My Running Journey: A Personal Story Told with Data

Introduction

In October 2022, something unexpected happened. I was walking through the streets and came across Ironman Cascais by accident. I wasn't there to watch the race, but I ended up staying. I saw athletes completely exhausted, pushing through pain and fatigue, but still moving forward.

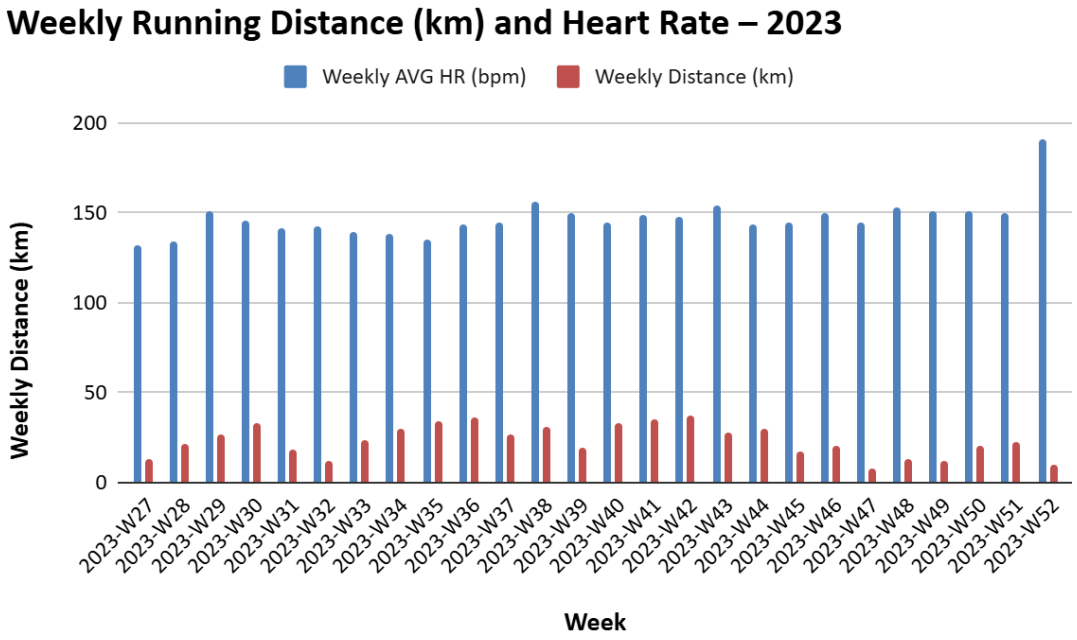
As each person crossed the finish line, the speaker said their name followed by the words: "You are an Ironman." That sentence stayed with me. I thought to myself: "I want to hear those words too, one day."

Ironman is a triathlon, but I had to start somewhere. Running was the most affordable and accessible option for me.

In 2023, I finally had the chance to start running. I signed up for the Lisbon Half Marathon because I wanted to run across 25 de Abril Bridge, an iconic part of the city I had only crossed by car. I was nervous because I hadn't trained much, and I thought finishing in more than two hours would already be a good result. But when I arrived at the starting line and felt the atmosphere around me, I changed my mind. I told myself: "I'll try to finish in under two hours." And I did.

That moment made me believe in myself in a new way. I realised I was capable of more than I thought. I wanted to improve, to run faster, and to challenge myself.

