

# GET ON THE BIKE

## My weight loss and life transformation

### Disclaimer

DISCLAIMER: Please note, I am not a Dr. or nutritionists nor do I play one on TV. All I have done here is documented what I did to get the weight off, it is now way intended as a program for everyone to follow, it is just my story. So take everything at face value and enjoy.

### In the Beginning

It was July 10th, 2005 and we were down at an amusement park in southern Ohio (Kings Island) with some family and friends. It was a long awaited vacation to get together with everyone and camp and hit the park and just have a good time. We were over at the park for the day, not doing anything major, but after only 4 hours, I was done and had to go back to take a nap. 30 years old and walking around for 4 hours did me in. I was totally exhausted and ended up napping for 4 hours that afternoon.



I was 30 years old and weighed 270 pounds. Now, I am 5' 11" so by medical standards, I was obese. OK, actually, I was fat and really fat at that. I should have weighed between 160 to 180, so I was at least 90 pounds overweight. Now I knew I was overweight, I could see it in the mirror every day. A few months earlier, I was traveling on a business trip when a little girl got on the same elevator as me. She looked her dad and in the loudest voice she could, remarked, "Look daddy, there's a fat man." Children can be so innocent, but she was right. Hell, my college nickname was "Chubs." I knew it, but

I just didn't want to do anything about it. I tried and failed over the past 9 years to loose the weight, like many people do. I tried every diet known to man (we will talk about that later.) Eventually I just gave up figuring it was life, genetics and I was destined to be fat, so I might as well just be happy.

At my last physical, even my Dr. told me I was in bad shape. I was border line diabetic and my cholesterol was the highest it had ever been. It was 184, which they were surprised it was not higher, as they consider anything over 200 high. I had had some liver problems due to a fatty liver and had a history of kidney problems since birth, so my body didn't need the extra problems, but did I care? Nope.

So did I grow up in an obese family? Was I destined to be fat? No, I wasn't. I grew up in a small rural town in Ohio. I had a great family and while my dad was always a little overweight, he was never packing the pounds that I later would. I was a very active child always involved in sports and extracurricular activities. My mother was always health conscious and made sure I kept my eating in check. She always used to get upset after I would go visit my grandmother for a week. Grandma loved to cook and she was the master of classic southern cooking. I think I would put on 10 pounds after every visit, but when I got home, mom was back at me to make sure I was active and eating right. My schools had always focused on nutrition and I knew how to eat and

exercise. I even had summer jobs that required exercise and even worked on a produce farm for 12 hours a day 7 days a week. Man I missed the farm. Working there for the 2 summers I did, put me in the best shape of my life. I weighed around 180-190 and could bench press a truck. We worked hard, and ate a ton, but when I look back at what we ate on that farm, it was all fruits and veggies. I always said, if I could make the money I do today working on that farm, I would have gone back in a heartbeat. I loved the physical work and felt good about myself. My girlfriend at the time (now my wife) really loved the shape I was in. Bottom line ... I was not always this way.

I think the change was once I got to college. I put on the classic freshman 15, no big deal. Then I discovered beer, and oh how my life changed. I also learned that for some reason I had a really high tolerance level, so to get drunk with the rest of my friends I had to drink 8-12 beers. My sophomore year I moved into an apartment and began to cook for myself. I was all about cheap easy to make meals. Also, up to that point, I had not eaten much fast food, but now I was eating it 3-4 days per week. At college graduation I was around 220lbs. I think the only reason I was that low was all of the activities I was involved in. I played roller hockey and a group of us would roller blade several times per week around a 10 mile track around the campus.

Then I got my first job out of college and it was a desk job. I went into the computer industry so I sat behind a desk all day long. I now had responsibilities and bills and all kinds of other things that started to gobble up my time. I never went to a gym in college and I never even thought to start out of college, but I still ate the same way I used to. The only thing that was changing was my waistline.

The other thing that happened was that I started traveling 60-70% of the time for my company, so I was out on the road eating and drinking whatever I wanted. Every night we ate out and I would always "treat" myself to foods that I would never fix at home. Things like ribs, chicken wings, cheese fries and if we went to a nice steak house, I would get the largest thing I could find on the menu. Then we would hit the bars and see how much we could drink. It was just like college, but with an expense account.

In September of 1996, my wife and I got married. I weighed 250 pounds, 70 pounds more than I should have. I remember before the wedding, my wife getting on me to get the weight down so I would look good in our wedding pictures. I tried some "get slim quick" schemes that did not work, so I gave up and was fat for our wedding. The guys in our wedding party were thin, so it made me really stick out. To this day, I always regretted those pictures, because I will never get a chance to go back and do it all over again. I had even been left off some of the wedding parties of my friends because their wives did not want the fat guy in the pictures. That was a wake up call for me and then I started a death spiral with various diets that would fail.

I would try one thing for a few months, then go back to being fat because being healthy was hard. Gym memberships were expensive and eating right and exercising on the road was hard. I can't even begin to imagine how much money I wasted on all of those "diets" and wasted memberships. From there, I just went back to Brian as usual.



October 2003, my daughter was born. I was the best day of my life and the scariest. This was the point where the pressure from my mom and wife to get the weight off came hard. Now I had a little one to take care of and I needed to be there for her. I knew they were right, but I had tried to lose the weight and couldn't so I just tried to not put any more on. I would get on the scales every morning and make sure I was not getting above 270. Ludicrous I know, but that was my mind set.

## Time for a Change

My mother and my wife had always bugged me about my weight, but I just blew it off. I knew they were concerned for me, but I just didn't care. I had no motivation to change. Well, that all changed during a single nap. I am not sure why that nap snapped me out of my "fat mode" but I started thinking about other things. I have a little girl and she is my pride and joy. At the time she was 2 years old and I could not play with her. She would want me to chase her around the house and play hide and seek, and I just didn't have the energy. Her 65 year old grandfather could keep up with her and chase her, but her own father could not. I would blame it on work or travel (we will talk about that later as well) but the real reason was Daddy was fat. So I did some math. I was 28 when my daughter was born so I would be 46 when she graduates high school and 50 when she graduates college. The real question I had to answer was weather or not I wanted to be around to see those occasions and be there for my little girl. The answer was yes, but for some reason, my own mortality smacked me in the face and I realized if I did not change, I would be dead before I should be. I decided right then and there that I had to change and that I would not fail this time. Too much was riding on it.

## No Excuses

When I look back at why I have failed at my weight loss in the past, it was riddled with excuses. "It's hard", "I like the food I eat", "I can't eat healthy when I travel", "Gym memberships are expensive", "I don't have the time" and my favorite, "I'll start tomorrow." It is all too easy to find excuses and others to blame. When I failed, it was easy to find the excuse and blame someone other than the one who needed blaming, and that was me. To this day I love watching the news or any of the "investigative reports" on the nation's obesity problem. They are always looking to blame food producers or restaurants. Nobody ever bothers to hold people accountable for their own actions. Nobody is forcing people in those restaurants. Nobody forces them to order what they order. Nobody forces them not to exercise. In January of 2003 some people actually tried to sue McDonalds because they said that it was the fast food chain's fault they were fat. Needless to say a judge threw it out.

I came to the brutal realization that NOBODY CARES! While I can come up with all of the excuses I want, if I drop dead tomorrow because I am fat, other than my family, nobody really cares. The only person that should care is me. So, on July 11th, 2005, I decided, NO MORE EXCUSES!

"It's Hard" - NOBODY CARES!

"I like the food I eat" - Fine, be fat then

"I can't eat healthy when I travel" - Bull@#\$\$%

"Gym memberships are expensive" - Then do something else, walking is FREE.

"I don't have time" - Make time!

"I'll start tomorrow" - Start today, worry about tomorrow, tomorrow.

NO MORE EXCUSES! If I fail, it is because I did not have the discipline to do it, period, end of discussion. I even printed an 8.5 X 11 sheet of paper that says NO EXCUSES! And taped it to my bathroom mirror so I had to look at it every morning. I had to do this and I had to hold myself accountable to get it done.

## Focus

I was running with a group of people towards the end of my weight loss goal. We were talking about my progress and how I had done it. As I told them my story (the one you are reading) and why I had succeeded this time, one person summed it up for me. "You were focused on it." That really got me thinking and you know what, he was right.

I call July 11th, 2005 my rebirth, because my point of view and my focus changed. I couldn't just go into it half assed again this time. I had to do it right and I had to succeed. My priorities shifted and loosing the weight went right to the top. My family was number 2 and work moved from number 1 to number 3 (I can always get another job if need be, but I can't get another body.) Why was my family number 2? Well, they are important, but I could not use them as an excuse. I couldn't say, "I didn't have time to workout because I have to spend time with the family." My wife and I had a long talk about this and I told her that the focus would allow me to spend more time with the family long term, but there might be some sacrifices short term. We both agreed it was important enough and we would figure it out.

