



Every second counts for a runner. In three hours, 37-year-old Tania Jones of Richmond Hill, Ont., preps a week's worth of lunches and dinners.

Life on the run

As one of Canada's top athletes, marathoner Tania Jones has a daily exercise regime that runs the gamut from early-morning workouts to lunchtime yoga breaks. But she's just as focused on life's other rewards: a fulfilling career and quality time with the boys, her husband, Colin, and three-year-old, Callum. Here's how she stays on track.

BY DENISE BALKISSOON PHOTOGRAPHS BY REGINA GARCIA

I STARTED RUNNING SERIOUSLY IN HIGH SCHOOL Then, during undergrad, I was recruited by the University of Victoria running team. While getting my master's degree in toxicology, I started to wonder how running fit into my life. (At the time, I hadn't

really heard of running for fun.) I started road racing, which was a world apart from track and field. I loved it and eventually worked my way up to a marathon. Last year, I won a silver [in Ottawa] and a bronze [in Edmonton] and was ranked third in Canada.

AMID THE TRAINING, A BABY

I was 34 and I was at the top of my game. But I was also severely injured with an Achilles problem. I was battered and burnt out, and I needed a break. So I got pregnant. I ran until my eighth month.

THE POSTPARTUM PLAN

In 2003, Callum was born. The physical change of having a baby had to be managed, so I pulled in a group of experts. A physiologist from Atlanta, Georgia, was the mastermind. He mapped out the stages of a comeback plan. I also >

hired a nutritionist, as well as a sports physician, who rebuilt my Achilles.



Jones's front hall.

SIX WEEKS LATER . . .

I started training again. I couldn't run, but I worked out with Mark McCoy, who was an Olympic gold medallist. With the baby in one of those bucket seats, you can go anywhere.

THEN, MORE PROBLEMS

Three months postpartum, after I got my body used to being physical again, I thought, Now I should be able to work out harder. But I started to lose mass. After extensive blood work, we realized I had a thyroid problem. Women can have thyroid problems after pregnancy and it's sometimes misdiagnosed as postpartum depression, which is why I document my experience on my website (www.taniajones.com). I want to get the information out there. Mine is a chronic condition that I manage with medication.

HOW I FIT TWO WORKOUTS INTO MY DAY

When I'm in training, my morning run starts at about 5:30 or 6:00. I do four miles and I'm done by 6:30 or 7:00. At night, I'll go for another run in a nearby park or, if my husband isn't around to watch Callum, I'll stay home and use the treadmill. Sometimes I'll slip in a run at the gym during lunch hour, or I'll do a few yoga moves. I used to run 22 miles on the weekend, but now I do 20, which saves me 15 minutes.



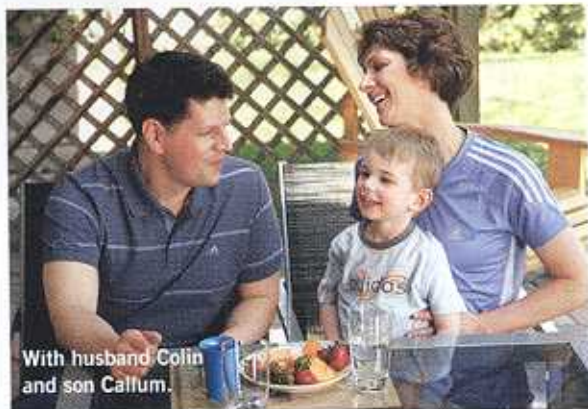
Sneaking in a workout at the home gym.

MORE TIME-SAVING TECHNIQUES

Cooking was a real drag and completely inefficient to me. So I applied athletic principles and brought in a coach: a chef who's also a trainer. She looked at our goals and came up with a meal plan. Now, in three hours during the weekend, I can prep an entire week's worth of lunches and dinners.

THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

I have an arrangement with my company [Procter & Gamble, where Jones is a regulatory affairs manager] to work one day a week from home.



With husband Colin and son Callum.

There's also some flexibility. I once spent 14 hours on a road trip and did a conference call from home the next day.

FAMILY TIME

We often go skating in the park, or we'll hang out in a playground. On the weekends, we spend a lot of time at the Richmond Hill Country Club. There's swimming for Callum, plus there's a daycare centre, so Colin and I can get some private time together. Or we'll get a babysitter and take an hour or two to go to the bookstore. We listen to a lot of talking books in the car, things dealing with business and career development.

ME TIME

My indulgence is to do something for an hour, without having a goal. I love Nora Roberts romance novels. They are formulaic and simple, and they relax my mind. On Sundays, I'll do a 2.5-hour-long run while Colin and Callum are at the jungle gym; I'll pass them a couple of times and wave.

GIVING BACK

I try to be a role model and support different races. In May, I was an announcer at a five-kilometre run for York Central Hospital. And I work with Girls on the Run, a running group for girls in Grades 4 to 8. It links exercise with self-esteem, which I think is really important.

THE "WHAT IF" SYNDROME

I sometimes regret never having had the opportunity to be a full-time athlete. It's always a "what if" that I'll never have. It was just the economic reality. I needed a job to support a family. I'll never know what I could have achieved, but what I have achieved is amazing.



At the 2006 Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon.