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Frank White Runs his 13th Marathon

For most of us, running a marathon is something other people do. For BC Law student Frank White, it's a bi-annual event.

The 2004 Boston Marathon was White's 13th since he started running in 1997, after graduating from Georgetown University. He had watched the Marine Corps Marathon each year as the runners passed near the campus, and thought it looked like a 'pretty cool' thing to do. He rowed crew in college, but had never run in competition.

"The spectators got so fired up watching the runners go by, cheering them on," White says. "I didn't have time to train while I was in school, but I thought that once I graduated, it was something I would want to try."

As soon as he got his diploma, he began to run every day. He liked the outlet it gave him, and he loved the sense of freedom. By the time the next Marine Corps Marathon rolled around, he was ready. There were nearly 100,000 people watching the 15,000 runners, and the energy in the crowd may have affected White, as he got off to a fast start. By the middle of the race he experienced a 'gut check,' and had to struggle to finish. But he did cross the finish line, about 6 minutes slower than his goal.

The next year, he ran the Memphis Marathon in his hometown, and again finished just slightly behind his goal. In fact, it wasn't until the 2000 Big Sur Marathon that he finally achieved his goal time, and by then he'd run half a dozen races.

White made the most of time he spent working abroad. He has run marathons in London, Berlin, and Florence. There were a couple of things that remained constant for each experience.

"There are two things you have to worry about when running a race," White says. "One is the type of course - hilly, flat, straight, that kind of stuff - and you can train for that. The other is the weather. You can't do much to prepare for rain."

Or heat. This year's Boston Marathon was one of the hottest on record, with a number of runners needing treatment for heat exhaustion and dehydration. This was White's second Boston Marathon, and while he had prepared for the course itself, he was not prepared for the heat wave that took all the runners by surprise. Still, he managed to finish the race, a goal in and of itself, and he's planning to run it again next year. As for where he will be running this fall, those plans are still up in the air. He may participate in a triathlon this summer, just to mix things up.

"There's one thing I noticed in every race I've ever run," he says. "Whether the runners spoke English, Italian, German, we were all able to communicate on a basic level. We're all trying to achieve the same goal. It's easy to appreciate that."