Now, I had priorities, but I did not know what the hell I was doing. I knew I wanted to loose weight, but I did not know how to loose weight and do it right. I know that was one of the major reasons I failed in the past, I just did not know how. Too many times we look to products or programs to tell us how to loose weight or we want someone to do the thinking for us. I realized that I had to learn how to loose weight and how my body worked. I wanted to learn everything I could. The Internet is a wonderful thing. There was a ton of great information and research done by nutritionalist and doctors. I would read as many articles as I could on the topic and see if everything matched. I learned about metabolism, fats, carbs, sodium, exercise, muscle structure, workout plans, menus, ect. I just absorbed everything I could so I understood not only how to do it, but why certain things worked. I have to give a ton of credit to WebMD ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)) as they had a ton of information that was accurate, backed by science and they were not trying to sell some product or weight loss program. I also highly recommend the book, *You: The Owners Manual*, as it had a ton of the science and reasoning as to how our bodies work and what they need.

All I thought about was loosing weight. How am I going to exercise?, how am I going to eat?, how am I going to track it?, how am I going to hold myself accountable? Some would say I was obsessed and they are probably right, but if I wanted to make this work this time, I had to be. I prioritized and focused.

## The Goal

I needed a goal, Just saying I was going to loose weight was not enough. How much weight? What was realistic? Could I actually do it? According to the charts, the ideal weight for my age and size should have been under 178. Yea right, 92 pounds less than what I weighed. There was no way in hell I was going to be able to loose 92 pounds. That was over 35% of my weight. It just seemed impossible and I was afraid that if the goal was unattainable, then I would not even try. I had a talk with my Dr. and I asked him what I needed to get down to so that the improvements were significant enough to "save my life." We agreed, that anything under 200 pounds was pretty good and that would significantly help my health and extend my life. OK, 70 pounds still seemed like a lot, but I had a goal ... to get under 200 pounds.

## The Bike

The research helped be decide how I was going to loose the weight. I had to eat less and exercise more, but I wanted to make sure I was choosing the right type of exercise. During one of my "weight loss failures" I had walked around the block for 30 minutes every day and I wasn't loosing anything. Well, I was, but not enough to really make a difference. I had to see what exercises I could do and where I would get the biggest burn. I committed to exercise 1 hour every day, but I wanted to get the most out of the hour. During my research, I found out how many calories we burn during popular exercises. Here is what I found.

	Approximate calories used by a 154-pound man	
<b>Moderate physical activities:</b>	In 1 hour	In 30 minutes
Hiking	370	185
Light gardening/yard work	330	165
Dancing	330	165
Golf (walking and carrying clubs)	330	165
Bicycling (less than 10 miles per hour)	290	145
Walking (3 ½ miles per hour)	280	140
Weight training (general light workout)	220	110
Stretching	180	90
<b>Vigorous physical activities:</b>		
Running/jogging (5 miles per hour)	590	295
Bicycling (more than 10 miles per hour)	590	295
Swimming (slow freestyle laps)	510	255
Aerobics	480	240
Walking (4 ½ miles per hour)	460	230
Heavy yard work (chopping wood)	440	220
Weight lifting (vigorous effort)	440	220
Basketball (vigorous)	440	220

The light walking I was doing was not making a big enough dent in the weight. So I looked for the 2 biggest burn activities, which were running and biking. Well, this was pretty easy, at 270 pounds, there was no way I could run. I researched and found out that runners put 3 times their body weight in stress on their knees and other joints, so that would mean my knees had to endure a force of 810 pounds if I ran. So biking it was, but I needed to get more aggressive, I committed to bike faster than 10mph so I could burn more in the same hour. So how aggressive? If I biked at 270 pounds for that same hour at a pace between 14-16mph, the calories I would burn in that hour would be around 1200. Ladies and gentlemen, I had a workout plan. Get up every morning and get on the bike for at least an hour.

I started out on a regular, run of the mill bike. I got a Raleigh Hybrid, so it is a cross between a mountain bike and a road bike. I could ride it on trails, but it did not have the knobby tires that made riding on smooth roads a pain. It has suspension to help make the ride smooth and it was comfortable. If I was not comfortable on the bike, then my chances of quitting riding it were going to go up, so I spend the money and got the right tools.

## One Day at Time

A pound of fat is approximately 3500 calories. It takes 3500 calories to burn it or 3500 calories of food to put it on. For me to drop the 70 pounds that I needed to, it was 245,000 calories. That

number seems huge and well out of reach to reduce it. Even biking and burning 1200 calories every time I went out meant it would take at least a year to burn that off, and you know what, if that is what it was going to take, then that is what it was going to take. What I ate was going to play a big part in there as well, but we will talk about that later.

The thought of working out for a year and biking every single morning could have gotten overwhelming. I had to prioritize and focus, but I had to focus on the now. Even though I had a great plan, I was afraid I would fall back into the problems I had for the last 9 years when I tried. How do I stay motivated to actually do this. I realized another reason I failed in the past was that I was focusing on way too many things (exercise, counting calories, measuring food, recording what I ate, ect) It was way too much work and I quit not because the exercise was hard, but because I was trying to do too much. I think that is a challenge that most of us face. It can get too overwhelming and we feel like there is no end in sight, so we give up. I know I did.

When I decided to get back on the program and actually do it this time, I had one simple principle, KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid.)

#### PHASE1 - My Eating

Now, after eating the junk for so many years, it is not like I was going to be able to "cold turkey" and give it up. I knew I would not be able to. So I had to take it one day at a time. On Monday, I will eat a healthy lunch. That's it, one simple goal. I will worry about Tuesday on Tuesday. After a week of healthy lunches, I added breakfast, then a week later it was dinner. I never worry about what I am going to eat tomorrow, just what I am going to eat today. After 3 weeks (and it was tough) I was in the habit of eating healthier.

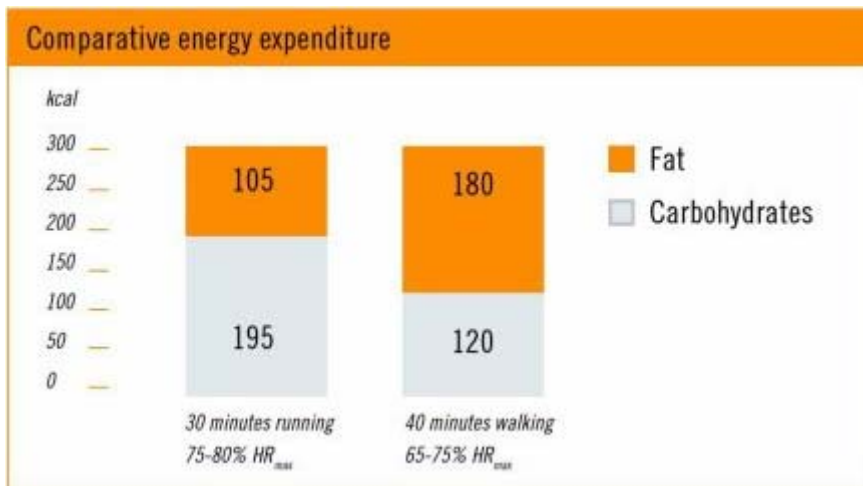
#### PHASE 2 - Get on The Bike

I knew that getting up at 5am to workout and still be to work by 8 was going to be tough. I dreaded the first day and I wondered how I was going to do it. Again one day at a time. On Monday, I got up and did my hour, I will worry about Tuesday on Tuesday. I never focused on the week or the month, just that day.

That was as complex as I was going to make it. Eat right one day at a time and exercise, one day at a time.

## You Gotta Have Heart

Actually, you gotta have a heart rate monitor. Now, there was a lot of gear that I used and tried during this whole quest, but if I had to pick the one thing that I could not have done it without, it was a heart rate monitor. Heart rate is a key indicator of your exercise level and to get the maximum calorie burn during my workouts, I needed to make sure I was working hard enough. But more importantly, I also had to make sure I was not working too hard. There is a heart rate zone where you will burn the most amount of fat and I needed to make sure I stayed in that zone. When you burn calories, your body uses fat and carbohydrates as sources of energy. The amount of fat burnt varies according to exercise intensity. Even though more calories burn at higher exercise intensity, the proportion of fat use of total energy expenditure is less than at lower intensities.



So, to make sure I stayed in that optimum fat burning zone, I needed a heart rate monitor to make sure I was not too low and not too high. To figure out your fat burn zone, here is the formula:

220 - your age. That gives you your max heart rate. Take 65% of that number and that is your low end. Take 75% of that number and that is your high end.

So for me, it looked like this:

220 - 30 = Max Heart Rate of 190bpm (beats per minute)

65% = 124bpm - don't go below

75% = 143bpm - don't go above

So I made sure that when I worked out, I stayed somewhere in that zone to get the most fat burn during my workout. Remember, my goal at this point was to get rid of fat, not athletic conditioning so depending on your goal, will depend on where you should be working out.

The other thing the heart rate monitor did was make sure I was adjusting my workout intensity as I got in better shape. As I lost weight and built muscle, the same speed I rode when I started at 270lbs would not get me up to my zone, so that meant I had to pick up the pace. Without that monitor, I would never have known that the same workout I did at 270lbs was not doing anything at 240lbs or even 220lbs. This constant monitoring allowed me to make adjustments in real-time and make sure that every workout counted.

I went for a bike ride with my wife the other day and we were going at a 15mph clip. That speed at 270 pounds would have kept me in my high end of my zone (143bpm) but at my current shape, I never got above 90bpm.

