

# Building the snowball

By Susie Power

Have you ever felt like some days you're Forest Gump? You have this endless energy throughout the run feeling light, fast and like you can run all day? I've been having a few of these days of late and for the first time in my whole life I'm feeling like everything is coming together.

**R4YL**

It hasn't all been this rosy and positive. The past six months have been tough. I have embarked on a rocky road, which with persistence has started to become smooth. I have self-triggered a new surge of enthusiasm for my sport, hobby, outlet or whatever you like to call your daily running activity. Now I would like to try and pass on some of my positive energies to you so you can liven up your spirit with this fabulous form of exercise.

At the beginning of this year, I still had my leg in a brace from a knee operation over Christmas. I had been through some big changes and commitments to my life the past year and in 2003 I experienced a lonely athletic year with thoughts of 'Why am I doing this?' Due to the amount of time I had away from jogging, running and proper training it was a tough decision whether to return to this sport I have been involved with since I was 8 years old. A few weeks into this year, I decided to read my star sign in the newspaper. It was something I had never taken much notice of before, but this time something struck home. It mentioned that miracles are undoubtedly possible at the moment although they will happen in their own time. You can't hurry them along. It went onto say that I cannot change the speed or direction of my current journey but I can do a lot more to make it feel more comfortable. Accept what can't be altered, sit back and be patient. Have faith as the future has a pleasant surprise up its sleeve. The next morning while the kids were still fast asleep I decided to start on a journey. No matter how long or how hard this road would be I had to set myself the challenge to accomplish something. I cut out the star sign paragraph, stuck it in my diary and respected and believed the comments.

Running requires effort. No matter what speed or distance. No matter if you are elite or just a recreational runner. It never gets easy. In the past I have had many questions from people asking me how I do it, how I run with such ease and how I continue to run day in and day out. Well, I'm sure all elite athletes will agree with me when I say it is never easy. There is a constant 'I want to go one better' approach to both training and racing. In training you always want to run a little further or tell yourself next time I'll do six repetitions instead of five and even when

you have a good race you always find some excuse that you could of gone faster. Elite athletes keep striving to achieve and their motivation, determination, dedication and

thoroughly enjoying this running game, even though I had indulged in it for over 20 years!

As I trudged on each day trying to be



even performance tend to snowball as time progresses. The body just does what it is trained to do and over time, the routine is the only thing that gets easier.

My journey began with a regular walk around the block every morning. It was tough getting up at the crack of dawn but with two children to look after, I had no choice but to get out before they dominated my day! I started with half hour walks and built them up to an hour with my evenings concentrating on strengthening my knee and building up wasted quadricep muscles. Nearly eight weeks later I slowly introduced jogging into my walks. I first jogged across any road I came to before setting myself power poles to jog to. I remember seeing regular joggers out at the same time and always jogged past the gym where the 6:30 am bike spinning class was on and just hearing the music and knowing others were out exercising encouraged me to keep at it. Over the next few weeks my jogs got up to ten minutes and it was hard. I was puffed. I was heavy and to be honest, I wasn't

patient and trying to have faith in my own ability I thought a lot about recreational runners and how I could help someone who wants to run but finds it hard to sustain this energy week after week. I have seen many people join our training group over the years, only to 'disappear' after a month and stop running; while others join in every couple of weeks to keep fit. We have always welcomed any level of runner into our squad because any company is good company and although some can't keep up or do the workout, they are out there sweating with the rest of us. They use the same effort to put their shorts on and get to the park. They still put one leg in front of the other and pound for pound they go through the same mind games I do. Some friends who have joined our group have impressed me more than I have them!

Their positive vibe and inner determination spreads across the whole group and I know I go away concentrating a little more on things like looking the other way at that cream bun after a long run! Many put the elite into a completely different

**“In the end it will be about your journey toward that goal that will make you the person you are”**

category to the recreational runner. Why? They are no different other than the pace they run. So if you are just at the start of your journey into running, remind yourself of the snowball. Frequency in anything is the key. As the snowball rolls it gets bigger. Teach your body to perform the way you want it to. After many weeks it will start to adapt to what you are teaching it. Set yourself a goal.

In March, I began running with a group. Oh what a difference this makes! Chatting, gossiping, laughing, joking it all adds up to an easy way to complete a training run. Get involved with the run and with the company and time will pass. Make it your goal to help each other and set a distance or time to complete for that day.

I currently have a training partner whom I run with most days. We don't compete against each other but we help one another through the session and we also encourage one another away from the running track. If he spends an hour a day stretching, he makes sure to tell me and I do the same. If I've run every day this week, he will make sure he never misses a day. It's a lot of fun working with someone who has similar goals to yours. It also triggers the 'get up and go' approach, when you are meeting someone at a certain time. You've said you're going to be there, so be there on time. Some days, I haven't finished preparing the evening meal, or finished some household job and I just drop it and go. Before you have time to think about it, you're already running and probably telling your training companion what you were supposed to be doing!

As the weeks and months have progressed, there have been many ups and downs. Times



when I have wondered why I am putting in this effort, will I get anything out of it? But every time, I wonder what if I could never run again? What would I be doing at home – sitting watching television or eating a biscuit? This activity gives you back as much as you put into it. The feeling of doing a personal best is pretty unbeatable. The feeling after running for 2 hours and just the tiredness as you lay down in bed at night is also an accomplishment you can be proud of. I have gone out many Sunday afternoons and looked at many people thinking to myself 'I ran 2 hours this morning while many of these people were still in bed!' You can walk

around at work with your head up knowing deep down inside you are not only helping your heart and lungs but you are also helping your self esteem, your mind and your overall well being.

As my journey has continued, I have set myself a personal undisclosed goal. I have written it clearly and placed it somewhere I can see it every day. They say if you really believe in this goal and you really want to do it the goal will dominate your thoughts. Your mind will propel you in that direction. Not a day goes by that I don't think of this goal. I know I have to contribute so when the going gets tough, I turn and remember the top of the mountain and how satisfied I will be when I get there.

So now, after reading this, set yourself a goal to achieve. It really doesn't matter what the goal is but make it realistic and something you really would like to accomplish. In the end, it will be about your journey toward that goal that makes you the person you are. There will be good days. I call them Forest Gump days, and there will be bad days when you feel like you are running with Cliff Young's boots on! Acknowledge the ups and forget the downs and remember to just keep that snowball rolling. One day you will look back, like I have with my journey, and think of the person you were, compared to the person you are now.

**Good luck!**



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