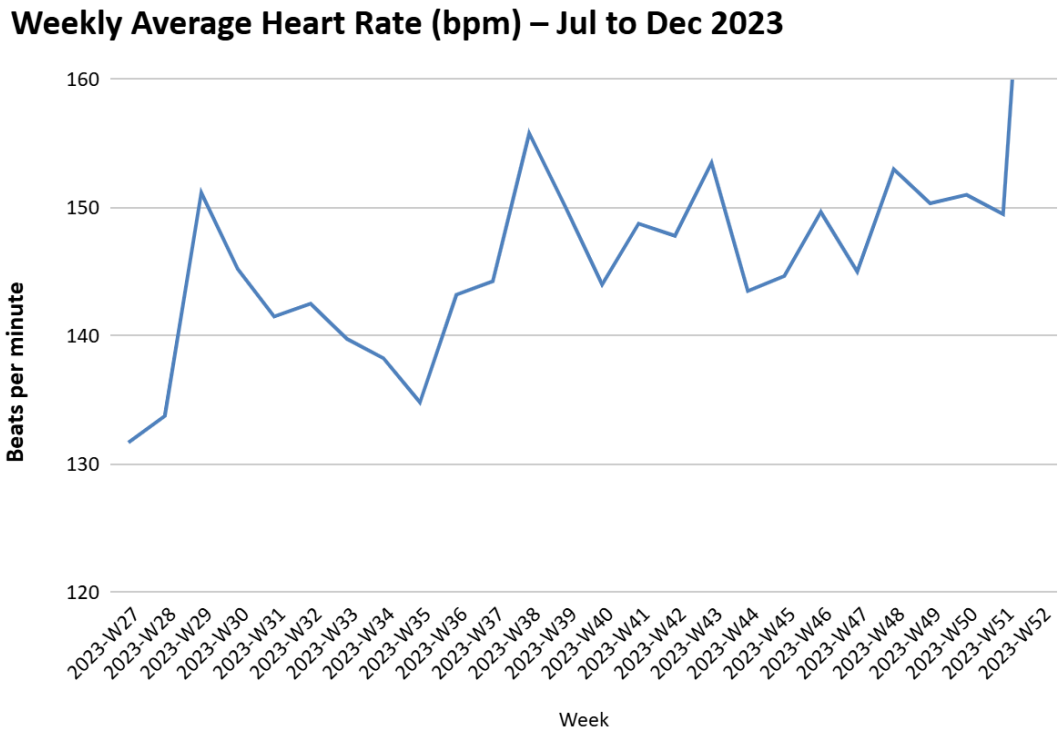
In July, I started training with a coach and following a proper plan. This dashboard tells the story of that journey. It's not just about numbers, it's about effort, consistency and personal growth.



This chart shows my weekly running distance (blue bars) and my average heart rate (red bars) from July to December 2023.

- I kept a consistent weekly distance over time, usually between **30 and 40 km**.
- Heart rate data helped me monitor effort and recovery.
- For example, in weeks when my heart rate was higher, it could mean I was tired, training harder, or not fully recovered.

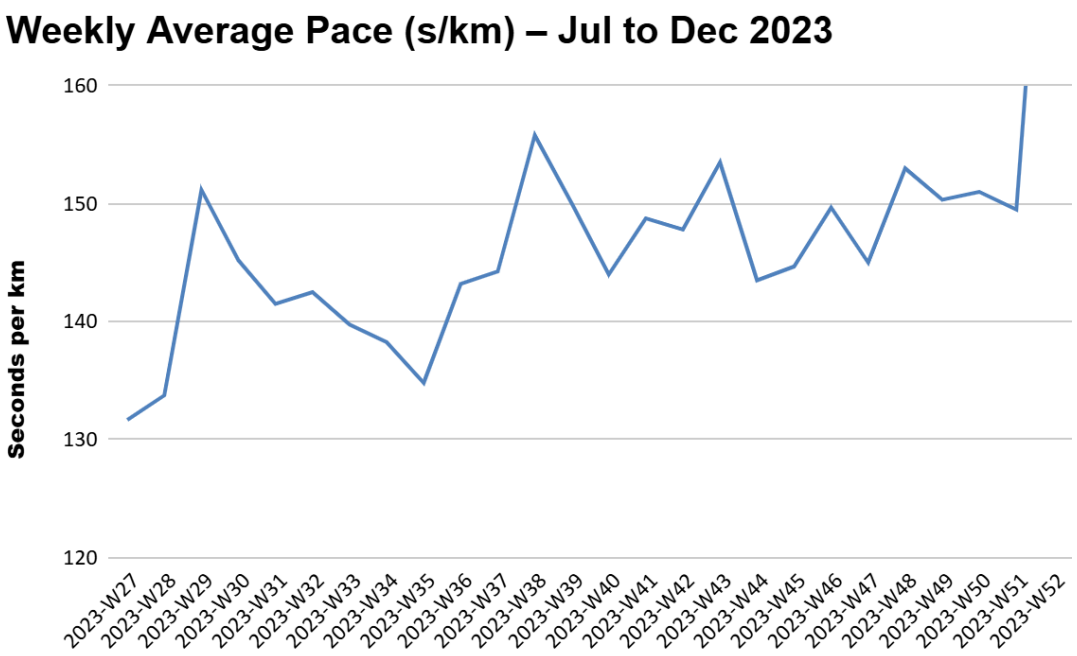
This view helped me understand how my body responded to the training over time.



This line chart shows my average heart rate each week. It helped me understand how my body was responding to training.

- A higher heart rate usually meant more intense training or tiredness.
- A lower heart rate, with the same or more distance, showed signs of better fitness.
- I noticed that my heart rate increased in some weeks, which helped me identify moments when I was pushing harder or when I needed rest.