## Diets

I saw someone that I had not seen in a while in the store one day. They asked me which diet I was on. "None" I replied, "I have changed my lifestyle." It got me thinking about all of the diets. Atkins, South Beach, Weight Watchers? Have you tried them? There's still Sugarbusters, The Zone, Medifast, Just Fast, Richard Simmons Deal-a-Meal, the Eight Glasses of Water a Day, Lowfat, The Fat Flush Plan, Look Great Naked Diet. I know I had tried many of them and none of them worked for me. Now I am not saying they don't work, they just did not for me. And why you ask? It was a diet. We all think of a diet as a short term program, the quick fix to get the weight off and that is the mentality we go into a diet with. Here is an example. I did the Slim Fast "thing" once. I would make my shake every morning, but I knew it was a short term thing and I could never drink those things for the rest of my life. I was just going to drink them until I get the weight off, so it was not a lifestyle change.

So what is different now. I have gone into it this time knowing that I have to change my lifestyle. I have changed the way I eat for the rest of my life and I have changed my exercise habits for the

rest of my life. No fads, to "get slim quick" schemes, just common sense better eating and exercise.

## Love of the Ride

When I started riding the bike, I would just jump on, ride out for 10 miles turn around and ride home 10 miles to get a 20 mile ride in. I didn't care how long it took me and those first few rides were killers. But after just a few days, I fell in love with my early morning ride. I would time it so the sun was just coming up when I pulled out of the driveway and off I went. Yea, I was pedaling my brains out to make sure I was getting a good burn on the ride, but the ride was quite and it was all mine. Nobody could take that time away from me and I could focus on or think about whatever I wanted. I actually began to find that some of my best work was done on the bike. I could get tons of distraction free thinking done or even just set the world's problems aside and think about nothing.

I had a bike computer that would tell me my speed, distance and time. I started to look at the time it would take me to ride my 20 miles and after just a few weeks, that time was going down. I was getting in better shape, the pounds were coming off and I was going faster, and faster and faster. All of a sudden, it turned into a contest to see if I could bike the 20 faster this week, than I did last week.

This was about the time that the Tour de France was going on and Lance Armstrong was going for win number 7. Not sure if that was motivating me to go faster, but I remember watching him race thinking, "If this guy can beat cancer and bike 21 grueling days, then I can at least get my fat ass out there and get my 20 miles in."

After just a few weeks I started thinking of myself as a biker (they actually prefer cyclist, but I was not to that level yet.) I loved the ride and when I would travel, I would miss my rides and could not wait to get back to get on my bike and back to my 20 miles of freedom.

## Eating

So let's talk about one of my favorite subjects ... FOOD!

### *What I Used to Eat*

Oh, man, I almost make myself sick just thinking about this topic. Now that I am educated and have learned about nutrition and what happens to my body, I am blown away, but some of the things I would eat. Before I start, I want to let you know that at my ideal weight, my daily calorie intake should only be around 2200, this gets important in a second

Breakfast was really easy ... I never ate it. On most days, I like most Americans, I skipped breakfast. I was in a hurry and had things to do. Weekends I would eat breakfast as we would take one of the days and go out. I always acted like it was a treat and a license to eat whatever I wanted. I would get 2 eggs, bacon, toast, hash browns, biscuits & gravy. We would call it the go back to bed breakfast, because when we were done, I was so full, that I felt like I had to sleep it off. So how many of my 2200 were consumed by that breakfast? 1500 calories!

Lunch was all over the place. Most of the time it was some type of fast food. Everyone from the office always wanted to go out for lunch, so we would. I almost always got a cheeseburger and fries. The typical sit down restaurant burger and fries comes in at about 1400. Again, over half of my day. Or a McDonalds Big Mac (a usual for me) and large fries were 1000 calories. Not reasonable lunches by any means. Or sometimes when we were on the road and we went to a restaurant, I would order off the dinner menu and not a lunch portion.

Dinner was out of control. Mainly from a portion stand point. I would go to some places, get an appetizer, dinner and dessert. Here is a classic example:

Outback Steak House

- split aussie cheese fries with someone (1/2 order) - 1450 for just half of them

- salad with blue cheese dressing - 422 (it is all in the dressing)
- 12oz prime rib with loaded baked potato - 1000
- Dessert - Chocolate Thunder - 1220

That is almost 4200 calories in 1 meal. Twice what my body needs. So what happens to the other 2000 calories? It gets stored by the body as fat and added to the extra pounds I was carrying.

Now, let's take a typical day for me with no breakfast, McDonalds for lunch and Outback for dinner, that puts me 3000 calories (remember, 3500 is 1 pound of fat) extra for the day. It does not take too many of those days to get me up there in pounds.

Here were some other popular favorites

- 10 White Castle mini cheese burgers	1600 calories
- 1 full Charlie's Philly Cheese Steak another 700 calories for the fries	1660 calories
- Pizza Hut Pepperoni Lovers (4 slices)	1360 calories
- 24 Buffalo Wings	1920 calories
- 2 Cinnabon Cinnamon Rolls	1632 calories
- Burger King Double Wopper and King Rings	1640 calories
- Taco Bell (2 bean burritos, 2 soft tacos and meximelt)	1450 calories
- PF Chang's Spicy Chicken w/white rice	1400 calories
- Cheesecake Factory Mud Slide Cheesecake	1090 calorie

And the list could go on and on.

Then there was the issue with what I drank. I drank a lot of pop/soda. I would easily drink 6-8 cans of Mountain Dew a day. That's 880 calories in drinks with no nutritional value. Then there was beer. Man, I could knock them back with the best of them and I would. Now, I might have 1- 2 beers with dinner on a weeknight, but on the weekend, I could kill a 12 pack in nothing flat. That is over 1000 calories of empty calories (calories that have no nutritional value.) You start to add it all up and it was amazing that I was only 270.

So is it the food industries fault for providing foods that are so high in calories? Is it their fault that they give us portions that could feed 3 people and not just one? I ate at a Mangianos with some people in Chicago once. I ordered the chicken parmesan and there were 3 breaded chicken breasts on the plate. Now 1 would have been plenty, not 3. So who's fault is it? It's ours. We as consumers keep demanding more value for our money and we have forced the food industry to pile the plates high so we feel that we got a value. Also, we vote with our wallets and if people keep ordering high fat, high calorie foods, then they will keep making them. Look at Burger King. They understood the demand for their "bad for you" food that they made a breakfast sandwich called the *Enormous Omelet Sandwich* with 2 eggs, bacon, sausage, cheese on a bun. And as long as we keep buying it, they will keep making it. I can't blame them, they just want to make money like the rest of us. So nobody ever forced me to eat this food, it was my choice. There are healthy alternatives out there and in the next few sections we will look at what I did to find them.

I want to thank calorieking.com for creating a great food database that has the menus of over 250 restaurants. Go out and look up some of the popular foods you eat. It was a rude awakening for me.

## ***Cleaning House***

If I was going to start to eat right, I first had to deal with everything that was "eating wrong" in the house. I waited until my wife was gone, she had to work that weekend. I put my daughter down for her nap and I grabbed a trash bag. I started going through the refrigerator and threw out anything that was not healthy (pop, chip dips, snack foods, you name it.) I then moved to the freezer. All of the frozen pizzas, ice cream, mozzarella sticks, jalapeno poppers, pretty much anything that was breaded. Then I moved to the pantry and I started going to town there as well. Chips, crackers, candy, jars of peanuts, soups that were loaded with fat. I know what you are thinking, "nuts are good for you," and you are right, but I would sit down and eat the whole jar and I had to get them out of there if I was going to succeed.

When it was all said and done and 1 hour later, I had 3 full trash bags of food that had to go. The fridge, freezer and pantry were pretty much empty. I didn't even have enough to make a meal. We were going to have to start over. When my wife got home she pretty much went nuts. I had thrown out everything and done it without telling or asking her. I must have easily thrown away several hundred dollars worth of food including her sacred chocolate which she swore she would not be able to live without.

We then sat down and had a long talk about it. She knew I wanted to eat better and that I wanted to lose the weight, but she felt that this was too drastic a measure. Drastic times call for drastic measures and after 9 years of failing, I have to totally change the way I was going to go about this. Eventually she understood and agreed to help me. We had agreed to eat healthier together. We went to the store that night and started all over with fresh fruits and vegetables and lean meats. We had a hard time walking past all of the crap that we were used to buying, but we knew that we would probably never see those foods again and we had to do it.

## ***Fast Food***

Now, I want to spend some time talking specifically about fast food. McDonalds, Burger King, Wendy's, Taco Bell, gone. I took them all off my dining list. The food at these places is so high in calories and sugar, that even in moderation, it is not good for you. A great movie to see is [Super Size Me](#). It is a documentary of a guy who eats McDonalds for every meal for 30 days. You may not agree with it, but it will at least make you look.

I know what you are saying, McDonalds has salads though. Yes, but take a look at some of the nutrition information on their websites. First off, nobody just gets the plain salad, they think, I am getting a salad, I will get chicken on it as well. If you got the Bacon Ranch Salad with Grilled Chicken (they have a fried chicken one as well) that is 260 calories. Now, that does not seem like much, but 80 of those calories come from fat. This also does not include the salad dressing. That is another 170 calories 130 of those from fat.. If you look at the info, that salad has more calories and fat than an Egg McMuffin. Why, well, they want it to taste good and fat and sugar tastes good. I started looking at fat food web site and nutrition information. I compared what they had on the menus and I just decided, that there was no way I could lose weight and still eat at places like that.

