

Trail FITNESS

Good health can be a journey, and for ultrarunners such as Dave Wakefield the only question is: How far?

Most Saturday mornings, a parking lot on the edge of McLennan Park stands empty except for a few vehicles. One of them is a blue 2007 Hyundai Accent belonging to Dave Wakefield. Some weekends it might be the only car there. While it sits, Wakefield transports himself into another world, striding along the park's dirt paths deep into trail runner paradise.

A naturally gifted runner, the 34-year-old Wakefield spent hours roaming through wilderness while growing up in the mountains of Breckenridge, Colorado.

"When you live on the side of a mountain, your closest friend may be six miles away. So if you want to see him, you have to run through the woods," Wakefield says.

The promising runner came down from the mountains to hone his running skills on the high school cross country team, but it was baseball that he chased into his college years. Wakefield didn't race competitively, or even run, until the diamond lost its shine and he found himself spending too much time with a different type of pitcher.

"I drank a lot of beer," Wakefield says. "I was 21 years old sitting around with a beer gut and looking at my friends, who, of course, were larger than me, and thinking to myself, 'I'm way too young to look like this.'"

The realization gave him the motivation he needed to ditch the beer and eventually 35 pounds. It was not until he picked up a magazine about trail ultramarathons—races longer than the traditional 26.2-mile marathons—that he began to consider more rugged running pursuits reminiscent of his youth.

"I got to looking at it [the magazine], looking at the distances, looking at the times and doing the math in my head and thinking, 'Geez, these people are running 12-minute miles, and they're winning races,'" Wakefield says. "Naively, I was thinking, 'I can do this.'"



Dave Wakefield credits his initial bout of naivety and his intense training for making him one of the region's most successful ultrarunners.

Following the success of a fourth-place finish in his first ultramarathon, a 50K, Wakefield decided to try a 100-miler. This was his introduction to just how unforgiving a trail race can be. After 18 hours and 83 miles of running and subsisting on nothing but Little Debbie Fudge Rounds and Fruit Punch Gatorade, Wakefield dropped out due to the depletion of essential electrolytes in his body. Lack of sodium caused his face, hands and feet to swell. After the run, he could not move off the couch for a week except to crawl to the bathroom.

Today, Wakefield has used what he's learned to become one of the most experienced, accomplished runners in the