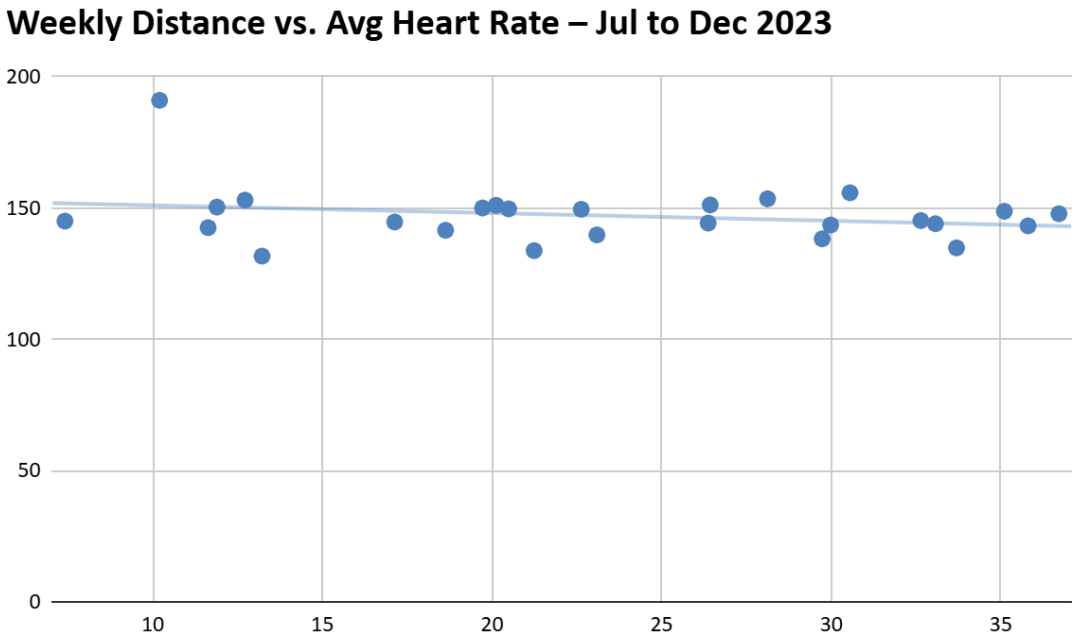
This chart gave me a better view of how consistent training affected my body over time.



This chart shows how my running pace changed each week between July and December 2023.

- The values are shown in **seconds per kilometer** (for example, 150 seconds = 2 minutes and 30 seconds).
- A lower value means a faster pace.
- I started around **150 s/km** and improved over time, with natural fluctuations due to races, recovery weeks.
- This format gives a more accurate view of small improvements week to week.

By tracking this chart, I was able to see consistent progress in my performance.

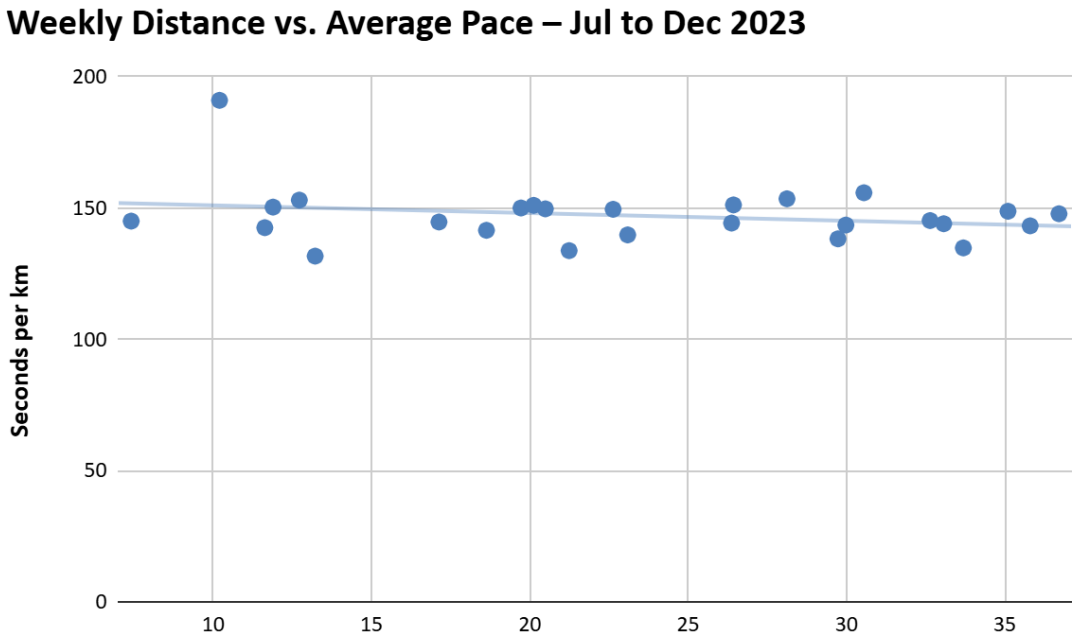


This scatter plot shows the relationship between my weekly running distance and my average heart rate.

