

{ LOCAL SUCCESS } ——— :: *jessica breedlove landry*

For non-runners, the thought of participating in a half-marathon or a triathlon is intimidating. Maybe not as intimidating as climbing Mt. Everest, but still pretty daunting for people who have never run. But running newcomer Jessica Breedlove Landry rose to the challenge and just completed her first half marathon at the Mardi Gras Marathon in February.

Just months before, the idea would have seemed ludicrous to Landry. As a young woman, she danced regularly and exercised through dance, but once she went to college, she stopped dancing. And so it went for Landry after college. Years went by and she did little to no exercise.

But recently, the 32-year-old Landry, who is also a mother, decided she wanted to jog to help facilitate weight loss. She had just begun jogging when, a few months before the Mardi Gras Marathon, a friend asked her if she would be interested in running a half marathon. "I was like 'There's no way I can run a half marathon,'" Landry said.

However, two of Landry's clients (she works as a stylist), told her that anyone can do anything as long as they have approximately 16 weeks to train. Landry had just that amount of time, so she decided to take the plunge and do it. She downloaded a half marathon training plan online and began running on a treadmill and doing long runs on the weekends. She ran four to five times a week, gradually increasing her distances. And she found it came naturally to her. "All my friends couldn't believe it. It was like I was made to run," Landry said. At her first official race, the Ole Man River, she came in 1st place in her age division.

Even though the training went smoothly, the actual half marathon itself proved to be a challenge. To get to the starting line at the Superdome in time from her home on the North Shore, Landry had to wake up at 4 a.m. Feeling a little discombobulated, Landry hit a wall around the 3rd or 4th mile. She just became tired even though she'd run the distances many times in training. "At about mile three or four, it just became a total mind game for me," Landry said. "It was the hardest run I've ever, ever had."

But no matter how difficult it got, Landry stayed mentally focused. "I'm competitive with myself," Landry said. She kept telling herself, "You cannot stop. You cannot fail." And she didn't. Her goal for herself was to finish the race in under two hours and she completed it in one hour and 58 minutes.

While she enjoys the race itself, Landry actually enjoys the training more. "I really just love the discipline of it, the daily ritual of having time to myself...It's like my little escape."

Now, Landry is training for her first triathlon, the Crawfishman Triathlon on May 3. Still self-motivated, Landry went to Barnes and Noble and purchased a book on triathlon training, which she has used as her guide in the training process. So far, she has thoroughly enjoyed the multi-disciplinary aspect of training for a triathlon (which involves swimming, cycling, and running). "I really enjoy the switch up instead of just running all the time," Landry said.

After the Crawfishman Triathlon, Landry will participate in the Crescent City Classic (with a goal of a 48 minute finish time) and hopes to complete an Olympic distance swim (1500 m) at the Destin Crab Trap Triathlon in October. This will be part of Landry's efforts to raise money for the Shane Korte Memorial Fund, which donates money for brain injury research.

Landry insists that while triathlons and half marathons are challenging, anyone can still do them. "It just takes baby steps and self-discipline," Landry said. "If I can do it, anyone can." She views the entire process as part of a change in the way she's led her life.



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