

# MARATHON CHALLENGE

1 x 60



International

# MARATHON CHALLENGE

1 x 60

---

CONTACT

Tom Koch, *Director*  
WGBH International  
One Guest Street  
Boston, MA 02135 USA

TEL 617-300-3893  
FAX 617-779-7900

tom\_koch@wgbh.org  
wgbhinternational.org

How do you run 26.2 miles if you have trouble making it around the block? With good coaching, discipline, and lots of group support—as NOVA shows when it follows 13 sedentary people through a nine-month regimen designed to prepare them for the grueling Boston Marathon® in *Marathon Challenge*.

Every year thousands of athletes from across the globe flock to Boston to run the city's marathon, known worldwide as the ultimate test of stamina and endurance. Created in cooperation with the Boston Athletic Association®, which granted NOVA unprecedented access during the 111th Boston Marathon®, and Tufts University, the film takes viewers on a unique adventure inside the human body, tracking changes in the runners' bodies.

Featuring participation by former Olympian, renowned elite runner, and three-time Boston Marathon winner Uta Pippig, the film chronicles her efforts to coach and inspire NOVA's runners—ranging in age from 22 to 60—throughout their training. The common factor among these runners: none has ever done a marathon before, and all are out of shape.

*Marathon Challenge* gives a behind-the-scenes look at the challenges, frustrations, and joys of renouncing a sedentary lifestyle to train the body to do what it evolved to do millions of years ago: run long distances across the open savannah—or, in this case, along greater Boston's picturesque roadways.

Together with their other teammates, the team undergoes a battery of physiological tests to gauge baseline levels for weight, cholesterol level, maximal oxygen uptake, and other health and fitness factors. These same tests are performed again at the completion of the training to chart each runner's response to increased activity.

And increase it does, albeit slowly. Injuries and family problems take a toll, but the group meets faithfully every Sunday for nine months to prepare for the race to end all races. Physical conditioning is only part of the process; equally important is the psychological support that team members get from their coaches and from each other.

Over the course of the program, NOVA covers the physiology of running with stunning inside-the-body computer graphics showing how the body adapts to the demands of long distance locomotion.

As marathon day approaches, the forecast calls for pelting rain, gale force winds, and the possibility of snow, conditions that daunt even experienced marathon runners. On the day itself—April 16, 2007—those who have made it through training arrive at the tail end of the storm in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, sheathed in ponchos with dry shoes in plastic bags. Then at 10:30 a.m., the starting gun fires and they join 20,000 other runners for the epic race to Boston—a journey that few on Team NOVA ever dreamed possible.

---

## NOVA

CREDITS

*Senior Executive Producer:* Paula S. Apsell

*Producers:* Daniel McCabe and Hillary Wells

*Director, Writer:* Daniel McCabe

A NOVA Production by Big House Productions, Inc. for WGBH/Boston

*Photo Credit:* Joel Laino