Now, compare that to Subway. No, I am not on a Subway kick, but they cater to healthy eating. A six inch turkey sandwich without cheese is 280 calories and only 40 of those from fat (4.5 grams, half the fat from just the salad alone.) Now, that it is with Wheat bread and no mayo and don't get chips. Even their salads only come in at 140 calories. That is almost half the McDonalds salads. Now Subway and restaurants like it, I classify them as delis, are

everywhere. But again, a Subway can be dangerous if you go in and get a 12 inch meatball with extra cheese and everything on it (754 calories.) Now, I don't count calories and keep a daily log, it is too much work for me. But I use common sense and I compare. I know that a turkey sandwich is better for me than a double hamburger. But I use the data and the facts to make decisions for myself. I also know that when I started I gave up all fast food and by eating right and exercising, I have been losing weight. "But I am in a hurry." You can find plenty of restaurants that are quick, but you can eat healthy. Delis, Chinese, Sushi, or better yet, pack your own lunch. I am amazed by how easy they are to find when you look for them. I wanted to lose weight, no more crap, no excuses.

## ***Portions***

One of my challenges was not what I ate, but how much I ate. I might choose to use low fat beef when we made hamburgers, but I would eat 2 of them and not 1. Or when I would get a steak, I would go for the artery busting 32oz and not the 8 oz which was more than enough. I now laugh at the fact that I would buy the baked chips or low fat popcorn, but I would still eat the whole bag. I knew that my portion sizes were off, but I did not realize by how much. I started to research portions and had to learn that 4oz of meat was more reasonable and if I wanted to have the peanuts, that a few ounces were plenty, not the whole jar. Here are some examples of what normal portions should look like:

3 ounces of meat = deck of cards

3 ounces of fish = size of a hot dog bun

1 oz. of cheese = 4 stacked dice

½ cup ice cream = 1 racquet ball

1 cup pasta = 1 baseball

1Tbsp. peanut butter or cream cheese = size of three dice

1 oz. nuts = 2 shot glasses full

A medium apple or peach = 1 tennis ball

1 cup fruit = 1 baseball ½ cup rice or mashed potatoes = 1 racquet ball

1 medium potato = the size of a computer mouse

Now when you look at that and then look at what typical restaurants serve you, you can see how things could get out of whack. As consumers we demand the best value for our dollar and the food industry keeps piling it on so we can say, "look at how much food I got for \$15." One night on a business trip several of us went to The Cheesecake Factory. One of my colleagues ordered the meatloaf. It came out with 3 huge slices. At least 3 times a normal portion. There were also at least 6 cups of mashed potatoes on the plate as well. The bad news is that had I ordered that meatloaf during my "non-healthy" time, I would have finished the whole thing. That had to change.

## ***What Did I Eat?***

Now, before I start, I am not trying to tell anyone how to eat, I am just telling you what I ate.

Calories: As I have said before, I don't count calories or keep a food log to see how much I am eating (if you can do that, great, but I don't have the time or patience for it) but I am reading labels. There are a few things I am looking for when I read labels and compare foods.

Calories - how many total calories in a serving. Remember, 3500 calories = 1 pound of fat. Also the typical person only needs between 1500-3000 per day so anything over that is stored as fat. If you want to get a better gauge on how many calories you need per day, there are some great tools on the internet (I used the one on WebMD.com), but this will give

you a number for weight maintenance, and not loss, so keep that in mind. I need about 2500 calories. That does not include what I will burn with exercise, just what I need to get through the day.

Fat - I want to see how many grams of fat are in something and/or how many of the total calories come from fat.

Fiber - Fiber is good, so the more of it the better. Most of us do not get enough. We should be getting about 24-35 grams per day.

Protein - No, I am not on one of those protein only deals, but because of the level of exercise I am doing, I need the protein for good muscle health. Now you can have too much protein, so it is best to consult your physician to understand what is best for you, but the rule of thumb is to have .27g per 1pound of your ideal body weight (not what you weight, but what you should weight.) So for example, my ideal weight should be around 180, so I should not eat more than 48g of protein. It should like a lot, but once you start reading labels, it is not.

Sodium - Yep, salt, I look at the salt content and choose products or alternatives that are lower in salt. Food makers will use salt to make food taste better, but too much salt can lead to high blood pressure.

Sugar - If they don't use salt, they will use sugar to make food taste better.

So why do I look at all of this stuff. Simple, I want to make sure the calories I am consuming are nutritional and not loaded with fat, sugar and salt. I want foods that have fiber, protein and the nutrients that my body needs. Now, I am not looking for anything specific, but when I choose bread, I look for the lower calorie, highest fiber bread.

If you want to learn more on how to read nutrition labels, there is a great explanation from the FDA at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html>. Not sure what the nutrition info is on certain foods at [www.calorieking.com](http://www.calorieking.com).

So what do I eat ...

#### BREAKFAST

For me breakfast is really simple. I usually eat oatmeal. I choose Quaker's Wight Control Instant Oatmeal. It is high in fiber (6g), protein (7g) and is only 160 calories per serving. So I have a bowl every morning. Now, when I want a break from oatmeal or am on the road and need to eat, I will eat eggs, but not any eggs, Egg Beaters which is an egg substitute and I will tell you, I can't tell the difference. And at only 60 calories for 2 eggs, vs. 150 for 2 eggs, I made the switch. Also, Egg Beaters have no cholesterol. I have found that many restaurants have them if you just ask (they are usually not on the menu.) For example, we were at Bob Evans the other day and I asked, they had them so I just got 2 "beaters" scrambled with dry wheat toast. Egg Beaters even come in varieties and I get the Southwest which has peppers in it. Throw a little Tabasco in there and I have breakfast. I even fed them to my relatives without them even knowing and they could not tell the difference. Throw in some Turkey Sausage (found in the meat section) and you have a full breakfast. If you look at pork sausage, it comes in about 183 calories for 2 links and is 38% fat. Compare that to Turkey sausage which is only 131 calories for 2 links by only 18% fat. That is why I rarely have the sausage unless we have family in and they want it, but rarely do I eat it.

#### LUNCH

For lunch it is very easy, a turkey sandwich. Yep, just a simple turkey sandwich with lettuce and a slice of low fat cheese. Why, simple, the turkey comes in at about 60 calories a serving with .5g (1%) fat and 10g of protein. The low fat cheese is 70 calories, compare that to the normal 120 that most cheese slices are. A lettuce leaf is 2 calories. Now, no mayo, too high in

fat, so I either use mustard, which is 3 calories or I use buffalo wing sauce. It spices it up and the sauce is not bad, the fried wings are. A tablespoon is only 30 calories. I use FlatOut Wraps (their CarbDown version) instead of bread because the calories are lower (only 110 per wrap) and I found some that are really high in fiber. So add it all up and my sandwich is 275 calories. That goes a long way in creating a calorie deficit. Now when I travel, I get a turkey sandwich from a local deli, Subway, any restaurant or I have been know to order one from room service the night before to take with me the next day. This only works if you have a way to keep it cold.

#### DINNER

Now, if you are keeping score so far, you have seen that with just breakfast and lunch, I have only consumed about 500 calories of my 2500 that I need for the day. So for dinner, I eat whatever I want, but keep in reasonable. I watch the portions and the fat content. We eat a lot of vegetables and have cut all of the fat out of our meals. We also do a lot of Asian/stir fry type meals. Why, because I like rice and it is about 260 calories for 1 cup of cooked rice and 0 fat, so it fills me up and is good for me. Throw some veggies on top of that and you have a meal under 500 calories. For meat we eat lots of chicken, turkey and fish. That does not mean I don't eat a steak every so often, but I eat an 8oz fillet since it is the leanest steak and the portion is small. One challenge people have is finding low calorie recipes to cook and still providing some variety. Well, we use the FoodTV.com website and have found tons of great ideas. When we do go out, I choose items that are healthier and if I don't know, I ask. Many restaurants are getting better about catering to people who want to eat better. For example, I was at an Asian restaurant and saw that they had a spicy chicken dish that looked good. I asked if the chicken was fried, it was, but I asked if I could get it not fried and they were able to do that, I just had to ask. When I order vegetables as a side, I ask how they are prepared. Many places with put a ton of butter and salt on them and if you ask, you can usually get them without anything on them. You just have to be smart.

#### DESSERT

I almost never eat dessert anymore. Why, because I don't need it. However, there is that rare occasion, when I have a sweet attack and need something to curb that sweet craving. So what do I grab? Some fruit and fresh fruit, no canned stuff because it has too many preservatives and sugar syrups in them. We always have some apples, oranges, bananas, pears or something around for the sweet attack. Now, my wife gets a chocolate attack so we had to find something for her to help that problem. Well, Jell-O now makes a Sugar Free Pudding Cup that uses Splenda and is only 60 calories. So she can get her fix and not blow the calories out of the water.

