

Arkansas Runner Interview – Nicole Hobbs

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Nicole Hobbs became the president of the Striders on July 1, 2015.

AR: Tell us about yourself, where you are originally from, where you grew up, how long you have lived in Saline County.

NH: I grew up in Lonsdale and attended Fountain Lake School. I lived in Benton from 2009-2011, where I first got involved with the Striders. Since then, I have moved closer to my job in Little Rock, and have been living there since December 2012.

I attended UCA where I earned both my bachelor's degree in accounting (2007) and Master of Accountancy (2008).

I am a CPA, and work as a tax supervisor at JPMS Cox, PLLC in Little Rock where I have been since Sept. 2008. We are a public accounting firm specializing in tax, audit and consulting services. I work on tax returns for individuals and all types of business entities but my specialty is non-profit organizations and Form 990.

AR: How long have you been running and what got you started?

NH: I was never athletic at all – I never played any sports and never ran unless I had to! In college I started running at the gym just for fitness. Many of you know that I work with Jacob Wells (aka Marathon Boy) who first got me into running. Somehow we decided to get a team from our workplace together to run the 2009 Twilight 5K, and I got put in charge of organizing our training runs. I don't remember how that happened, because at that time I was not a runner! The race was miserably hot and I finished in 33:49. I decided to keep running to get in shape, and I ran with the Easy Runner training group the next spring for the 2010 Firecracker 5K. I started racing and training more after that and joined the Striders that summer. I have now shaved off over 13.5 minutes from that first 5K time.

AR: What is a typical running week for you?

NH: I work and live near the River Trail so it is convenient for me to go there for my training runs. I usually run with the Little Rock speedwork group, led by Bill Torrey, every Tuesday evening, then a short training run and/or race as well as a long run on the weekends. I run 3 or 4 times a week. My weekly mileage varies depending on my work and race schedule but I average between 20 and 30 miles per week.

AR: Do you do any cross training, biking, weights, etc.?

NH: I usually do hot yoga 3 times a week and also lift weights at least once a week.

AR: Favorite place to run? Why?

NH: I would say the River Trail just because it is so convenient for me and

you can really run any distance you want to there. I love having the bathrooms and water stops available along my route to minimize what I have to carry with me. The safety of a closed trail is definitely a plus as well.

AR: How about training partners? Do you have any or do you train alone?

NH: I run with the Tuesday track group and mostly train with Eric Baker. He and I have worked really well together as far as our pace, goals, and when/where we run. Having a partner definitely keeps me accountable.

AR: Have you been a member of any running clubs other than the Striders? If so, which & where?

NH: I am also a member of the Little Rock Roadrunners and Half Fanatics.

AR: How long have you been racing?

NH: I ran my first race in 2009, but really started racing when I joined the Grand Prix series in 2011.

AR: About how many races did you do last year? This year?

NH: Last year (2013), I ran 35. I've run 19 so far this year, with plans to do at least 9 more. This year I plan to Iron in the Grand Prix series, which means to run all 20 races. Those include races of every distance, from a mile to a marathon and everything in between.

AR: What has been your longest racing distance?

NH: Marathon

AR: Do you have a favorite racing distance? If so, what?

NH: I really enjoy the half marathon distance because it gives me something to train for but doesn't take up too much time, yet still feels like an accomplishment.

AR: What have been your favorite races? Why?

NH: The Little Rock half marathon is one of my favorites, because it's just fun to witness that many people from all over the country coming together to run our capital city. It's also fun to see all of the signs and great people cheering you along the way. I also love to support races put on by my friends, such as the Striders races, Light up the Night 5K, and CASA Half Marathon. Also, I can't forget to mention the 3 Bridges Marathon, for which I am on the board.

AR: What are your PR's?

NH: 1 Mile – 6:05 (2014 Go! Mile)

2 Mile – 13:26 (2014 Chase Race)

5K – 20:12 (2014 Firecracker)

10K – 44:23 (2013 Survivors Challenge)

Half Marathon – 1:38:27 (2013 Soaring Wings)

Marathon - 4:06:01 (2012 Midsouth)

AR: Most memorable race? Explain.

NH: That would be the Village Creek 25K, which I ran in January 2014. It was a trail run, and it had rained so much the week before the race, that almost the entire course was extremely muddy. Sliding around on all that mud caused my IT band to hurt so badly I almost dropped out of the race. I sat down near the halfway point, at the only aid station, for about 20 minutes to try and massage out some of the pain. It's the closest I've ever come to a DNF, but eventually I decided to get up and keep moving with nearly half of the race to go. I finished, but was in a lot of pain and couldn't run for a few weeks after that. Up until then, I had been training for the Little Rock Marathon, and my injuries from that race caused me to have to drop down to the half. I've been pretty conservative with my non-goal race selections since then!

AR: What have been some of your other most memorable events, moments, or achievements in running?

NH: Finishing my first marathon was a big accomplishment for me. Also, I was very proud of being chosen as the Arkansas RRCA most improved female runner of the year in 2013.

AR: Non-running achievement of which you are most proud?

NH: Passing the CPA exam, and being the first college graduate in my extended family.

AR: How about shoes? Do you have a particular favorite?

NH: I keep mixing it up so I don't have a particular favorite. I wore Newtons for a couple years and liked those but I just switched to some Nikes that I'm still breaking in. Fortunately, I tend to have pretty good luck with shoes.

AR: How about significant injuries? Have you had any and if so, what sort and did they require any special treatment other than rest?

NH: It seems that a lot of injuries to runners are caused by non-running events. That was the case with me last year, when I sprained my ankle playing softball. I couldn't run for 3 weeks, and had to miss 3 races that I had planned on doing. I've also had some trouble with my IT bands in the past that led me to see a chiropractor, where I discovered that my hips were very uneven. I still see a chiropractor weekly and recommend it to everyone.

AR: Are there any runners you particularly admire or respect, or perhaps who have helped you in some way? Explain.

NH: Jacob Wells really got me into running to begin with so I owe a lot to him for that. He is a great motivator, and I admire his passion for running and for helping others to run. He has run as a guide for blind runners, and runs with a disabled young man which he pushes in a stroller. He's also a certified running coach, director of the 3 Bridges marathon, and has run over 400 races. I am fortunate to have him as a coworker as well, so I regularly stop by his office to talk about running!

AR: How about hobbies and activities other than running?

NH: Yoga and playing for my firm's coed softball team during the summer

AR: Favorite non-running spectator sport?

NH: I enjoy watching the Olympics and occasionally football.

AR: Favorite non-running leisure activity?

NH: Laying by the pool or cooking

AR: Favorite anything else you want to mention—book, movie, TV show, vacation destination, quote, etc.

NH: "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift." - Steve Prefontaine

AR: Running goals for the current year?

NH: Run my first 50K, and finish the Iron in the Grand Prix series

AR: Long term?

NH: Qualify for Boston and run a non-downhill 5K in under 21 minutes

AR: Anything else you would like to say to your fellow Arkansas runners?

NH: Running has brought many people and memories into my life and for that I am very grateful! I love my running family!

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