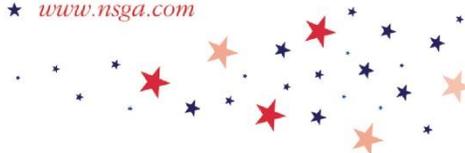




National Senior Games Association

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Personal Best "Class of 2013" Athlete

Mike Fanelli, 56

San Anselmo, California

"I perspire to inspire"

What can you say about a guy who has logged over 100,000 miles of running by age 56; completed 100 miles in 16 hours 40 minutes; run a marathon in 2 hours 25 minutes; run a mile in 4 minutes 16 seconds, - and 4 minutes 56 seconds at age 50; won and placed highly in numerous marathons, and served as Head Coach of the USA National Track and Field Team in 1992, 1996, and 2000? What can you say but... Wow!

It makes sense that this endurance runner is a former Marine who has never known the meaning of 'quit.' He loves the beauty of his sport and he loves to compete. But his motivation to run underlies a lifelong passion to promote fitness and to practice what he preaches to an extreme. And now he's taken on a new challenge - switching from marathons through mountains to jailbreak sprints on a track in the 2013 National Senior Games Presented by Humana. Read on to see what this running expert has to say about attempting to turn back the clock- and his passion to inspire others to reach for their personal best.



History

Have you always been active?

I started running at age 12 after watching the 1968 Olympic games in Mexico City. I started competing in high school with cross country at 14. My team won the Philadelphia City Championships, and I've never stopped running since. I was just your typical Philly kid, playing pinball, sneaking smokes, playing stickball. But with running, I literally found my path.

My first marathon was the Philadelphia Marathon when I was a nerdy 16-year old. The idea of running beyond the limits of exhaustion because you believe you can do it fascinated me. It was the perfect self-experiment for me. Last November, I returned to run the Philadelphia Marathon again 40 years later. It was a moving experience of reflection to take it all back to the roots.

I think my Marine Corps experience underscored the sense of discipline I've always had. It enhanced my ability to be absolutely meticulous in preparation, focus and concentration. For the Marines, quitting is not an option and you are trained to survive in the worst situations. I barely missed making the United States Olympic Team trials in 1980 and 1984 but that just motivated me to continue my journey. There are always setbacks and obstacles. I had meningitis at 40 that almost killed me. Once you get to a certain stage with enough life experiences, stuff doesn't rattle you.

You are a career endurance runner. What's the challenge for you to compete in shorter track events?

What I'm trying to do with the senior games is opposite of the way most people go in running. Most start with shorter distances and continue to move up and slow down with age. I'm trying to reverse that aging process and go all the way back to what I did as a youngster running track. I figure I can always move back up from there again!



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When I turned 50, I ran in the California State Senior Games and won the silver in the 1500 meters. Then I had some injuries and other issues that kept me out of pursuing track much further. Last year, I regrouped and competed in the World Masters Championships and then the Bay Area Senior Games. This year I was in the Palm Desert Senior Games and won the 3,000 meter event. I will go to the Bay Area games again and also the Pasadena Senior Games all in prep for my big goal in July. This will be my first National Senior Games. I hope to bring home something nice and shiny – preferably gold!

Talk about running 100,000 career miles. It's mind boggling.

It's amazing. Fewer people have done this than have climbed Mt. Everest. It's not something you set out to do from the beginning because there are so many variables. To run that far you have to run every day for 40 years. It became a lifestyle and I've been able to maintain my body and build the volume. It was just something that came with the territory of always trying to do your best, to be your personal best every day. The personal best message you are now sharing is the same message I share every day.

Goethe said, "Boldness has genius, power and magic in it." He said that way before Nike ever came up with "Just Do It." When you take a bold step, it takes on a life of its own and all the pieces fall in behind it to accomplish your goal. But you have to take that first bold step.

I wrote a quote once about endurance running that has been passed around a lot. "Divide the race into thirds. Run the first part with your head, the second part with your personality and the last part with your heart."

Motivation & Inspiration

What motivates you?

First and foremost it is competition that motivates me. I like the beauty of my sport. It's black and white and quantifiable in distance and time and I know exactly what each performance means, the significance it has and where it fits in comparison to my previous performances and in comparison to anybody else who participates in running and in track and field.

But simultaneous to that I am a strong proponent of fitness. My first career was in sports marketing, my current career is as a real estate broker, but I'm in the process of phasing back into coaching, but in this case coaching with 'gray America' to help people realize their true potential. You want to be healthy, you want to be mobile, you want to be independent. If I could reinvent myself as Jack LaLaine I would. (Laugh)

Who inspires you?

I met Dr. Walter Portz, head of cardiology at Stanford, when he was running races over mountains at the age of 80. He wrote a fascinating book called "We Live Too Short and Die Too Long." The premise is that when you are killing yourself for years and years and not looking after your health, by the time you retire you're so broken you can't enjoy it. We need to reverse that, live more fully and healthily so we're not just in the process of dying. Staying fit gives you the quality of life you deserve.

Living in Marin County I'm surrounded by healthy, fit people in the 60's, 70's, 80's. Guys like that are my heroes, much more than an Olympic gold medalist. It's very uplifting to see seniors so active. They are my role models, and I hope I am



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a role model to those behind me. I want to pass the health and fitness message forward. I like to say I perspire to inspire.

(Laughs)



What do you say to people who are not as active as they should be?

So many of my peers don't get up off the couch because they have this issue or that issue. You know, the body is an amazingly adaptable machine. It's capable of far more than what most people use it for. So if you've got an X-Y-Z issue or ailment, let's figure out what it is and how you can get mobile to work through it. If you are athletic maybe you can't do your primary sport but there's probably another sport that you can participate in. You have to keep moving.

