

'A good addiction'

City runner
 'hooked' on
 marathons

Joe Sinclair has finished 63 races in past 3 years

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U.S. Olympic legend Frank Shorter said a good memory is the kind of thing that will get a long distance runner in trouble.

"You have to forget your last marathon before you run another," said Shorter, winner of the



Sinclair

marquee 26.2-mile road race at the 1972 Olympics in Munich. "Your mind can't know what's coming."

Statesville's Joe Sinclair took that information and tossed it to the side of the road. That would be the side of the road on the course of one of the 63 marathons and ultra-marathons he has run in the past three years.

This tally includes his running of three full marathons in three days earlier this month. That's 78.6 miles in the span of about 55 hours. And one of those races was the fear-inducing Grandfather Mountain Marathon, the title of which should be enough to explain why that particular run is not for everybody.

But calling the events "races" may be something of a misnomer in the case of Sinclair and his running partners.

"I see it as there being two types of marathoners," he said. "There are speed marathoners, who are concerned about their times and maybe even of winning. And there are pure endurance marathoners. And that's what I am."

Sinclair runs most of his marathons in the five-hour range.



Local runner Joe Sinclair recently ran three full marathons in three days. That's 78.6 miles in the span of about 55 hours. "I'm addicted to running," he said. "But I think it's a good addiction."

Runner

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His best time is 4:26 at the Myrtle Beach Marathon in February of this year.

Sinclair, a former school administrator, served as the superintendent of Iredell-Statesville Schools in the early 1990s. He ran his first marathon in 1996 when his son Stephen begged him to accompany him on his go at the Ellerbe Springs Marathon.

"When I finished that race I said to my son, 'There are certain things in life you only want to do once and this is one of them.'"

Sinclair was 49 at the time. He had finished the race in five hours, 34 minutes and thought the longest of long-distance running days were over.

But in 2008, he was bitten by the running bug like very few have. That is to say he got bit by the same bug that got its choppers in Forest Gump.

Then 61, Sinclair put enough miles behind him to see if he could beat the time he posted at the same Ellerbe Springs event he had run a dozen years earlier.

He beat his time by 38 minutes. And he was hooked.

"I am addicted to running," he said. "But I think it's a good addiction."

During the week, Sinclair can be seen on the streets holding a steady jogging pace with running partners Brea Nance, Michelle Hepler, Gladys Lippard and Silvana Tembladore. The latter two women have run a combined 30 marathons with Sinclair.

Sinclair shuns the notion that distance running is the loneliest sport that requires a solely individual effort. Indeed, he says, fellow runners are perhaps the most important part of the running equation.

"I think it requires a lot of training and proper nutrition and the right clothing and running shoes," he said. "But mostly it's about being with people who view marathon running the same way you do: that it is not about time but about endurance."

Sinclair's running exploits have earned him a place on a list compiled by a group called Marathon Maniacs, which cares less about a person's per-mile pace than his or her completion of running events that are at least 26 miles, 385 yards in length. Just to make it on the Marathon Maniac list — which the group itself refers to as its "Insane Asylum" — requires the running of

two marathons within 16 days or three in a three-month span.

From there, one can earn stars for different, well, mile-markers. Ranked 30th on a leader board that includes some 4,000 people from around the world, Sinclair has six stars and is hankering to earn his seventh.

Sinclair's passion is not just with running but with spreading the good news about staying healthy.

"This is cheap medicine," Sinclair said while tapping the pedometer attached to his belt. "I'm talking about walking or exercising on a regular basis."

Sinclair added there is a massive distinction between logging 10,000 or so steps on the pedometer during the course of the day (about five miles) and signing up for three marathons in 15 minutes.

"I'm not recommending about doing what I do," he said. "I know that it's not for everybody."

Do you think? Even among the miniscule number of fitness nuts who have completed a marathon (estimates to be less than 1 percent of the population), what Sinclair does should have some kind of extreme-like suffix added to it. What he did from July 9-11 could be called a marathon-athon.