

# The Harvard Crimson ONLINE EDITION

## News

### Sharing a Room, Sharing a Race

Two Harvard students will compete in the 111th Boston Marathon

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Early in the afternoon when most students are done for the day, Charlton “Chad” Volpe ’07 laces on his sneakers and prepares to head out for a run. Volpe is a former rugby player who has traded in his cleats for sneakers to try his hand at the ultimate long-distance running challenge.

He joins the ranks of many Harvard students who have decided to run next week’s Boston Marathon, but luckily for this first-timer he has a veteran training buddy in his lanky roommate, Matthew R. Conroy ’07.

Both runners are among the 30 students running the marathon for the Harvard College Marathon Challenge (HCMC), which requires its participants to fundraise before the run.

Those 30 will join the expected 20,000 runners at next Monday’s Boston Marathon, the world’s oldest annually contested staging of the grueling 26-mile race.

Between the training and the fundraising, students are re-shaping their lives in preparation for a race that killed its first participant back in 490 B.C.

And though Volpe, a newcomer to the running scene, as well as the experienced Conroy, have faced their own challenges on the road to the marathon—each one breaking a foot last fall—they are confident that, together, they are up for the challenge.

#### **A ROCKY ROAD**

After breaking his foot in a rugby match last November, Volpe took a radically different path in his athletic career.

The 215-pound Volpe looks every inch the rugby player, but last December he began the arduous process of turning himself into a long-distance runner, after months of toying with the idea of running a marathon.

Before beginning training for the marathon, the most that Volpe had done in the way of long distance running was a few five-kilometer runs. Volpe says that the experience of learning to long-distance run has been relatively painless because he started small.

“For me, the very first run I did was two or three miles,” he says. “Since I started early enough, I was able to start with really low mileage and then gradually, gradually work my way up. With gradually laddering up the mileage, you don’t really feel the pain as much.”

Volpe’s discipline in controlling his training schedule has impressed Conroy, and is a big part of Conroy’s confidence in his roommate’s prospects come April 16.

“This kid is running a marathon,” Conroy says. “He’s going to have a long career in marathon-running.”

## **BIRDS OF A FEATHER**

Conroy, a Crimson editor, is as an old-hand at marathoning in comparison to his roommate—he has already completed two marathons and an “ironman” triathlon. Conroy’s first marathon was two years ago in Hartford, Conn.

“My first marathon was very interesting. I woke up, and it was pouring rain. The streets of the city were flooded ankle deep; there was ankle deep mud,” Conroy recalls. “This continued the whole day. By the end of [the race] you’re hypothermic. You’re absolutely freezing.”

“But this kid’s been playing rugby in the rain so he’ll be ready,” Conroy says, gesturing to Volpe.

Volpe has caught the marathon fever, contagious in a roomful of people who have tried their hand at the 26-mile race.

“This may be the last time I can do something like this,” Volpe says, adding that he’s entering the “real world” next year and may no longer have the time to train for a marathon.

Their roommate James Patrick Maguire ’08 ran the Boston Marathon last year alongside Conroy.

“Last year he saw us going on training runs every morning,” says Maguire, who is not running the marathon this year. “I think Matt [Conroy] was really the driving force in getting him to do the marathon.”

## **OVERCOMING OBSTACLES**

But the road to marathon glory is not always smooth. Conroy as well as Volpe has had to overcome a broken foot in his training for the marathon. Conroy broke his foot in the fall when he rolled it while running.

While Volpe has been injury-free since his recovery from his broken foot, Conroy has not been so lucky. The heavy stress of running took its toll on his legs, causing shin splints. Despite that, Conroy is ready for the Marathon.

While Volpe has recovered from his injuries, he says that training in the cold was the next hurdle on the horizon.

“The cold makes the running so much harder. It’s uncomfortable. It’s sort of a unique challenge” Volpe says. “And this year especially, there’s been a lot of ice.”

But Volpe has had fewer problems juggling school and training, subscribing to a less-is-more philosophy.

“To a large extent, I feel that the school work will take as much time as you give it. If you give it three hours, it’ll take three hours. If you give it five, it’ll take five,” Volpe says. “We’ll see when grades come out whether it worked out or not,” Volpe adds with a laugh.

“If you don’t make it, you can do the marathon again next year,” Conroy jokingly reminds him.

Perhaps due in part to his liberal philosophy on schoolwork, time management has not been a significant hurdle for Volpe.

“In all honesty, finding the time is not the hardest thing. Once you start getting into it, it’s not as hard to find the time to run,” Volpe says. “All [the training] has done is take out time that I was putzing around on the Internet.”

Volpe and Conroy looked calm and collected after an eight-mile run together yesterday afternoon. Both plan to taper down their mileage this week from the 20-mile runs they have done in the past few weeks.

But neither runner thinks that the marathon will be easy, no matter how much they train.

“It will be insanity,” Conroy says of race day. “I don’t think it gets easier. Oh God, it never seems easy.”

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