

Future Docs

The fast and the studious



Comparing medical school to a marathon is only natural. Both are prolonged, occasionally grueling endurance feats that demand focus, dedication, and sacrifice. And both are challenges that third-year medical student Josh Ordway eagerly embraces.

As one of the top marathon runners in the country, Ordway maintains an intense training schedule, often running twice a day and logging more than 100 miles per week. This regimen has helped him become an elite athlete—Ordway won the 2008 Columbus Marathon and

qualified for the 2008 U.S. Olympic Trials, where he came in 21st—but keeping up this pace while attending medical school can be difficult.

“I refuse to get up before four [a.m.] to run,” Ordway said, “because that’s starting to get crazy. But if I can get up at four, I’m okay with that, and that will still allow me to get in the training I need.”

After pounding the predawn pavement for five or six miles, Ordway puts in a full day of work for his clinical rotations before heading home for a harder workout of up to 13 miles. Medical school alone is extremely demanding, but Ordway doesn’t mind pushing himself so hard athletically as well.

“Running keeps you mentally fresh,” he explained. “It’s a great stress reliever, and it helps you to focus and prioritize.”

Running and school leave time for little else, but Ordway is also looking forward to getting married in July. Fortunately, his fiancée, Becki Michael, is handling the bulk of the wedding planning. Michael is very understanding about Ordway’s busy schedule, because she’s an elite marathoner herself: in 2008 she placed second in the Austin marathon and qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials, just like her future husband.

In fact, distance running is an Ordway family tradition. Ordway’s father, Doug, has been a runner for more than 40 years and is among the top marathon runners in Ohio in his age category. Ordway’s two younger sisters both ran for their colleges, and his younger brother is currently running for Southern Illinois University.

Ordway also ran as an undergraduate during his four years at Princeton University. The school recruited him based on his excellent academic record and his first-place finish in the Ohio high school cross country state championship race.

Despite running competitively since seventh grade, Ordway didn’t attempt his first marathon until 2005, when he finished sixth in Columbus. Since then, he’s taken his success, like the challenges of sustaining it, in stride.

“My goal is just to be a good med student and a good runner,” he said. “Just to continue training at a high level, and if I can continually drop my time, if not race to race, then year to year, that’d be very nice.”

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After graduation, Ordway hopes to step up his training and possibly make another Olympic attempt in 2012. A residency, probably in family medicine, may also make training difficult, but he doesn’t flinch at the idea.

“If you want something bad enough,” he said, “if something’s that important to you, you’ll make yourself do it.” **VS**