

HEART SKIPS A BEAT, BUT NOT THE RUN

TNN | Jan 22, 2018, 05:43 IST



Marathon Schedule			
Race Category	Start Time	Start Location	Finish Location
Marathon Amateurs (42.195 km)	05.40 a.m.	CSMT	CSMT
Marathon Elite (42.195 km)	07.10 a.m.	CSMT	CSMT
Half Marathon (21.097 km)	05.40 a.m.	Worli Dairy	CSMT
Timed 10K Run (10 km)	06.10 a.m.	CSMT	CSMT
Senior Citizens Run (Approx. 4.3 km)	07.25 a.m.	CSMT	Opp. Metro
Champions with Disability (Approx. 1.5 km)	07.45 a.m.	CSMT	M. G. Road
Dream Run (Approx. 6km)	08.20 am	CSMT	Opp. Metro

Nearly 70 patients at the Asian Heart Institute will participate in the marathon thanks to the cardiac rehab programme and regular workouts

In 2009, K.S. Ramachandran, was in Coimbatore for a family event, when he realised that he would get breathless while climbing just two or three stairs. A family friend who is a doctor suggested an echocardiogram. That showed nothing to worry about, but an angiogram picked up six blockages in the main arteries of his heart. He underwent bypass surgery, a major ‘open-heart’ procedure in which the chest is cut open, which would be enough for most people to decide to take it easy for the rest of their lives.

But Mr. Ramachandran, now 72, says the operation was a blessing in disguise. He had played tennis and badminton before, but irregularly. “Not only did I bounce back post-surgery, I took up exercising with seriousness like never before.” Three months later, he joined the hospital’s cardiac rehabilitation programme. Starting with the treadmill and stationary cycle, he would work out and stretch while a specialist monitored his heart rate and functioning. He gradually stepped up the routine, till he was walking briskly and jogging for 10 km every day. Then, in 2013, he did the Dream Run at the Mumbai Marathon. In 2014, he did the 21-km half-marathon.

“My wife and my children have been the most supportive,” he says. “My wife often jokes that she was assured that I had a heart only after my bypass surgery.” His mantra, he says, is, “Better your own timing. Compete with yourself, not others.” His best time so far is 3’23”; this year, he is aiming for 3’10”.



“It is not an easy feat. After about 16-17 km, the legs don’t move. The sun comes out, and it gets really challenging. Even if I advance by a minute or two, it will be an achievement.” As he prepares for this year’s event, he can barely wait. “It’s like a carnival for me. The encouragement and support we get is overwhelming”.

Change for the better

Rajnish Rathore is now 45, but he could have died 10 years ago: he had a heart attack and needed an angioplasty to clear a 90% blockage in one of his heart’s arteries. He too says the surgery changed his life for the better. “I take care of my health, and that has made me a more confident person.” Starting with AHI’s cardiac rehab programme, he has been regularly exercising. He still goes to AHI once a week, but also works out for around 90 minutes four days a week and does one 15-km run a week. He says he is addicted to the exercise and running regimen. “I keep one day for rest. I never miss my schedule on other days under any circumstance.”

He has been running the Half Marathon every year since 2011, only missing out last year due a leg injury. His best time is 2’44”, but time is not what he focuses on: “I aim at the finishing line.”

Mr. Rathore has one piece of advice for anyone who asks: “Don’t wait for a heart attack to start running.”



Mr. Ramachandran and Mr. Rathore are among the 70 heart patients treated at the Asian Heart Institute who will be participating in the Mumbai Marathon this year. Half of them have also undergone bypasses. The patients are participating in all three events — the marathon, the half marathon and the Dream Run.

Nilesh Gautam, interventional cardiologist at AHI, says that all of them are monitored carefully during the rehab process and only then allowed to participate. “Besides the regular exercises, they also do yoga and core muscle strengthening workouts that help them gear up for the run,” Dr. Gautam says. “Another crucial part of the training is also to know when to stop running if signs such as excessive breathlessness, unusual sweating and uneasiness show up.”

The cardiac rehabilitation programme is essentially aimed at getting patients to exercise and self monitor health parameters gradually. It consists of three components: exercise, risk factor modification, and dealing with stress and depression. A patient who joins the cardiac rehab post surgery exercises while being monitored by doctors. A unique routine for each patient is designed keeping in mind his or her general physical condition, the extent of the heart attack, weight, and the condition of patient’s limbs and joints. Other aspects of dealing with risk factors like weight control, smoking cessation, and diet are also looked at.

During the programme, a patient exercises using portable heart monitoring equipment. With the help of this special equipment the ECG is continuously transmitted to the monitoring station wirelessly, while the patient is exercising. This ensures the optimal amount of exercise is performed in the safest manner possible.