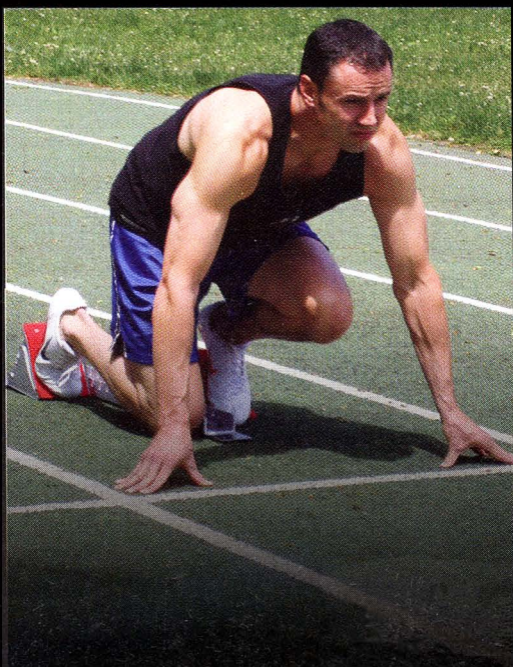


Getting Fast: Ron Potocnik



Ron Potocnik didn't have a debilitating injury to overcome. The personal trainer and owner of Train with Ron on the Near West Side simply had a goal that sounds simple: He wanted to run fast again. But when most people his age, 41, talk about running fast, they mean hitting a PR in the marathon or maybe a 5K. But Potocnik had other things in mind. "I ran track in high school, and I was OK, I just missed states," he recalls. "But I heard about a master's track meet, and I thought that would be a good goal to get me back in good shape.

"I've always been athletic, but I thought this was something that could really test my strength and speed."

You could certainly say he's succeeded. Focusing on the 100, 200 and 400 meters, Potocnik has already qualified for the USA Masters Track and Field Championships in Oshkosh, Wis., this month. He also plans on attending the world championships in Helsinki, Finland. He's already run a sub 51-second 400 meters, but Potocnik thinks he's got a lot left in him.

"I'm still learning these events and figuring everything out," he says. "I definitely think I can go sub-50 in the 400." His ultimate goal is to break the world record for the 40-44 age group in the 400, which is 48.8 seconds.

What's the difference between running track now and more than 20 years ago?

"It takes longer to warm up and you don't have the same recovery time," he says. "When you're young, you can breeze through heats. Now that's the biggest challenge."