#### DRINK

Now, what do I drink, easy, water. Why? Water has 0 calories, 0 fat, 0 sodium and 0 sugar. No, pop/soda, no beer, tea, juice, just water. There are a ton of theories as to how much water you should drink and nobody seems to know, so I just drink as much as I want without feeling bloated. Currently, I drink about 100oz of water per day (about 12 glasses) and that includes what I drink while I work out, so I am sweating some of that. Now, many people like the diet sodas but I don't and water is for the most part free. I have a water filter on the tap and just get my water that way. I refuse to buy the bottled water, just because it is expensive.

#### SNACKS

Yes, I get the munchies and sometimes need to snack or need something in between meals. What I have learned is to be smart about it. As we are keeping score, even in I have a dinner coming in at 1000 calories, I still have a 1000 calorie deficit before I add in my work out. So I look for snacks that are under 100 calories and you know what? I found quite a few. One of my first was popcorn. It is my biggest weakness. I love the stuff, but I found that Orville Redenbacher makes their singles bags in 94% fat free and they are only 100 calories for the single person bag. Next were Kashi Granola Bars\_(found with other granola bars.) They are only 130 calories and they are lower in fat, salt and sugar than any of the others I have found,

but they are higher in fiber and protein than any of the others. Another snack I found were soy crisps. They are like rice cakes, but they are made from soy protein. Now I know what you are thinking, they must taste terrible. Actually they don't. They come in great flavors such as BBQ, Nacho, Ranch, White Cheddar, and many others. The ones I have found are either made by Quaker or GeniSoy and will be in the health food section and not the chip aisle. I can eat about 17 crisps (a cereal bowl full) for under 100 calories and it cures my snack fix. I even put them in a bowl and set them out at a party. I didn't tell anyone what they were, but everyone was eating them instead of the regular potato chips that were set out. Compare that to the 1200 calories that an 8oz bag (small snack size) of potato chips come in at. I also make sure we always have some cut up veggies (carrots, celery, cauliflower, peppers) in the fridge for snacking. A handful of baby carrots (10 of them) are only 35 calories.

#### PORTIONS

For me it is all about the portions. Now, let me use my soy crisps for example, yes, they are only 100 calories for about 17 crisps, but if I eat the whole bag, then I just consumed almost 400 calories vs. the 100 for the smaller portion. A 32oz Porterhouse come in at a busting 2800 calories (already more than my daily allowance) but an 8oz fillet is only 600 calories.

So now that we are done, I have between a 700-500 calorie deficit every day. Now I exercise and burn another 1000 calories per day and that is how I have dropped the weight. Now, here is what is cool, how hard will it be to maintain the weight once I have it off? Not hard at all. The ratios and the math stay the same. I can make some adjustments in my workout and keep eating the same, or I could add an occasional beer or cheeseburger back in, but as long as I keep the calories burned in line with the calories consumed, then the weight can stay the same.

Again, I don't keep a daily log of what I eat and count calories to the extreme, but I look at labels and try to do some quick math in my head and keep it simple.

### ***Eating Healthy on the Road***

I travel for a living. I spend about 50% of my time on the road in airports, hotels bouncing from once city to another. I am in a different city every day, up early, to bed late. I have done this for the last 9 years and it was my number one excuse. "I can't eat healthy on the road, I have tried and you just can't do it."

Bull#\$%@. That is just an excuse.

You can eat healthy on the road. It is not easy, but nobody ever said this weight loss thing was going to be easy. So what did I do? Well, let us break this down.

First, NO FAST FOOD! Please see above if you need to review why.

#### Breakfast

I used to head right down to the hotel restaurant and get myself a nice big breakfast. Breakfast after all is the most important meal of the day right? So I would get 2 eggs, bacon, hash browns and toast and start my day of with a mind blowing 1000+ calories right off the bat. When I started to actually pay attention to the menus I found that I could easily eat healthy. They had oatmeal or yogurt or fruit or any combination of the 3. If I wanted eggs, I could either get just egg whites or just have a couple eggs, but did I need the bacon or potatoes. I have even started traveling with some instant oatmeal packets in my suitcase. Most hotel rooms now have a coffee maker (I just use it to boil water) or even tap water is hot enough. If am in a hurry, I find a local coffee shop, they usually have fruit. Heck, I think the rule is there has to be a Starbucks every 1000 feet by state law. It has nothing to do with, "I can't find it," it is discipline not to eat the really great tasting fat stuff.

#### Lunch

My biggest problem with lunch is that I would get busy and sometimes skip lunch. Bad idea. If you get in the habit of that, your body thinks it is starving and lowers your metabolism to start to save energy. You don't have to have a huge lunch and if you are in a hurry you can always find someplace to get a sandwich. When I am in big cities, I can always find a deli and if I know where I am going to be when I am traveling, I can use the internet to find a Subway or Blimpie. I have even been known to call room service the night before and get a turkey sandwich to take with me the next day (only works if you have a place to keep it cold, but you get the idea.) Convenience is not an excuse for eating poorly.

### Dinner

When I started out, I thought this was going to be the hardest part of the day. On the contrary, I found this to be the easiest meal to control. Why? Because every restaurant has the ability to cook healthy and most of them do. You just have to look at the menu. When you are trying to find a restaurant, ask to see the menu before you are seated. If you can't find anything, find another restaurant. Once seated, skip past the chili cheese fries and look for the meals that are healthier. Again, I don't count calories, but I know that the grilled chicken or salmon is going to be better for me than the full slab of ribs. Many of the restaurant chains will even tell you on the menu which are the healthier meals. If you are in a non chain and you are not sure, just ask. "Hey, I am trying to loose weight and eat healthy, what do you recommend?" It is even OK to ask how things are prepared. "How is that salmon prepared? Oh, with a butter sauce, can I get it without that? Can I get the salad dressing on the side? Can I get the butter and sour cream for my potato on the side? Get water to drink and not 6 beers. When they bring the desert menu, don't even look at it or ask them NOT to bring the desert tray around.

### Airports

If there is ever a place where it is difficult to eat healthy, the airport is it. I will admit, there are times when even I can't find anything healthy at the airport. Now, most major airports will have a deli somewhere. The challenge is finding it or if you have enough time to walk a mile to find it. So in these cases I always have a backup plan. I always have some granola bars or some dried fruit or something in my bag. That way if I can't find anything, I can at least slam down something before I get on the flight. Convenience is not an excuse for eating poorly.

### Room Service

Yes, there are those times when I have to order room service. I get in late and I am running out of time. I have even chosen hotel room service so I can eat and still get my workout in. Just like any other restaurant, you have to be smart about the menu and ask questions. I can always find a chicken sandwich on a menu. I just ask if it is fried or grilled, no mayo and if it comes with fries, leave them off the plate please (if you bring them, I will eat them.) Every room service menu I have ever seen has a salad. They question is, what is on it. Ask and get dressing on the side.

Yes, this takes work and it was hard, but I hated being fat more than I hated having to work to find healthy food.

## **The Start of Loss**

When I started this whole quest, I had no clue how long it was going to take me to get under 200 pounds. It had taken me years to get that heavy so I expected it to take me years to get the weight off. Still, I was determined to make the change no matter how long it took. The first few weeks were amazing. The weight came flying off. I think I lost 15 pounds in the first 3 weeks alone. Now, most of this was water weight as my body began to adjust, but either way, it was very motivating. It became a daily ritual to get on those scales and see progress and that was what was important to me, even if it was a little progress. Every pound that came off, was one more pound closer to the goal. Eating right was a big help, but aggressive exercise was the key. Getting up every morning and riding that bike for my 20 miles was burning 2-3 pounds per week.



Though this analogy is backwards, I was the snowball picking up speed on the way down the hill, but instead of getting bigger I was getting smaller and that feeling fueled me every single morning to keep going one more day and 1 more pound.

People began noticing the change. It was a great feeling to have people commenting on the loss or how good I was looking. And when people began noticing, I was only half way there. Just wait until I hit the end goal! That began to drive me to work even harder and focus even more to make sure I was moving in the right direction. You could say I was addicted to the praise, but who isn't. We all love it when someone says something nice about you, just instead of having them comment on my job or my car or my clothes or a million other things we buy so people can comment on them, I wanted them to comment on how different I looked. I wanted them to say, "Man, did you see LaMee, he looks great, how did he do it." Right or wrong, it just became more fuel

to make sure I stayed on task as keep losing 1 pound at a time, one day at a time.

In October of 2005, only 4 months into the new lifestyle, I was down to 220. I had lost 50 pounds! Now, I am in sales and I work remotely, so my co-workers are scattered throughout the US and work remote as well. They did not know I was doing this, so when I strolled into a company meeting 50 pounds lighter, everyone noticed, and everyone said something. At one point, I actually broke down and cried because the truth had come out about how worried everyone was about my health and how happy they were that I was changing and how inspired they were by my focus and dedication. There were several other co-workers that had struggled with weight just as I had and were now asking me for advice and wanting to make the change themselves. If the pressure was not on to succeed before, it was now. This was also about the time I started a blog (Web Log.) I needed another tool to help force me to focus and to commit, so I used this web diary to document how I was doing and to post my weight stats on a weekly bases. It forced me to focus every week and every day so I could post a smaller number every week on that website. If you are reading this story, chances are you have seen the site, but it was amply titled, [www.getonthebike.com](http://www.getonthebike.com).

