

The Accidental Runner

ALUM PROFILE: TYLER ANDREWS '08

Tyler Andrews '08 took up running almost by default.

"I tried a lot of sports but I wasn't that coordinated, so running seemed to be the only thing left," said Andrews, who half-heartedly kept at it until one day he ran into CA's cross country and track coach, Jon Waldron.

"He was an inspiration. He told me that the fastest runners weren't doing anything that crazy. Before one race, he told me just try to keep up with the ones in front. I think that race I came in second and took a minute or two off my time," said Andrews. "That's all it took."

Four years later, Andrews is now ranked eighth in New England in the 10,000m. He's on the varsity cross country and track teams at Tufts University, he's a cross country and track Academic All-American, and he has set two course records in the last year. As if that weren't enough, last May, Andrews won Boston's Run to Remember Half Marathon, clocking a blistering 1:10:36. Not bad for a race he decided to enter on a whim.

"It was at the end of track season, I wanted to take some time off, but I thought, I'm in really good shape why not

try it?" laughed Andrews. "It was a ton of fun to run through the streets of Boston."

But as much as he enjoys running and the thrill of victory, there was always something that bothered Andrews about the sport's single-minded focus on winning or losing.

"At the end of the day, athletics is a kind of selfish pursuit."

So Andrews signed up for Service Trips for Student Athletes (STRIVE). It's a New York-based group that encourages athletes to complete community service projects while continuing their athletic training. Andrews was hired to be the leader and coach for a group of eighteen American, European, and Japanese high school students.

On May 29, 2011, the very day he won the half marathon in Boston, Andrews hopped a flight to New York, caught a red-eye to Lima, Peru, and hitched a twelve-hour bus ride into the mountains, eventually winding up in the small village of Pisac, located in Peru's Urubamba valley.

"I think to me having the service element makes the running more meaningful," said Andrews. "STRIVE's motto is a



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service program for athletes, not the other way around. Service is the priority."

In Pisac, Andrews spent his days at a school called Cuyo Chico, where he taught basic reading, writing, and arithmetic to students ranging in age from six to thirteen. The days were bookended with training runs that took Andrews up gravel roads into the Andes Mountains and down dirt paths nestled next to the Urubamba River. Training in Pisac involved running at high altitudes. In the mountains, the blood is less oxygen-rich, and that can often slow a runner's performance—but, Andrews said, he enjoyed the challenge.

"It took about a week to get acclimated. I had a basic training plan from my coach, and I kept at it."

This isn't the first time Andrews has combined service travel with athletic training. After his graduation from CA in 2008, he journeyed to Ecuador where he worked in a children's hospital during the day and spent his afternoons running over the often challenging terrain. He remains close to the host family he met there.

Andrews credits his decision to take a "gap year" and dedicate his time in the service of others to his mentors at CA.

"I remember talking to Peter Jennings and Jon Waldron, and they said, 'You know, CA is an intense place; if you feel burnt out, take a year off.' It was one of the best decisions I ever made," said Andrews. "I was so much more ready to go into the academic world. The year in Ecuador helped me narrow my interests and say this is what I want to do."

Andrews eventually decided on a mechanical engineering major and headed to Tufts University. But his bags—and his running shoes—are still packed; he's already planning his next trip to Peru this summer.

You can find more information about Strive Trips at strivetrips.com.



Tyler Andrews '08 in Peru