipeg Convention Centre. There were world class runners who came into our community for various events, such as Ed Whitlock, who broke several records.

When the City of Winnipeg tried to close down our events by denying permits and imposing unreasonable demands, we put together a presentation. It was our opinion that we operated safe, fun and healthy events for all Manitobans, and that as the long-standing representatives of road running in Manitoba, we should have been consulted on these decisions. The City did agree to listen to our presentation. The safety of our events was unparalleled in Manitoba sports as we had never had a single insurance claim since we formed. Any injuries during an event were quickly dealt with by experienced First Aid providers. I also knew that the City was very concerned that we would use streets rather than sidewalks, and yet the City has been approving huge subdivisions for decades, which had no sidewalks to run on. If they were so concerned about safety, why were they approving the development of neighbourhoods with housing for thousands of people, with no sidewalks? This was a serious point of contention.

Working on the MRA Board was truly a privilege as I was able to work with such a terrific team of people who were all pulling in the same direction to get things done. One example was the winning of the WalMart Walk for Miracles. I knew that there were several groups looking to host this event and I knew what would be needed for the MRA to be selected. We put together a package for our presentation that contained maps for the running route, maps for water and concessions, locations for port-a-potties, locations for First Aid responders, etc. We showed Wal-Mart that we had everything prepared and could put this together just about immediately. Leni did such a terrific job of the presentation that they just about decided on the spot to grant the event to the MRA!