



Koen, father of two children, runs an immotheker office at Ledeborg. On top of that he's also active, since many years, in local politics of Hamme. At the moment he's alderman of Public Works, Mobility, Drains and Green Management.

How did you get a taste for running?

As a runner I was a late bloomer. I was actually a jogger than ran from time to time until the end of 2012. As a result of a bet with some friends I ran my first race in June 2013. It was the 10 miles of Waasmunster, a beautiful but tough race. It went so smooth that I got a taste for it. In September 2013 I also ran the 10 miles of Hamme. In November of the same year I even ran the half marathon of Kasterlee. Especially the last one was a really nice experience. Kasterlee is beautiful but tough. I stayed just under the 2 hours and for me, as an amateur that just started training dedicated, it was a wonderful feeling. Since then I can't let go running. Early 2014 I founded Hammeloopt, together with some friends. Hammeloopt stimulates people, in a casual atmosphere, to run often and further. In that ambiance follows the first commitment to run my first marathon. I choose the Nacht van Vlaanderen in 2014. I started to hope and got the ambition to run a marathon each year. Running became a habit, an addiction of, often, a mental freedom enjoying, emptying the mind, alone or together with friends of Hammeloopt. In the meantime Hammeloopt became a close and sportive group of more than 30 runners. Friends of, through and for running, engaging for charity. At the moment we are collecting money for VZW Ouders van Verongelukte Kinderen. Often we enter different races with at least 10 runners. That's really nice. I can't miss it any more. I keep on running and I hope to find the right balance between hard work, a lot of social and political engagement, my fantastic wife and children and at least one marathon per year.

You ran a couple of marathons. Are you getting used to it or do you still need to recover a couple of days?

In 2015 I ran In Flanders Fields, in 2016 I trained for the same marathon, but due to illness I had to quit. On 18 June 2017 I ran the Great Breweries Marathon. A magnificent race track, a brilliant story but temperatures of more than 30 degrees are actually not justified for an amateur like me. I finished but completely dehydrated I ended at the Red Cross, who set up a drip. I'm really grateful for the loving care but I also had to face my limitations. The combination of running your own business, a tough political mandate and lots of engagement in several organisations such as Hammeloopt, het Hamse boekenweekend, Jogging Hamme, the Familiafeesten and others, as well as training intensively for marathons is really getting heavy. After two months of resting I'll take a look, together with my coach, which sportive goals could be set.

Which race do you have the most beautiful memories?

My most beautiful memories are about the half-marathon of Kasterlee and In Flanders Fields 2015.

Thank you for the interview Koen. We wish you good luck.

Kevin Simons