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Groups can help runners go long

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Staff writer

Once you've achieved a 5K race — or the slightly longer 3.5-mile Corporate Challenge coming up next week — For some, longer distances beckon. A slew of groups locally can help you go the distance.

Mike Weinpress of Ogden ran his first race, a 5K (3.1 miles), in 1983 and found he liked the competition. A coup 10K (6.2 miles) race. Now he averages about one race a month, 5Ks to 26.2-mile marathons.

His two pieces of advice to runners new to long distances: Invest in good running shoes, because even expensive (Running sneakers are meant to last 300 to 500 miles.) And increase the length of your training runs gradually. V that many running experts advise, which calls for increasing your distance only 10 percent per week. If you are r three days), then you could safely add nearly one more mile to one of those runs, for a weekly total of 9.9 miles. of injury from over-training.

Weinpress and others find that running with buddies makes distances more do-able. The Rochester area has m groups that are free and welcome newcomers. They run in areas such as Greece, Spencerport, Brighton, Victor, Canandaigua and Naples.

"I wouldn't do long runs if it wasn't for the social aspect," says Lori Sousa, 39, of Brighton. She coordinates a Ro people who want to train for a half-marathon or full marathon.

A running group has lots of benefits. Making the commitment to show up each week helps you not get lazy. You People cheer each other's successes and help each other through the inevitable bad days, when you're tempted

That support can go beyond running. "You begin encouraging people in other areas of life," says Sousa, a social Christian Fellowship in Rochester.

Weinpress, 52, coordinates a running group based in Spencerport called Sals — as in the folk song, "got an old often run along the canal. While they run, they talk. "We solve a lot of the world's problems," Weinpress jokes. "A conversation gets loose."

Typically five to 10 runners show up for the Sals run, and most of them run 10 to 20 miles together each Saturda

Fleet Feet Sports store in Brighton offers free group runs several times a week and a 16-week coached distance includes workshops on stretching, nutrition and more.

Not everyone wants to do a marathon or half-marathon. Some groups jog three to six miles. Bill Hearne of Perint Runners (10 to 22 miles) on Saturdays and Oven Door Lite (about 6 miles, at a gentler pace) on Sundays, both i

"Rochester is a terrific city for running," says Hearne, 60. "There's a lot of groups and a lot of support."

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Training: Week 9

Pat yourself on the back! This is the final week of former Olympic marathon champion Grete Waitz's nine-week, three-sessions-a-week plan to build up to running 3.5 miles.

Day 1: Start slowly and jog for 35 to 40 minutes.

Day 2: Same as Day 1.

Day 3: Start slowly and jog for 40 minutes.

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