

# THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

## Bridge League CEO runs first marathon, makes plans for Memphis

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CEO took marathon challenge to promote cause

Robert Hartman will always remember 4:37.48.

It's the time it took him to finish his first marathon.

"I'm a little sore," he said. "It was a really amazing experience from start to finish."

On Oct. 13, Hartman, 42, completed the 2013 Bank of America Chicago Marathon under his goal of 4 hours, 40 minutes.

While it was a personal accomplishment for the otherwise "recreational" runner, his first aim was to raise money (he collected \$1,000) and awareness for a cause that is close to him.

Hartman is CEO of the Horn Lake-based American Contract Bridge League, which chose the Alzheimer's Association as its partner for the company's charity arm, the ACBL Charity Foundation.

"Studies have shown that social activities such as going to bridge club and staying active, even the act of counting cards, wards off dementia," Hartman said.

In addition to hosting the company's annual The Longest Day fundraiser, encouraging its 3,000 sanctioned clubs to play bridge from sunrise to sunset and find other ways to raise money for the AA this past June, Hartman decided to personalize the effort.

"We raised over \$550,000 for the Alzheimer's Association. I was amazed, so I decided I would do something big for the cause because all of our members had," he said. "Running my first marathon seemed like a big thing to me."

Four months ago, Hartman made it official and signed up with the Memphis

Runners Track Club and joined running coach Kevin Leathers' Can't Stop Endurance St. Jude Heroes training program.

"I really needed to increase my mileage," he said. "I had run 5Ks to support local causes, and I had run a half-marathon before, which I thought that was really pushing it."

He logged 430 miles between June and the race.

During the week, his runs ranged from three to 10 miles, and he used his Saturday runs with Leathers' program to increase his endurance.

The challenge lay in his many days out of town.

The website [mapmyrun.com](http://mapmyrun.com) came in handy many times.

"It's a great resource where other people find a good running route in a city and post it," Hartman said. "It's kind of like Yelp."

Teaming up with Leathers served as a valuable resource as well.

"One of the biggest things I preach is consistency and patience," Leathers said. "You get so focused on the finish line that you forget the day-to-day. You have to be patient adding mileage and intensity and with seeing improvements. It takes patience to hold back and not get injured."

Consistency was important to Hartman's training also when it came to what he put into his body.

"You have to stay hydrated throughout the entire week, and it was important not to try anything new the day before the race, even the flavor of your Gatorade. We were told they had lemon-lime flavor on the course, so I trained with that," Hartman said.

While his training proved favorable and he says "there wasn't anything (he) would have changed," Hartman realized his one mistake at Mile 15.

"You have pace groups, and since I was aiming for 4 hours and 40 minutes, I started the marathon with that group, but I felt so good I decided to leave them behind," Hartman said.

"It worked really well until Mile 15, then I said to myself I better slow down."

Then there were the last six miles.

"That was part of the coaching," Hartman said. "It becomes very mental at that point. They told us to run each of the last six miles in honor of someone. I lost my dad to pancreatic cancer last year, so I spent a lot of time thinking of him, as well as one of my board members who lost someone around the same time."

Now there's no holding Hartman back: "I'm preparing for the St. Jude (Memphis) Marathon in December."

Learn More

For more information about Can't Stop Endurance and the Memphis Runners Track Club, visit [cantstope endurance.com](http://cantstope endurance.com) and [memphisrunners.com](http://memphisrunners.com).

For more information about the American Contract Bridge League and the Alzheimer's Association, visit [acbl.org](http://acbl.org) and [alz.org](http://alz.org).