



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT **CARRIE ASALON**

**Tell us a little about your running history. Why/when did you start running?**

I started running consistently around 2011; before then, I ran track for a year at the ripe age of 7th grade, and my first 5k in college with zero preparation and terrible pre-race fueling. I've come so far since then! I started running because I thought it was the "thing" to do to stay healthy as I entered adulthood. Looking back now, I didn't know how to run "smart" for the first few years. I always ran at a grueling tempo pace, so I didn't really enjoy running. I just ran as a means to an end. It wasn't until I began running longer distances and researching effective training methods that I embraced slow, easy training runs. Now, I run because it's my "me" time and my outlet. Whereas I used to run for the physical benefits, I now run for the mental benefits.

**You just ran your first marathon—tell us about your training and race day experience!**

The fact that I just ran a full marathon still feels surreal! I loved every single training run, and I credit that to learning how to train slow and easy. In order to juggle work and family, all of my weekday runs took place early in the morning, before the sun, birds, or neighbors woke up. Head lamp and LED armbands affixed, I thrived on the peaceful quiet of each morning run. Two months before Flying Pig, I sustained an overuse tendon injury. With the advice of my podiatrist

and the local running community, I took two weeks off of running and instead incorporated cycling, rowing, and aqua jogging. I'm proud of myself for quickly pivoting my training instead of feeling totally derailed. It paid off! I finished the marathon three minutes faster than my goal time and enjoyed \*nearly\* every minute of the race. The crowd support, even in the midst of a thunderstorm, blew me away. My pace team did an amazing job keeping me on track, giving our group a nice buffer to take the hills easy without sacrificing our goal time. My incredible husband braved the weather to cheer me on, holding an oversized fathead cutout of our son's face. I felt a burst of energy every time I saw their smiles on the course! When I originally signed up for the Flying Pig, I really thought it would be my one and only marathon, like a bucket list item. After experiencing the community of marathoners and particularly Flying Pig runners, spectators, and volunteers, I can't rule out another marathon in the future. It was too special of an experience to limit it to just once in my life.

**What is your favorite running memory?**

My favorite running memory is pushing my toddler in the jogging stroller in the 2022 Bluegrass 10,000. Ziggy loves "running" with me and gives me the cutest verbal encouragement along the race course, especially as we near the finish line. I love sharing that special bonding time with him, while selfishly not sacrificing my passions and goals.

**What inspired you to become a member of Team Beef?**

I have a degree in animal science and a personal interest in both animal and human nutrition. I love that Team Beef connects my education with my love for running. I've never heard of another food or nutrition council providing the kind of support and education for runners that Team Beef does. Keep it up!

**How do you incorporate beef into your diet to fuel your runs?**

I fuel my body with a diversity of lean proteins, plus lots of fruits and veggies. I'm a sucker for pasta with ground beef as a carb-loader, and beef tacos or a steak salad as a post-run meal. And when I really want to treat myself, I go for a filet mignon with asparagus and mashed potatoes. Anyone drooling yet?

**What are your future running goals?**

I'm currently juggling two opposing goals. After focusing on the slower/easier pace of long distance races over the last two years, one goal is to get back to speedier short distance races and push myself to faster 5k times. In opposition to that, if (or when?) I run another full marathon, I'd like to spend more energy taking in the awesomeness of the race. I want to take a selfie with the singing Elvis and a panorama of the top of the Eden Park hill. I want to eat

all of the delicious treats that spectators and volunteers hold out for runners (jelly beans, Girl Scout cookies, Hershey's kisses, bacon!). For my first marathon, I relied solely on my own fueling so I was sad to pass up on the generosity of the spectators. Next time, my goal is to eat all the things and enjoy every morsel!

**Any advice to runners or first time marathoners?**

Embrace the slow and easy training runs! It took me too many years to finally listen to the research and science on the physiological benefits of the slow, conversational pace. It feels counter-intuitive, but not only does it work come race day, it makes running so enjoyable. For first-time marathoners, trust the power of your mind to get you through the distance. If you can train to 16, 18, or 20 miles, your body can travel 26.2 miles when that race-day adrenaline kicks in. Teach your mind to trust your body's ability, even if that means literally coaching yourself out loud for the entirety of mile 23. Lastly, commit to a pace and plan that allows you moments during the race to look around and soak in the exciting moments of a full marathon. I went fast enough to certainly feel the challenge, but paced well enough to retain energy to high-five a Captain America going for a Guinness World Record, thank the water station volunteers, crack some jokes with my pacer, and toss a basketball toward a hoop at mile 22 (spoiler alert--I missed the basket). These little moments along the course are what makes a marathon so special.

