

I live in Atlanta, where summer heat and humidity just come with the territory. Summer weather has been around these parts for a lot longer than I have, so I have no right to complain. I knew what I was in for before I moved down, so I have no option but to accept it and move forward.

When I lived in the Northeast, winter was my least favorite season, but not for the reasons you may think. I don't mind the cold. I have found that even in below zero bitter cold, your body will eventually warm up. It's the snow, ice, and treacherous footing that I didn't like. Since Atlanta gets very little snow, and when we do, it doesn't hang around for long, winter in the south is actually my favorite running season. But I loathe summers. I am not a good hot weather runner, and I don't like carrying water on my run. And I NEVER run on a treadmill.

Two years ago, in July, 2018, I decided that in August, I was going to shoot for a 100 mile month of running. It had been several years since I had hit the 100 mile milestone. Then, as luck would have it, I started August with a work assignment in South Florida. As bad as Atlanta is in the summer, it's a cakewalk compared to South Florida.

It would have been extremely easy to have said "Forget it, I'll wait and try again in September, when the weather starts getting a little cooler. I hadn't gotten back to consistent running for several years prior. I'd run 50 miles one month, 80 the next, then another 50. I was a lazy runner, accepting just about any excuse to skip a day.

But instead of giving in to the hot humid conditions, this time, I made a decision that has motivated me through all kinds of weather conditions over the past 2 years. I just said to myself that since I had no choice but to accept whatever weather I had to deal with, I would full on embrace it, and since I don't do treadmills, every mile I run is an outdoor mile.

Those first morning runs along the beach in Melbourne, FL were brutal. Although I was getting out at 4 in the morning, temps were still in the upper 70s to low 80s every morning, and the humidity was always hovering at or near 100%. I didn't do any of my runs there fast, but I did get most of those runs in the 4-5 mile range. The reason it worked for me is because instead of dreading the thought of each run, I went into each run saying I was going to do it, and then bask in the accomplishment for the rest of the day.

That strategy seemed to work for me, and I ended up finishing August that year with 114 miles. It was my first 100 mile month in years, and when it was completed, I thought "If I can do it for a month, why not go for 2 months in a row." I started September with the same determined tenaciousness as I ended August. "Embrace the heat and humidity" I said. Summer seemed to hang on for almost all of September that year, but I remained focused and ended the month with even more miles than August, a little over 116 miles. After all those years of no 100 mile months, now I had two in a row. Little did I realize at the time, but those would end up being my two lowest mileage months in the past 2 years.

The key to achieving bigger goals is to make them a culmination of many little goals. If you succeed in achieving your smaller goals, the larger goals will take care of themselves. If you had asked me 2 years ago if I could possibly string 2 years of 100 mile months together, I would have said you were crazy. But it was just a matter of starting by setting a weekly goal of 25 miles per week, which then rolled into 100 mile months, and then having months extend into years.

So I will start July with the same number of miles I start every month. Zero. I'm officially 100 miles away from 2 straight years of 100 miles per month, and have the whole month to navigate to get there. That is an accomplishment I never thought in all my years of running that my body would allow. And it's hard to believe I'm now only 3 months away from turning another major milestone. I'll be 65 years old in October.