

# Dan Browne



AP photos

## Training for the long haul

By Chad Bonham

**Life** is like a marathon.”

That simple phrase might border on cliché, but coming from Olympic long-distance runner Dan Browne, the words are packed with years of experience-laden wisdom — simple truths he has received during those miles of solitary training.

“Running is a great time to communicate with God,” Browne says. “You’re out there alone a lot of times and doing your thing, and it keeps you grounded. It’s hard to ignore His voice when it’s just you out there.”

Growing up in Portland, Ore.,

Browne, 33, started out playing traditional team sports like soccer and basketball before gravitating towards the unique aspects of cross-country and middle-distance track events as a high school freshman. He got serious about running as a junior.

But his life as a believer started much earlier, thanks to the influence of his mother. After high school, Browne attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point where he was baptized and became involved in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA).

“My faith is at the core of who I am,” Browne says. “It motivates

me. Ultimately, we’re here for a short while and our job is to glorify God with our gifts and to live a life worthy of being a Christian.”

Browne graduated from the academy with a double major in English and went on to participate in the Army’s World Class Athlete Program. His desire to shine the light of Christ through a life of excellence has pushed him to be one of the country’s top long-distance runners. Browne often trains with a group of runners who pride themselves on working out at high elevations and performing core exercises in the gym.

“The life we lead is one where you have to keep delaying gratification,” Browne says. “You have to keep working hard to obtain a high level of fitness. Just like [the apostle] Paul worked to try and perfect himself as best he could, we’re trying to do our best to be ready for whatever comes our way. We have to deny ourselves as best we can. Ultimately Jesus is the best example of a life well lived.”

Much like the long distances he runs, Browne’s career has been paced by consistency and a disciplined work ethic. He experienced a breakthrough in 2002 by winning the U.S.A. Marathon Championships, the U.S.A. Running Circuit men’s title and the U.S. 20-kilometer road title. The following year, Browne claimed fifth at the 3,000-meter run at the U.S.A. Indoor Championships and brought home the bronze medal from the Pan American Games in the 10-kilometer race.

At the U.S. Olympic trials in 2004, Browne qualified for the Summer Games by finishing third in the 10,000-meter run. By then, he had already made the Olympic team by placing third in the Olympic trials marathon. Once in Ath-

ens, Browne finished 12th in the 10,000 meters, the top finish of any American.

“It was the fulfillment of one of the dreams in my life,” Browne says. “You work so hard for it for such a long time and there are no guarantees. There are just not enough spots for everyone. I was blessed to compete in both the 10,000 meters and the marathon. I gave my all for it.”

With less than a week to recover after the 10,000 meters, Browne ran a challenging marathon that was dotted with numerous hilly portions of the race. By the midway point he was dehydrated and fin-

ished a disappointing 65th, but was happy to finish nonetheless.

“I was praying a ton during that race,” Browne says. “I just wanted God to give me the race that I was meant to run. Ultimately, my goal was to finish the race. Obviously winning would have been great, but finishing is, in my mind, the most important thing and giving your best. In a similar way, that’s what we’re called to do in our life. We all stumble and fall, but ultimately God calls us to finish the race and do our best.”

For the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, Browne is focusing on the 10,000-meter run where he hopes

to qualify for his second appearance at the Summer Games.

Browne keeps the same unwavering attitude as a follower of Christ as he does in his endurance training — because ultimately it’s all about preparing for the long haul.

“Our goal as Christians is to be at oneness with God,” Browne says. “Whether we serve a lifetime here doing it or we accept Christ right before we die, this life is just a brief whisper and it’s gone. The real life is afterwards in eternity.” **tpe**

CHAD BONHAM is a freelance writer based in Tulsa, Okla.

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