What else besides competition are you looking forward to at the 2013 National Senior Games presented by HUMANA?

When I heard the nationals were going to be in Cleveland this year it motivated me more to get back to the track and qualify. I'm a big rock and roll trivia buff and I want to visit the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Now I hear there's going to be a Rolling Stones exhibit there.

The Stones, Bob Dylan and the Beatles are my top three so I'm excited about that.

Training & Preparation for Competition

How do you approach training for track competition as a career endurance runner?

This is a total athletic paradigm shift. The natural process is you lose strength and speed over time. The natural progression for middle and long distance runners is to go up and it's really hard to go back, especially when you've taken as much pounding as I have over a hundred thousand lifetime miles.

I'm going all the way back to my roots to do track speed events. The gun goes off and it's an all out sprint to the end in the 800. You really have to change your mindset and the training is quite different- there's a high degree of specificity. Instead of doing something with slow twitch muscles you're working with fast twitch muscles and something explosive and powerful.

As I enter the competitive season with a lot of meets lined up I'm on the track three times a week doing even higher intensity speed training and foregoing much of the endurance work. In June and July I have nine meets lined up and the final one is my goal peak event at the National Senior Games in Cleveland.

I don't really have a zero rest day going into the day of competitions. A few days out I'll just do two to three miles daily of easy, easy running, almost like yoga and then finish up with a bit of neuromuscular firing, like six to eight 100 meter strides extending into nearly a full sprint. Then, two days out I'll just go out and do an easy two or three miles to stay loose.



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Training in fact takes ten days to have an effect on your fitness; there's a lag time. So at some point the best way to gain your best fitness is to be rested. That has to be factored in. I'm a diligent student of exercise physiology and its practical application to sport.



Does your wife also get involved with running or sports?

My wife Renay also runs, in fact we met at the 100th Boston Marathon. But she's not super competitive like me. This past weekend it was my first time to support her. She ran her first ultra marathon – a 50 kilometer trail race - and she did it, she finished. That's a really big deal to be 55 and go out and do something extraordinary that she had never done before. She just had this desire to reach out beyond her comfort level. She's from Scranton Pennsylvania and proved she is coal country tough. I'm really proud of her. If only she had decent coaching she'd be all right (laughs).

Fitness & Nutrition

How do you normally train?

First of all, I train every single day. I haven't missed a day running since 2010 and now I'm trying to reach 1,000 consecutive days. What I'm doing now with this track event focus is more of a blend of endurance and speed. So I'm on the track with high intensity twice a week and the rest of my days are either longer endurance runs or active recovery runs. My hard days are on the track running repeats of 400 and 600 meters

starting at one mile race pace and progressively increasing that pace. An easy recovery day might be five miles, pushups and sit ups.

I prefer to train alone because I compete alone and only listen to the conversation between my ears. Controlling that dialogue helps me to be comfortable with being extremely uncomfortable.

What kind of diet do you follow?

I'm not quite on a 'paleo diet' but I'm typically on an organic rabbit food type diet through the week and on the weekend I'll cheat a little bit and have a pizza if I'm not competing. Your muscles don't recover as quickly with you get to 50, 60 and beyond. Proper nutrition and hydration is an important component of that recovery process, the time between stress activity where your fitness actually takes place.

You can't run 100,000 miles and not have to deal with Injuries. How do you keep going at such a pace?

Chronologically I'm not that old at 56, but because of what I've endured over all those miles I sometimes feel like I'm 157 athletically. I figured 100,000 miles is 22 million plus running steps with so many of them being high intensity even in my training going all the way back. My knees are doing fabulously well, but my feet are pretty damaged. My left foot



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needs surgery and I've had two procedures done that seem to be holding me up well enough to get through July. And that's my good foot! My right foot has sustained some nerve damage.

But I'm doing a lot of ancillary therapy work and always in constant management mode to make sure all my pieces are in working order, especially after hard training sessions. I do Roling deep tissue work, active release therapy and active isolated stretching that help keep things in check. When I'm getting this deep tissue with nerve therapy, that's when it obvious I'm a former U.S. Marine because some of my utterances are not pretty.

Epilogue

We were eagerly anticipating having our 100,000 mile man complete his experiment to transition from endurance runner to track competitor at the 2013 National Senior Games Presented by Humana. But this was not to be. Despite the disappointment we share with him, his response and resolve to face the challenge provides ample proof that Mike Fanelli was a worthy choice to be an example of being your personal best. In Mike's words:

My quest to the National Senior Games was going well through the spring. I won the 800 meters at Wine Country Senior Games, the 3000 meters at Palm Desert Senior Games and the 1500 meter event at the Bay Area Senior Games held at Stanford University.

In mid June, however, I got some really bad news. I had been feeling "poisoned" and it was due to the retention of an astounding amount of urine...as much as 1000 CCs. Tests showed I had developed a severe prostate condition that will require surgery. It does not appear cancerous but iffy until surgery is done in September - they are waiting for the effect of drugs and catheterizations to lower my bladder's enormous current retention.

I am MOST disappointed to miss the National Senior Games. It was to be the peak of a long season with a lot of athletic discipline. I wanted to win the gold in Cleveland and see the Rolling Stones exhibit at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. I'm honored by this Personal Best recognition. However, in the end I will have 'no satisfaction' in 2013.

I should be able to begin training again and so have my sights set on competing on the track again in the spring. VERY high on my list will be qualifying for the 2015 National Senior Games...I've got some unfinished business there and intend to eventually have my 'satisfaction'.

In the meantime, I shall use this obstacle as a stepping stone towards motivating others to aspire towards great fitness of both body and mind...I shall again "perspire to inspire" and beat this bump in the road.

In the end I shall prevail because I do not believe in any other possibility.

[Continue Reading about Mike Fanelli](#)

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