## Racing

So now I was eating better and starting to exercise, but I needed something to work for. I needed something to force me to get out of bed every morning and get on the bike and something to think about when I wanted so badly to pull into the closest fast food joint and grab the biggest burger I could. I decided I had to commit my self to something that had a date on it that I had to work towards. I decided to sign up for GOBA (Great Ohio Bike Adventure.) It is an 8 day bike tour throughout Ohio. You ride between 50-60 miles per day. You bike from city to city and camp every night, then get up and do it all over again. This is not really a race as all you really have to do is get to the next city. At 270, I figured that sounded like a good goal. If I could lose the weight and get in shape to ride 50-60 miles per day, then that was a win in my book. So why is this chapter titled racing? Well, after 3 months of riding, I was ready for GOBA, I had lost 40 pounds and was in good enough shape that I could easily ride those distances in a day for 8 days. I needed to re-evaluate my goal and find something a little more aggressive.

That was when I talked to a good friend of mine named Rich. Rich several years back had done the same thing and lost a ton of weight and now he was doing Triathlons. Rich had been egging me on to get into Triathlons as well, but I never dreamed that I could even do it. He suggested

that I start out with a Duathlon. It is similar to a Triathlon, just no swim, so you run, then bike, then run some more. I figured I had the biking down, I just had to refine that, get a race bike and start running. I thought about it for several days. In my mind, that was a big commitment. I did not want to fail and I did not want to set myself up with a goal that I could not reach. I was afraid that if I did, I would just tumble downhill and go back to my "fat and don't care" attitude. I then realized that I can do anything I put my mind to. If I want to do it, then I need to commit and do everything I need to do to move towards that. I decided that I was going to at least commit to a Duathlon and then see about a Triathlon if I could do the Duo. My goal was not to win it, but to finish. That in itself would be a great accomplishment.

The first thing I had to get was a new bike. My Hybrid (cross between a street and mountain bike) was fine for the leisurely ride, but to race, I was going to need a road bike. I went to my local bike shop, dropped some cash and walked away with a Giant OCR1 road bike. It weighed half what my other bike did and man it was fast. I still got up every morning and did my ride, but now I doubled the route I was riding and started to focus on doing it faster and faster and faster.

The next thing I had to do was address the running. The last time I had run was in high school and I was slow and not very good at it. We had to run laps for football and I was always dead last and when I came in, I was breathing so heavy, that the coaches thought I might drop dead. And that was supposedly the best shape of my life. Up to this point, I had just been walking briskly on treadmills, so I started adding a few short runs in there. I would walk for 15 minutes, run for 5 and walk for another 10 minutes. I slowly started adding 5 minutes until I could run at about 4-5mph for the full 30 minutes. At this point, it was starting to get cold in Ohio and I was not able to bike outside as much as I used to. I had brought the bike indoors and put it on a trainer (device you hook up to the back tire of the bike and you can ride it indoors) but it was not the same and this gave me a variety in my workout.

I started a countdown to my first race and to watch the days disappear. This created a great sense of urgency. I knew I could not waste a single day. Every day I did not workout or fell off the eating healthy wagon, was a day I could not get back before the race, and I was going to be damned if I was going to fail to finish this race.

## First 10K

In November of 2005, I was down to around 215, quickly approaching my goal of 200. We were planning on spending Thanksgiving with my sister. She had called me to let me know that she



and her husband were running in a 10K race Thanksgiving morning, so we would have dinner a little later in the afternoon. She had not called to ask me to run; just to tell me when dinner would be served, but it got me thinking if I could do a 10K. Now, I had been running on treadmills up to this point, but only for 30 minutes at a time. 10K is 6.2 miles and I was barely finishing 3. I called her back and asked if I could join them that morning. I told them they did not have to run with me, because I did not want to slow them up, but I wanted to see if I could do it. I then started increasing my run to 40 minutes, then 50, then 1 week before I set the treadmill to 6.2 miles to see if I could do the whole thing, and I could. I had done it at a 12 minute mile pace, 1 hour and 15 minutes.

I couldn't sleep the night before; I was so nervous and excited. Most people never run a 10K, and I was going to do it only 5 months and 65 pounds after my "rebirth." I have to thank my sister from the bottom of my heart. She ran cross country in high school and knew how to run, but she

had agreed to run with me and go at whatever pace I set. It was cold that morning at 32 degrees and I thought I was nuts for being out in the cold, let alone running 6.2 miles.

We started out at a pretty moderate pace. I wanted to finish not see how fast I could run. We were amazed when we hit the first mile marker and we were on an 11 minute pace. Not only was that faster than I trained, but the course was hilly so we were going up hill for the first mile. We turned it into a game to see if we could stay at that 11 minutes. After the first 4 miles, we were under the 11 minute pace. We were getting faster and faster. My sister was blown away that her formerly fat brother was actually doing this and doing it at a pretty good clip. Each mile became 1 less I had to run and I kept looking up the road trying to see the next mile marker. When I saw the 5 mile marker, I knew I only had 1.2 left and I would have completed my first 10K run. I am not sure if it was conditioning, or adrenaline or the Gatorade, but my legs felt great and I still had some "juice" left. My sister was doing good with the pace and happy with it. I told her I wanted to leave nothing on the course and asked her if I could pick up the pace and go on as fast as I could to the finish. She smiled and told me to go for it, and I was off, pouring every last bit of energy I had into every step, every motion. Crossing that finish line was one of the best feelings in my life and goes into the top 5 greatest feelings of all time for me. It was even better that my brother in law and his running friends were standing there waiting for me and we had high-fives all around. I did it in 1 hour and 4 minutes. That was a 10:19 minute per mile pace. Almost 2 minutes per mile faster than I trained. We then packed back into the car; headed home and got ready for some turkey ... I earned it that day.

## On the Road

I have a job that has me traveling quite a bit. 50% of the time actually. It was actually one of my excuses and a common excuse that fellow road warriors have. I knew that eating right and exercising on the road would be hard, but I couldn't do then 50% of the time when I was home, I had to make this work on the road as well.

We already talked about eating on the road earlier, so let me talk about working out on the road. It was hard, I won't lie. I had to get up early to get to client meetings and presentations. I was already getting up at 6am to get ready for meetings and then had dinner meetings or was on a plane that evening, so when was I going to get a workout in? Again, it had to become a priority so it did. I started getting up earlier and if that meant a 4:45am wakeup call so I was on the treadmill by 5am, then that is what it took. If it meant giving up going out for a drink with the guys and going back to the hotel for a quick 30 on the treadmill, then that is what I did. Most times, it was the first thing I did when I got to the hotel. Instead of unpacking the laptop and checking email real quick, I would throw the bags down, change my clothes and head off to workout to get it in, done and over with. If I needed to ask everyone to bump dinner back 30 minutes so I could do that, then I did and everyone was real supportive. I made sure that I worked out at least 30 minutes every day. If I had a day that I absolutely couldn't (and there were quite a few) then I made sure I ate really well that day and worked out 1 hour the next day. Remember, I am now training for a race, so every day counts.

I also had to get creative with my workouts. There were many hotels that did not have workout facilities or they were not open that early. My favorites were the hotels that wanted to charge you \$25 per day to use their workout equipment. Thanks, but no thanks, I will find alternatives. One of the best things for me was the YMCA. Now I am a Y member at home and therefore I can go and visit other Y's in the US. I would do my research ahead of time and figure out where they were and call to make sure that I could visit. Some have restrictions on the number of visits as a "guest" per year. My next alternative was running ... anywhere. I would ask the hotel about running routes and it was amazing how many parks nearby or plotted out routes had around the city. I just had to ask. In Las Vegas, I wanted to avoid the \$35 per day charge to use the workout facility (I guess they really want you gambling, not working out) and I ended up running for an hour in the parking garage. It was well lit and had security and the ramps up to all of the levels made for a great workout. My most creative was at a conference in Seattle. The workout facility

was jammed every morning and I didn't feel like waiting in line to use the equipment. I went down to the front desk and asked if I could workout in the stairwells. Once they stopped looking at me funny and I explained what I wanted to do, they had no problem with it, so that is what I did that week. Went up and down the stairs of my hotel, all 35 of them. One morning I came back from my stairs workout and my roommate (they always make you room with someone for these conferences) asked if I went swimming. I thought it was an odd question, until I realized I was dripping sweat all over the carpet. "Nope, did the stairs again," I told him between gasps. "How many times," he asked. "Up and down 6 times." Chris was better at math than I was and he quickly fired back, "Um, that's 210 flights up, which is more than the Sears Tower." Not a bad workout and it was free. On a side note, when I got back home the increased power I had on the bike was noticeable and my speed jumped. Stairs were on my regular workout schedule.

The key was to get creative and think about working out. I had to plan and that meant researching and choosing hotels that had workout facilities. Now I even look for the ones that you have access to 24 hours a day so I can get up early if need be.

I actually found that I was losing more weight on the road than I was at home. When I was on the road, I only had 2 things to focus on; weight and work. When I was at home I had to add family and the day to day activities that went with it. Funny how my greatest excuse turned into my greatest success.

