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AIR FORCE MARATHON

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Ready, Set, Go!

Estimated 15,000 Runners Expected To Participate
In Upcoming 26th Annual Air Force Marathon

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READY, SET, GO!

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In Upcoming 26th Annual Air Force Marathon

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ

Avid runners know that it is never too soon to start training for a big event, and events don't get much bigger than the 26th annual Air Force Marathon. This year's race is scheduled for Saturday, September 17, 2022 at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, OH.

Registration opened January 1, 2022, and an estimated 15,000 runners are expected to participate in this year's event, which is open to the general public. "We always have representation from all 50 states, and in most years, more than a dozen countries are represented," notes Brandon Hough, director of the Air Force Marathon.

The Air Force Marathon was founded in 1997 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force. "The first year saw a few thousand runners compete in the event," Hough explains. "Over the years it grew into a much larger event that now features a full marathon, half marathon, 10K, 5K, relay, a kids' run, and two different challenges dubbed the Fly-Fight-Win Challenge. Any given year, the event has 13,000 to 15,000 participants.

"In recent years, the Air Force Marathon has begun to add additional events throughout the calendar year, including a 10M time trial bike race, the Blue Streak Time Trial, which we run seven times a year at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base; it will celebrate its 24th anniversary in 2022," Hough continues. "We produce an all-virtual race series called the History & Heritage Race Series with six events in the calendar year that celebrate various retired aircraft that were flown in the USAF. In 2022, we also are launching the Museum Mile, a 1 mile race in May around the perimeter of the National Museum of the USAF."

Another exciting new event is planned for the end of 2022: "The Air Force Marathon has partnered with the U.S. Space Force to produce the Space Force T-Minus 10-Miler, which will be held on December 10th, 2022 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station," Hough discloses.

A life-long runner himself, Hough became involved with the Air Force Marathon when he was a second lieutenant stationed at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. "I first volunteered to help unwrap medals in 2012 and then did the race that year," he recalls, noting that he raced several times

after separating from the Air Force before becoming the director in 2018. "To be able to direct this event – which perfectly blends together my passion for running and my love of the USAF – is an incredible honor."

The Air Force Marathon offers training tips and assistance to aspiring participants; Hough himself advises a "slow and steady" approach. "Training for a marathon is much akin to training for anything new in life; one needs to apply consistent training over time," he points out. "The key is to break down the training into manageable blocks and to have progress checks along the way. Much like how one cannot run until you can walk and you cannot walk until you have crawled, to run a marathon you must be able to run a half marathon and to run a half marathon you must be able to run a 10K. Thus, anyone who aspires to the marathon should start with a 5K and once you feel comfortable accomplishing that distance, move on to the 10K. Taking this approach to running will ensure a smooth and level build and stave off injury from trying to increase the training load too fast. There is simply no need to rush up to the distance; it is best to take your time and build sustainably.

"We keep a tab on our website dedicated to training and offer training schedules to participants for all of our events, including beginner and intermediate levels," Hough continues. "We offer a once a week group run at 4 p.m. on Mondays

at Wright-Patterson AFB for those with base access. We also have a Facebook community group where people can ask questions directly to us, chat with other participants, and share their accomplishments or struggles."

Hough notes that training for a marathon can be both mentally and physically difficult. "I think two of the biggest challenges people face training for a marathon are the time commitment and the physical toll that training takes on one's body," he says. "As to the time commitment, training for a marathon requires a rather large input of time to be successful: people run anywhere from 30 to 100 miles a week training for a marathon, which can be anywhere from 7 to 15 hours a week working out. Having a schedule and sticking to it is the best tool for ensuring you are prepared for the time commitment of training."

Even with strong commitment and a regular schedule, Hough advises runners to be prepared for setbacks. "When training and racing I often remind myself that I chose this path," he states. "This acts as a guiding force in my training and grounds me when I feel a bit lost or overwhelmed by the training. This is also how I approach setbacks in training. As much as we all want to believe progression is a linear experience, it often has ups and downs, but the trend line points up over time. Thus, do not get caught up in the down periods and recognize that they are part of a one-step-back, two-steps forward situation." 

