

Huge Loss Comes in Short Bursts

Right » Tara Martin (left) at the 2010 Great Kilted Run in Seattle, well on her way to her goal after losing 58 pounds

Bottom » Martin volunteering as a course marshal at the 2012 Epic Dartmouth Triathlon in Dartmouth, N.S.

LIFE-CHANGING STEPS

The first few months were spent taking stairs instead of the elevator, walking on her lunch break (Martin's job involves sitting most of the day) and cutting down on fast food. On February 1, 2010, while walking her dogs, she made her first real life-changing steps. "Suddenly, I thought, 'If I can walk,'" she recalls, "let's see if I can run.'" Martin pushed her body as fast as it would go for half a block. "I lost my cookies in someone's yard," she says. "My heart rate was so high, I was dizzy, and I just wasn't prepared. I didn't know anything about running – but from there, I just kept going."

Though it was far from easy – Martin jogged at 4 a.m. because she was too embarrassed to be seen – she stuck with it. By April 2010, running had brought her weight to 222 pounds. With a long road still ahead, she enlisted the help of a trainer. "He believed in me, even when I didn't." Martin's trainer introduced her to interval workouts. "Until then, I hadn't been thinking about getting my heart rate up. But with that extra boost of cardio, your calorie burn is so much greater," she says, noting that intervals could involve sprints, running hills or jumping rope.

A year of hard work with intervals a constant part of her routine, ensued. By April 2011, Martin checked in at 155 pounds – more than 100 pounds less than she'd been on her 40th birthday. "My body completely changed. It went from being mobidly obese to being lean and strong and athletic," she says. "You don't think change is possible? Think again."

Today, at 165 pounds (which she says is a healthier weight for her body), Martin has become a regular runner. Beginning with 5K and 10K races, she has now completed five half-marathons (personal best of 1:58:23), a sprint and Olympic triathlon, and in May, she ran her first marathon in 5:08. In September, she planned to complete her second marathon. "I was born an athlete, I just waited 40 years to figure it out," Martin says.

INTERVAL TRAINING

There are many important factors that contributed to Martin's running and weight loss success. Proper diet and lifting weights, for example, have both played a crucial role.

But one key component in her ability to burn fat has been interval training – short bursts of speed followed



Photos: Courtesy of Tara Martin