

## **Paula's Heart Journey**

- 1) Ever since my senior year of high school (1981-82), I have run on and off.
- 2) In the early 2000s, I saw a cardiologist for "odd heartbeats" and after a nuclear stress test received a clean bill of health and the admonition to drink less caffeine. (Admittedly, I fell off the "no caffeine" bandwagon early on. I was not actively running at the time.)
- 3) In late 2008, I returned to running and didn't look back. With very few exceptions, I have run three days a week for this entire 7-year period. My goal was to break 30:00 for a 5K.
- 4) In April 2012, I began being coached. My coaching was based on heart-rate training. This coaching focused on my September 2012 half marathon, then after that the focus was on the goal of running a faster 5K.
- 5) In February 2013 I experienced my first odd high heart-rate episode, but since it was relatively isolated I just wrote it off to race excitement and didn't pursue the issue.
- 6) In February 2014, my coach changed. Under my new coach, I got a handle on nutrition (yay!) and felt that the 30-pound weight loss may finally be the missing link to cracking the sub-30 code.
- 7) Unfortunately, my body did not get the memo that the missing link was about to fall into place because the heart rate issues started multiplying. At first, I thought it was the summer heat because running a trail race series in Tallahassee in the summer is pretty brutal.
- 8) Following the issues of Summer 2014, my health felt sufficiently "odd" that I pursued, first through my PCP, then through a cardiologist who cleared me after a stress test and an cardiac echocardiogram.
- 9) When I struggled through the Boston Half Marathon on a day that was not in any way "hot," I had second thoughts about that cardiology "all clear" but again hoped it was just a fluke.

10) Then I struggled with heart rate issues at my favorite race, the Turkey Trot 10K, wrote this blog, and was very unsubtly told by people who have my best interests in mind that I should keep looking for answers.

11) While I kept looking for answers, the issue became more and more pronounced. I stopped drinking "leaded" coffee on run mornings on the premise that the caffeine wasn't helping. There were still days when an incident would occur half an our into an "easy" run.