## New Clothes

It only took about 30 pounds before my clothes didn't fit anymore. And I don't mean a little loose, I mean, pants falling down, don't fit anymore. My wife kept laughing at my "clown clothes." Just as I did with the food, it was time to get rid of my fat clothes. They had to go. In the past I would have put them up, just in case I needed them again, but not this time. We got out the trash bags



and started bagging up all of the clothes that did not fit. When I was done, I had 3 shirts that I wore in college that still fit. Everything else was in trash bags. Now, I did not throw them away, but I gave them to charity. The key was they were gone! If my new pants started feeling tight, then I wanted it to be a reminder to get back at it and not be able to fall back to my other pants.

The dilemma was how much to buy. I knew I was still going to keep losing so I didn't want to buy a bunch of clothes just to get rid of them too. So the wife and I went shopping and we got 2 pairs of jeans, 2 pairs of dress slacks, 3 dress shirts, 5 casual shirts, and 8 pair of underwear. That meant I was going to be doing laundry all of the time (including on the road.) But that was the price of success. For the first trip for clothes, I went from a men's 44 pant to a men's 38 pant. I went from a men's 3XL shirt to a men's XL shirt. THAT WAS SO COOL! For the first time I actually enjoyed buying clothes and I did not have to go to the "big and tall" store or department to find anything that fit. All of a sudden I could buy clothes that were fashionable. I looked better and I dressed better, and you know what, I felt better. It was more fuel to keep at it to get down another size.

## "What you do not measure, you cannot improve."

I saw that quote and I fell in love with it. When we are trying to lose weight (fat really, I have never heard anyone tell me they want to lose some muscle) how do we measure our progress ... the scales. I like the scales and I use the scales, but it is not the only measurement I use. Why? Because scales can lie! I know we have all yelled and cursed at a set of scales before. I used to always hear my wife scream from the bathroom, "YOU LIAR!" When she did not trust the scales. Well scales should not be the only measure, because they tell you how much you weigh, but how much of what? Our body weight can fluctuate on a daily basis due to many factors that

are not fat. For example, I have seen 2 pound swings from day to day and many times it has to do with the fact that I ate something really salty and my body is retaining some more water to help process that salt and it is not 2 pounds of fat. So how did I measure my progress? With 3 tools actually ...

1. Scales. They are the fastest and quickest way to gauge progress. It takes me 3 seconds to jump on them in the morning and they tell me if I have gone up or down. I weigh myself every morning when I first get up. It does not matter when during the day you weight, but you want to be consistent. I weight more in the evening than I do in the morning (not surprising because I have eaten all day) so if I weighed at different times each day, then the weights will vary and I do not get consistent results. I want to make sure I am making progress. The next thing is that I always use the same scales. I don't want to keep using different scales all of the time because I don't want to have to try to factor in if they are the same as at home. The scales at home my be 2 pounds off from the scales at the gym, so I want to use the same scales so I am not discouraged by an accuracy problem with the scales. Mine at home may be 2 pounds off, but then I know every morning when I step on them that they are 2 pounds off.

2. Measuring Tape. And no, not the measuring tape out of the toolbox. A measuring tape designed for measuring body measurements (found at any sewing supply store for \$3.) I take my measurements every Sunday. It is too time consuming to do it every morning since I usually have to get help from my wife so I know it was done properly and that I measure the same way week to week. Why is measuring important? Well, the scales may say that I have not lost any weight for the week, but I could have lost fat and replaced it with muscle (that is still progress) so by looking at the measurements I can see if I am truly stuck or still making progress. I had a two week span where I did not loose a pound, but I had lost ½ and inch from my waist and increased my leg diameter by ¼ inch (because of muscle) so while I had not lost pounds, I knew I had lost fat which is the goal.

3. Body Fat Percentage Scales. If you have to get new scales, you might as well shell out the extra \$30 and get a set that can also tell you your body fat percentage. That comes back to the idea of I weight 193 pounds right now, but 193 pounds of what (Fat, Muscle, Bone, Water.) I am at about 27% body fat right now and would like to get that between 15%-20%. They are pretty cool as they shoot a current (you don't feel a thing) up one leg and back down the other and based on how much fat you have in your body, it tells how long it takes (or something like that I think.) Either way, it works and I can then see what I weigh, how much of that is fat and the one I have will tell me how much of that is water so I can see if I am retaining (my wife loves that feature so she knows what a 2 pound fluctuation really is.) You can also get calipers or if you belong to a gym that either have the scales or have the tools to measure your body fat for you, which is fine as well. There are also some body fat calculators on the internet that can give you a rough estimate based on your measurements. Not as accurate, but if you don't want to have to replace your scales it is a good alternative.

Between these tools, I had a pretty good idea if I was heading in the right direction.

## December 18th, 2005

I will remember this Sunday morning for the rest of my life. I woke up that morning stepped on the scales and they read 199. I yelled so loud that I think the entire neighborhood heard me.



After only 5 months and 7 days, I had lost 71 pounds and hit my goal to get under 200. My pants size went from a men's size 44 to a size 36 (5 sizes). My cholesterol went from 184 to 132. My blood sugar is 1/3 what is was (I can't remember the exact numbers.) I had put 1092 miles on my bike

(that is the distance between Columbus, OH and Austin, TX.) I had run 80 miles (that is the distance between Columbus, OH and Cincinnati, OH.) I had accomplished what I set out to do. The only problem ... I still had 3 months until my first bike race. I knew I would keep riding and running to get ready for that race. I knew that I still had some more weight that I could lose. I proved I knew how to lose it. Time to up the ante.

I decided to go for 180. I felt like I could lose another 20 pounds. I knew the last 20 would be harder to lose, but I had come this far and there was no stopping me. So that morning I made a commitment and I went downstairs and got on the bike and kept at it.

## Winter

I live in Ohio and that means I have a cold hard winter that I have to deal with. Once it started to get cold, I had to figure out how I was still going to workout and train. I bundled up and biked as far into the fall as I could but eventually it just got too cold and I couldn't do it anymore. I knew I couldn't stop and "it's cold" is just another excuse. One of the first things I did was to buy a bike trainer that mounts on the back wheel of the bike and allows you to ride it indoors. It helped, but it wasn't the same. I could only take about 30 minutes of that before I just wanted off it. Pedaling my brains out to go nowhere. I still kept running on the treadmill, but same problem, I just got bored. I realized that I needed to make sure I was mixing up my exercise so that I didn't get bored. I realized the winter time was a great opportunity to start some weight training. I knew I would need the increased muscle to provide more power on the bike. I also started learning to swim since I knew eventually I would have to swim at least half a mile in my first Triathlon. Now I knew how to swim, or should I say, I knew how to not drown, but I needed to become a swimmer (Thanks to Rich for all of his coaching and help.) I started using elliptical machines and stairs. I just tried to mix it up so I was still burning fat, but not getting bored.

Whenever I had to travel, I tried to book trips that took me south to warmer weather. We even went to Florida for a week to visit my wife's grandparents. I ran every morning until I could run no more just for the chance to run outside again. I forced myself to keep at it and watch the scales and the pounds kept coming off.

## The Complete 180

On February 21st, 2006, that number has several meanings. I stepped on the scales that



morning and the read 180. It took me 2 months to drop the last 20 pounds. It took me 7 months and 10 days to lose 90 pounds. I dropped another pants size and was now in men's 34s. I had to get smaller shirts and now go with a men's large, but some of them were a men's medium. To lose the 90 pounds I had gotten rid of 315,000 calories through better eating and exercise. And I was in the best shape of my life

The 180 number had another meaning for me ... it signified the 180 degree turn that I had made in

my life. I choose to make a change and I stayed focused and committed to my goal. I was surprised by the results and was embarrassed that I had waited 9 years to even try to lose it.

Once more goal to go, and that's the race. I had 47 days left to get ready to give it my best show. Now it was time to finish the training. Time to get back on the bike.

## Training

Now that I had the weight off, I did not focus so much on losing weight, but maintaining weight. That was a rude awakening for me. Were I was used to limiting my food by 500 calories, now not only did I need to add that 500 back, but I needed to eat enough to fuel the workouts I was doing. I had to learn to eat all over again. It felt weird the first few weeks and I felt like I was gorging myself. When we would cook fish, I was having twice as much as I used to and I was eating 3-4 times the vegetables I was used to. I still stuck with healthy foods, but I had to adjust the quantities.

My first race was a Duathlon (Run and Bike.) It was going to be a 6 mile run and a 13 mile bike. No big deal as I had already done a 10K (6.2 mile run) and I was biking 20-30 miles a day, but I had not been doing both of them together. A race like that takes a couple of hours to do so I had to be able to sustain a good pace and have the endurance to finish. That and I wanted to see how well I could do. I knew I could not win it, but I wanted to move as high up the standings as I could. I started working out for at least one hour and tried to get in an hour and a half if I could. I then started reading and researching training plans. Some fellow triathletes had recommended the book, *The Triathlete's Training Bible* and if you are thinking of doing a multi-sport race, I highly recommend it. It gave me the tips and tools I needed and while I was not training to be a professional athlete, I wanted to get the most out of my efforts.

