

Man in motion, by Greg Rienzi

Jordan Tropp only knows fast. The fourth-year student in the School of Medicine is 26, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and a runner. Last October he ran the Baltimore Marathon and won—not his age group, but the race itself. Dressed in his Navy singlet, he led from the start and finished in 02:29:06. At one point, he looked around and thought: "Where is everybody?"

Jordan, the oldest of three children, grew up in a Cleveland suburb. Bored by soccer, he joined a CYO Cross Country club in the 7th grade. His first race was a hilly and muddy 5K at a suburban park. Jordan lined up with 200 other kids, many of them older, and finished in the top 10. Running became an obsession. He joined the varsity cross-country team at St. Ignatius High School in Cleveland, which won the Ohio State Championship. His senior year, Jordan ran a mile in a blistering 4 minutes, 22 seconds. The summer before his senior year, Jordan attended a cross-country team at Saint Ignatius High School in Cleveland, which won the Ohio State Championship. His senior year, Jordan ran a mile in a blistering 4 minutes, 22 seconds.

The summer before his senior year, Jordan attended a cross-country camp in Ohio where he met his future fiancée, Hannah Neczypor. They began dating a year later.

Jordan was drawn to military life. He chose the Naval Academy because he wanted to become a Marine. He planned to run cross-country at Navy, but during his Plebe Summer he broke his foot on an obstacle course. He joined the academy's Marathon Club, figuring he could "go easy" over 26.2 miles. In his first marathon, the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C., "easy" meant a time of 2:37:15, good for 15th place overall and first in his age group.

Jordan pondered becoming a Navy SEAL, a Marine, or a physician in the Navy Medical Corps. He sampled elements of all three, including a trip to the Amazon rainforest on a humanitarian mission to remote villages downriver. "I am attracted to trauma situations," he thought. "I want to be there in the golden hour, a moment of life or death." He chose medicine and saw himself stationed overseas at a field hospital or deployed to the site of a natural disaster.

He graduated top 25 in his class and was offered the opportunity to defer enlistment for medical school and a residency. One morning, Jordan checked his email. He found a message flagged as spam—his acceptance letter from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

In medical school, Jordan got serious about marathons. To date, he's run 12. He regularly finishes in the top 60. His personal record came in 2015 with a time of 2:27:02.

Jordan chose orthopedics as his specialty. He likes the hands-on aspect—closing surgical wounds, applying casts and splints, restoring fractures and dislocations. He fondly recalls working on a dislocated fifth metacarpal: “That thing just slid back in, and I heard an audible ‘pop.’ It was great.”

With a hectic schedule of classes and surgical rotations, Jordan squeezes in training runs wherever and whenever he can. On a typical day, he wakes up around 3:30 a.m. and goes for an hour or two run before work.

Who needs running coaches, training programs, and set mileage goals? Not Jordan. His diet? Whatever. Pizza? Beer? Fine. He runs "naked," no headphones or GPS watch to record running data. This past summer, he estimates he ran 90 to 100 miles per week. He sets aside one day for "rest."

During a run, his thoughts often turn to what happened the previous day at the hospital. Or sometimes to nothing at all.

Jordan's racing "uniform" consists of his Navy singlet shirt and the same cross-country shorts he wore in high school.

In the 2017 Baltimore Marathon, he started the race in the lead pack, which soon became a pack of one. He recalls the crowd noise as he turned onto Pratt Street for the last 0.2 mile stretch and his first marathon win. Jordan's next marathon goal: finish in the lower 2:20s.

A week after his victory, a package arrived from the Office of the President of Johns Hopkins University. Inside was a letter of congratulations from President Ronald J. Daniels, and a Blue Jays Track and Field singlet that Daniels suggested he might wear for the next race.

He will graduate this May and get married in June. In July he will start his 9-year enlistment as an orthopedics resident at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

Yes, he's busy. But he can't wait to help put his fellow servicemen and women back together—or go wherever his country needs him.

He'll run there if needed.