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## Running

### Blasdell marathoner hitting his stride

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By **Budd Bailey**

Blasdell's Michael Deren doesn't have a time target when he runs a marathon. He probably doesn't need one; he's doing quite well as it is.

Deren ran the 26-mile distance in 2 hours, 24 minutes and 39 seconds in Alabama. That's a significant accomplishment for someone who has only run five marathons as of the age of 23.

"I don't really have any set times I want to hit," he said. "I don't know how fast I can go. I'm just trying to stay healthy.

"The No. 1 goal is to have fun. If you aren't, it's not worth it. If I set a time and don't accomplish it, it's disheartening."

Deren ran for coach Jim Zubler at Frontier, and gives him plenty of credit for his development as a runner.

"He was a good influence on me," Deren said. "It was important for me to learn to think of the team. I was more individualistic. I did pretty well. I won the state meet in the 2-mile as a senior."

From there, Deren earned a scholarship to East Tennessee State. He said it was half for running, half for academics. While Deren didn't have to read textbooks while he ran under those circumstances, he quipped that "I did study on the bus."

He suffered a major setback in his junior year when he was involved in an accident.

"Me and my roommate and another person were riding bicycles to practice," he said. "We were going down a hill. A car turned in front of us. We were on the left side, and we shouldn't have been there, and slammed into a car.

"I had a broken collarbone and wrist—two broken arms, essentially."

Deren's roommate suffered a fractured left big toe and right kneecap. Deren still rides a bike, but now he always wears a helmet and he doesn't go so fast.

"It took me quite a while to recover," he said. "I couldn't run for at least eight weeks. Then I started to run for two or three days, and came down with mono. I couldn't run for another month. The accident was in November, and I started training in March."

Deren finished up his eligibility with the Bucs and graduated in 2009; he has stayed at the university to attend graduate school. But he wasn't done with running yet.

"As a runner, everyone asks, 'Have you ever run a marathon?' I had run 18 to 20 miles but never completed one, and I always wanted to do one," Deren said. "Once I graduated from college, I was able to train for one. I thought it would take a while to recover, so I wanted to wait until after my college career was over. I didn't want to lose that."

Deren picked up a copy of the book "Daniels' Running Formula," and started training. He set out for his first marathon about a year ago, and saw the race end in disappointment. He hit the wall in Knoxville, Tenn., thanks to a hilly course and going out too fast. By mile 20 Deren couldn't run any more, and finished in 3:19.

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He decided to redeem himself two months later.

“I did Buffalo in 2:34,” he said. “That was at the end of May. I said, ‘Now I’m doing well. I’ll keep training.’ In September in Ohio I did a 2:36; it was a little hilly. Then I did one in Alabama in December in 2:29.”

That set up the 2:24 in the Rocket City Marathon in Huntsville, Ala. That’s not the fastest marathon by a runner with local connections, an accomplishment that is believed to belong to Mark Finucane (2:11:55).

The 2:24 certainly shows that Deren has the potential to go faster in the years ahead. That could set up for a bid at the Olympic team.

“I’d like to try [for the U. S. team]—the qualifying time for the trials is 2:19,” he said. “I’d like to hit that. That might be a year or two away.

“I think you peak when you are 29 or 30. I still have plenty of time. I hope to get a nice job [after getting his masters] so I can train. I’d like to continue. It’s fun.”

## **Race calendar**

- Friends of the Night People Run Against Hunger, 5K, 320 Porter Ave., 10 a. m. April 2, 884-5375.
- Bemus Point 5K, Long Point State Park, 9a.m. April 3, 488-0788.