2 weeks before the race, I was training for several hours a day. I was focused on giving the race my best. That week, I worked out for over 12 hours and had put over 100 miles on the bike, I had run over 15 miles and burned over 6000 calories. I think my wife was going to kill me as I was a man obsessed, but I was a man on a mission and that mission was to cap off this amazing transformation with the best race I could. I had gotten down to 175lbs (95 pounds lost) and I was truly in the best shape of my life. I was down to 13% body fat, so I was now a lean mean, racing machine.

## The Race

April 9th, 2006. It was a cold morning in Toledo Ohio. It was only 34 degrees when I got up that morning and I knew it was not going to get much warmer. There was no wind that day and since the bike was my strangest part, that was good news. My first race was a Duathlon, so that was running and biking since it was too cold to swim. The race was going to be a 2 mile run, then a 6.5 mile bike, then another 2 mile run, another 6.5 mile bike and finally a 2 mile run. That was a total of 6 miles of running and 13 miles of bike. I had been training pretty hard up to that point to make sure I could do it and I knew that finishing was not a problem. The question was, how would I do?

We got to the race about 7:30am and started getting setup. I picked up my race number and got my bike setup in my transition area. My wife was along to help me get setup, take pictures and be my cheering section. Since I had never done anything like this before, I just watched how some of the other racers had setup and just followed their lead. This was a smaller race with only about 50 people participating. At 8:00am I started my warm-up and just did a little jog to settle my nerves and get everything loose. So far, the knee felt good and I was starting to get comfortable. At 8:25am we all lined up at the starting line. I moved towards the back to get out of the pack since I was not sure how fast everyone around me would go.

The horn sounded and we were off. I started at my normal pace and kept towards the back, but that only lasted for a few minutes. The legs felt good, the adrenaline was pumping and I picked up my pace. I started passing people and moved up towards the middle and found some open space in the course to settle in, get my rhythm and enjoy the race. Even though it was cold, I



sign. The catch was to stay calm and make sure I had enough for the bike. As I approached the transition area, I was really getting excited. My favorite and strongest part had been the bike and I was about to find out how good I really was.

The transition from the run to the bike had not been the smoothest part of my race, but I did not let it get to me. I stayed calm and focused and just tried to make sure everything was smooth and that I did not forget anything. I changed into my bike shoes, put my helmet on and jogged over to the bike mount area. I got myself clipped in and I was ready.

I started off in a lower gear, but had my cadence (number of times the pedals go around) pretty high. I was doing about 18mph coming out of the transition area. I got out on the open road, the legs felt well so I geared up and began my chase. There were about 5 other riders just ahead of me and I was coming up on them pretty quick. These were some runners that were obviously better at the run than I was, but probably not as strong on the bike. I noticed that they were in



higher gears, but their cadence was not as high, so they were working hard to grind the pedals. I moved over to the left and began my pass of this group. I looked down and was doing 21mph. Once I got past that group, I looked at my cadence and it was 111 and I knew I had some power in reserve, so I geared up again and began my chase of the next group. For me, it turned into a game; who can I catch next. I saw about 10 riders all packed together up ahead. I realized it would take me forever to try to slowly weave through them, but as I looked up ahead, there was open road in

front of this group, so the faster I could get by, the more room I had. I decided that I could turn up the juice, get through them, and then relax a little on the open road. So that was my plan. I bore down on them like a bat out of hell, got the bike up to 25mph, and screamed "on the left."

Everyone moved over and I flew by. I even noticed that some of these guys were on \$4000 and \$5000 bikes, and I just blew by them. That got my adrenaline flowing. I was starting to find out how good I really was. No, I wasn't going to win this thing, but for my first race out, and having just lost 95 pounds, I was kicking ass. I stretched out, got in as aerodynamic a position as I could and just found my rhythm on the bike. The bike and I became one. I know that sounds weird, but it felt like I was born on the thing. I had never felt as comfortable on anything in my life. I felt no pain, no cold, nothing, just the drive to go faster and catch someone else. I looked down to see how far I had gone and I had just completed 4 of the 6.5 miles in this segment. All of a sudden I felt it. It felt like a red hot iron had just hit my leg. I cramped. The calves had been tight the week before the race and I knew I had been pushing a little hard, but was surprised by the pain. I had had this happen to me before during a spin class so I knew that I could either stop or just try to ride and see if I could work it out. I looked behind me and the closest rider had to be a quarter mile back so I geared down and brought the cadence up to try to pedal the cramp out. There was no way I was stopping. After about 5 minutes I had worked most of the pain out and at that point it was a dull ache so I geared back up, and kept going towards the transition area.

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I never even looked to see how my time was when I got off the bike. I didn't care. I had ridden as fast as I ever had, I passed at least 20 people on the ride, so for me it was a win. Now I had another 2 miles to run, but the problem was my calf was hurting and I knew it was going to bring my pace down. I found my groove, found a cadence that was not as painful and just tried to not fall behind too much. I ended up getting passed by 5 of the people that I blew by on the bike. I smiled to myself and said, "Go ahead, I will see you again in a few minutes."

I finished the next 2 miles section of run and headed back to my bike. This transition was much faster as I couldn't wait to begin the race again. It only took me 2 of the 6.5 miles to catch and pass those 5 that had passed me. Then I looked up the road about a mile and found my next target. I never did find out his name and I wished I would have, but I called him "blue jersey guy" in my head. He was moving at a pretty good clip, but I was slowly gaining on him. As I approached him, he looked back, saw me moving up and he stepped it up a notch. I met his gear and cadence and just hung back (far enough that I was not drafting him as drafting is illegal.) I just kept watching his legs, watching his cadence and waiting to see a sign of him getting tired. We approached a 90 degree turn in the road and I saw it. He geared down to slow down for the turn. I just kept pedaling, went high in the turn, leaned into it and never slowed down. Now I was by him, moving at almost my top speed and he had to speed back up just to keep pace. I geared up again and went as fast as I could. I realized he might catch me on the run, so I had to put as much distance between us as possible. I started looking for another target, but our little cat and mouse game chewed up 3 miles so I was quickly approaching the transition area again and there was not another bike in sight. Not sure if that was good or bad.

Off the bike and back on for the last 2 mile run. My strategy, don't let anyone catch you, especially blue jersey guy. The calf was killing me, but I knew the pain would go away at the finish line, so I just ignored it. This now being my third time running the same course, I knew



exactly where I was at each section and I just kept looking back to make sure I was not being closed on. About 3/4 of a mile into the course was a turn around so this was going to be my first chance to see where blue jersey guy was and how fast he was closing on me. Amazingly, he wasn't. No sure if the ride got him or what, but at that point, unless I totally blew it, there was nobody that was going to catch me. The closest person was at least 300 yards behind. Find a groove, stay with it and finish the race. At the half mile to go mark, I bumped it up a little bit. I did not want to leave

anything on the track. When I crossed that finish line, I wanted to make sure I barely had enough left to hug my wife. That's it. I came around the corner and I saw the finish line. I thought about sprinting, but decided to pay respect to the steady but sure race I had run that day and crossed and my current pace.

1:32:00

One hour and 32 minutes. Faster than any of the practice runs I had done and I was not surprised. I ran faster than I ever had and I biked faster than I ever had. The greatest feeling was that my wife was standing right there at the finish line, cheering me on the entire time. I had done it. I had meet and beat every goal I set out to during my quest. The fastest finisher for that race did it in 1:07:00, so I was only 25 minutes behind. Not bad for my first race. I couldn't wait for the next one

## Finale

July 11th, 2005 seems so far back and it is hard to remember how I felt when I started this whole quest. But I can tell you what I accomplished:



In 8 months 29 days ...

- I went from 270lbs to 175lbs - 95 lbs lost
- I went from a men's 44 pant size to a men's 32
- I went from a men's XXXL shirt to a men's large
- I went from barely being able to bike over 10mph to tops speeds of 27mph
- I went from a 3mph walk to a 7.5mph run
- My cholesterol went from a 184 to a 132
- My blood sugar dropped 3 times what it was

But most importantly ... I can play with my daughter all day long and tire her out before she tires me out. My chances of being around to see her do all of the things she will do have been greatly increased.

So what changes now. Nothing. I will continue to eat better one day at a time, I will exercise one day at a time and I will get on the bike one day at a time.

There are many people I want to thank for all of their support and help through this whole quest:

I want to thank my wife Angie for being there for me and supporting me through this whole thing. Honey, there was no feeling in the world like seeing you on the other side of that finish line.

I want to thank my Mom for continuing to worry about me and for being patient. I may learn slowly, but I eventually learn.

I want to thank Rich Fowler and Brian Kahl for being my personal coaches and friends and giving me the advice and help that got me here.

I want to thank Dr Josh for the help and tips to get over the knee problems and get me back in the race.

I want to thank Janet, a friend and my boss for giving me the flexibility to focus on this change this year.

I want to thank all of the friends and family who stuck by me and loved me now matter how I looked.

I want to thank Chris for keeping me honest and focused while we were on the road.

I want to thank the entire MSAM team for noticing the changes and asking me how I did it. The kind words were humbling and motivating.

I want to thank all of those who followed the blog ([www.getonthebike.com](http://www.getonthebike.com)) you held me accountable and helped me stick to it.

And finally, I want to thank you, for taking the time to read my story. I hope you enjoyed it. I know I did.