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SHADOW RACE BRINGS RUNNING BROTHERS TOGETHER AT LAST

There are three Smock brothers – Patrick, David and Michael. They all are doctors with busy schedules, living in different cities, so it is difficult for them to find an opportunity to share their passion for running marathons with each other by being at the same race at the same time.

Yet the three finally were set to accomplish that goal for the first time at the 2011 ING Miami Marathon and Half-Marathon on January 30 when the U.S. Army threw a wrinkle into their plans.

Patrick Smock is the Orthopedic surgeon attached to the 745th Forward Surgical Team that is normally based at Fort Hood, Tx. His unit was recently deployed to Afghanistan, so he had to cancel plans to come to Miami and meet up with his brothers.

”We were a little disappointed,” Michael Smock said. “The idea of the three of us running a marathon together was something we had talked about for a long time.”

Patrick, determined to complete his training and share the Miami experience with his brothers, came up with the idea of a Shadow Race. He will be running the 26.2 miles on his base at a classified location in Afghanistan a few hours before Michael and David navigate through the streets of Miami, Miami Beach and Coconut Grove. Due to the time differences, the race in Afghanistan will actually begin about 12 hours prior to the actual start of the Miami Marathon on Biscayne Blvd.

The Shadow race on the other side of the world will be more than your typical run around an Army base. Patrick, 32, has recruited more than 100 soldiers and other military personnel to participate alongside him. He also contacted ING Miami Marathon event organizers and arranged for a package of t-shirts, promotional items, medals and racing bibs to be sent to Afghanistan.

He organized all of the logistics on the base. There is a paved road that runs around the base airstrip which they have measured as a 3.5 mile loop. The course has been mapped out so that the half and full marathons will end at the base flagpole, which is where the entry point to the main portion of the race is located (full marathon will be about 7.5 laps, half will be just under 4 laps).

They have arranged four water points/aid stations along the course so there will be help available every mile. The assistance of 12 medics and one trauma nurse has been enlisted to serve as medical staff for the race. The base MWR (Morale, Welfare, and Recreation) office has a clock for timing the event and will be helping to provide water and Gatorade for the aid stations. They are also arranging to have energy gels and bars available for nutrition.

A PA system will be set up at the finish line to provide music and entertainment for the runners and supporters at the event.

“We really hope to make this as well organized as any event you would go to back in the states,” Patrick Smock said via email. “I am grateful to many volunteers here for helping to make it that way. I think we will have over 100 runners, which really is a large number and is probably more participants than any other event has attracted since I’ve been here.”

“As soon as our race is over in Miami, we will be sending these American heroes their 2011 shirts and medals,” said David Scott, race director for the ING Miami Marathon and Half-Marathon. “It is incredible what they are doing serving our country overseas and even more amazing that they will ‘run’ with our 20,000 plus runners. We can’t wait to see their times posted alongside ours.”

Michael, 42, lives in St. Louis and works at St. Johns Mercy Medical Center. While initially disappointed that Patrick couldn’t join him in Miami, he has become impressed with what his brother has been able to pull together in Afghanistan.

“I thought it was cool when he said he was going to train along with us and we would talk about our running stories by Skype and email,” Michael Smock said. “Then he said he was going to train the full distance and run the marathon distance on the same day. And now he has recruited over 100 people on his base to run with him. That’s pretty amazing. Even though he won’t be with us in Miami he will be with us the whole time. I am sure shortly thereafter we will hook up by Skype and share the experiences.”

Michael expects to complete the marathon in about 4 1/2 hours.

“Patrick has done way better training than the two of us,” Michael said of him and David. “I wouldn’t be surprised if he does somewhere around three hours and 45 minutes.”

David Smock, 28, lives in Kansas City and is completing his Internal Medicine Residency at the University of Missouri–Kansas City. He hopes to finish the marathon in under four hours.

“We are all very grateful that the Marathon is allowing the shadowing of the event,” David said. “We were hoping to do a big race together. It would be all that much better if it happened that way, but this will be fun for us anyway. We have been planning events for years but have never been able to have time off at the same time.”

Patrick Smock hopes to be headed home to Texas a few days after the Marathon race and looks forward to again trying to coordinate a trip to a race with his brothers.

“Even though I’m missing this opportunity to be with them, I’m sure we’ll make time in the future to do several events together,” Patrick said. “We are all very active and like to travel and working vacation into some sort of running/biking event has always intrigued us.

“I don’t know if we will run Miami together in the future... that will most likely depend on how our schedules work out. But we are already tentatively planning to sign up this summer for the Ironman triathlon in Lake Placid in 2012. Hopefully no deployments interfere with those plans. I don’t think I could find a place to swim in Iraq or Afghanistan!”

About US Road Sports

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