

04 — Arizona's Randy Johnson becomes the oldest pitcher in major-league history to throw a perfect game.

## CLEVELAND MARATHON

# A foot soldier for blacks' good health

## Marathoner's group promotes healthy living

JOE MAXSE  
Plain Dealer Reporter

Growing up in St. Louis, Tony Reed admits he was not much of a runner. Even as a member of the high school track and cross country teams, his gait was not the stuff of Olympic aspirations.

But Reed, 51, will be one of the most satisfied participants Sunday at the Rite Aid Cleveland Marathon. In a little more than five years, the college accounting teacher and Texas Instruments consultant from Dallas helped found the National Black Marathoners Association.

The fledgling nonprofit group, with approximately 500 members, wants to get the word out to the black community that getting and staying fit — whether running or walking, no matter the distance — should become a matter of concern.

"It's all about getting out there and just doing it," said Reed, who has run 86 marathons since 1982. "Maybe there are not that many role models [in distance running] for blacks, and there is also the age factor. Once you get out of high school and college, people stop participating in sports."

There is also no hiding the health factors in the community, with blacks at a greater tendency than whites to suffer from cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and high blood pressure.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics:

- Approximately 2.7 million blacks 20 or older have diabetes. However, one-third do not know it.
- Heart disease and stroke are the No. 1 and No. 3 killers of blacks, claiming more than 100,000 annually.
- The prevalence of high blood pressure among blacks is among the highest in the world.



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Tony Reed, 51, of Dallas is willing to put in the tough miles to train for a marathon, and he's hoping more black people will join him in making an effort to stay fit. Reed will run in Sunday's Cleveland Marathon to promote the National Black Marathoners Association.

Reed said he was galvanized to act through personal experiences.

His parents have dealt with high blood pressure and diabetes, and he had health issues when he was younger. Also, while running a marathon in St. Louis, he was touched when several black children ran alongside him for a distance.

"I was running past the projects

where I grew up," said Reed, who has run three marathons this year, including one in Antarctica. "Sometimes in the city, there are no safe places to run. But we can change that."

At the Black Data Processing Associates national conference in Chicago six years ago, the topic of health spawned the NBMA.

Reed does not want to dwell on the health-scare tactics. Instead, he wants his organization and other grass-roots groups and schools to get more black children and adults to participate at some level. A college-scholarship program has been started.

"We want to have visibility at races and have an impact on health," said Reed, whose organization designated Cincinnati in 2005 and New Jersey last year as its national events.

The NBMA's Cleveland chapter is headed by Team Marathon, which has been participating here for more than 25 years. Veteran runners Warren Elzy and Vincent Walls of Team Marathon are helping organize the local contingent.

"We're expecting about 75 runners from around the country," said Walls, 48, an RTA bus driver. "We're all going to wear red and black and have 'Freedom Run 1865' on our shirts. We'll have a stand at the [Health and Fitness Expo]." The Expo opens from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. today and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday at the Cleveland Convention Center, Hall D.

If you can't make Sunday's race, there is time to get in shape. Next year's NBMA event is in Arizona on Feb. 17, 2008.

For more information, go to [black-marathoners.org](http://black-marathoners.org) or [teammarathon.org](http://teammarathon.org).

More than 100 vendor booths, featuring running shoes and apparel, technical accessories, nutritional supplements, and expert training, fitness and diet advice, will be featured at the Health Expo.

Notable speakers include: Amby Burfoot, winner of the 1968 Boston Marathon and editor-in-chief of Runner's World magazine; Anne Audain, seven-time Cleveland 10K winner and six-time Olympian; John Bingham, runner and author; Jeff Gallo-way, 1972 Olympian in the 10,000 meters; and Kitty Consolo, two-time Cleveland marathon winner. For information, go to [clevelandmarathon.com](http://clevelandmarathon.com).

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