- Each dot represents one week of training.
- The x-axis shows the total distance I ran that week (in kilometers).
- The y-axis shows my average heart rate for that same week (in beats per minute).

We can see that as the distance increased, the heart rate stayed mostly stable or slightly decreased. This is a good sign. It suggests that I was able to run longer distances without putting extra stress on my heart.

This type of chart helped me check if my fitness was improving and if I was training efficiently over time.

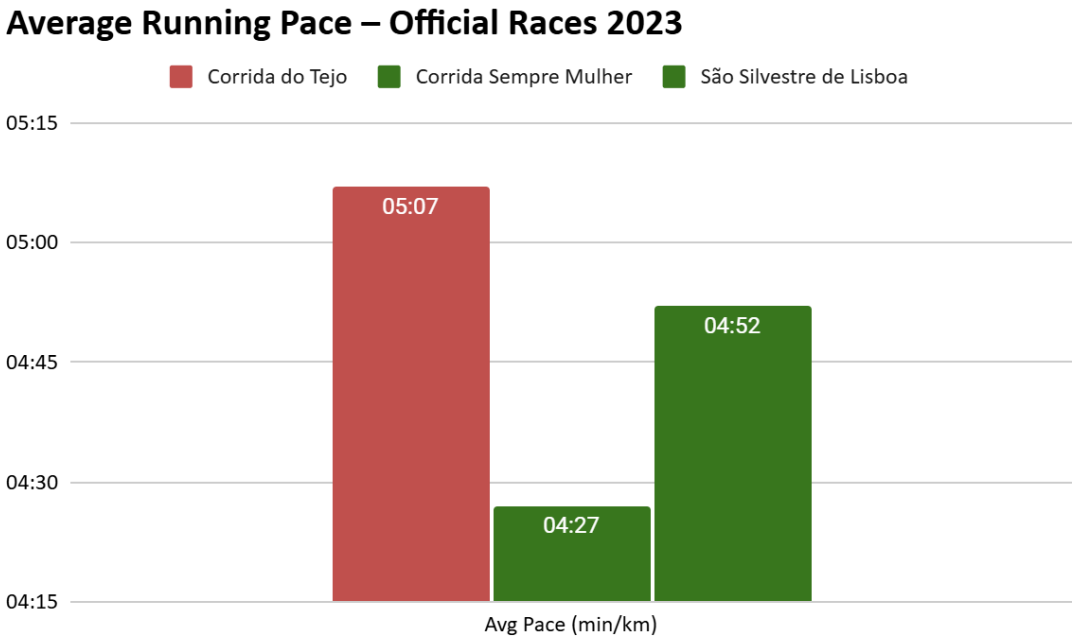


This scatter plot shows the relationship between how much I ran each week and how fast I ran on average.

- Each dot represents one week.
- The x-axis shows the total distance I ran that week (in kilometers).
- The y-axis shows my average pace (in seconds per kilometer).

As the weekly distance increased, the average pace generally became faster (lower values on the y-axis). This is a positive trend. It suggests that the more I trained, the better my performance became.

This chart helped me see the connection between training volume and running speed. It gave me motivation to stay consistent with my running routine.



This chart shows my average running pace in three official races during 2023. Each bar represents one race and its average pace in minutes per kilometer.

- The fastest race was *Corrida Sempre Mulher* with a pace of 4:27 min/km.
- *Corrida do Tejo* had the slowest pace, 5:07 min/km.
- In the *São Silvestre de Lisboa*, I ran at 4:52 min/km.

I achieved my personal goals in two out of the three races. This chart helps me compare performance across events and see how my training translated into real race results.

Race	Distance	Total Time	Goal	Goal Achieved
Corrida do Tejo	10.01 km	51.36	50 min	No
Corrida Sempre Mulher	4.83 km	21:30	5K in 22-23 min	Yes
São Silvestre de Lisboa	10.2 km	49:2	Sub 50 min	Yes
Note: Corrida Sempre Mulher was officially 5 km. GPS recorded 4.83 km.				

Conclusion

This project helped me understand my running progress through data. By collecting, organizing, and visualizing my training and race results, I saw how consistency, distance, and pace are all connected.
This dashboard means a lot to me. It shows more than numbers. It reflects my effort, progress, and love for running. It's also the beginning of my journey into the world of data.

Technical Summary

- **Tools used**: Google Sheets (data export, cleaning, calculations, and visualizations)
- **Metrics collected**: date, distance (km), duration (minutes), average and max heart rate (bpm), workout type, average pace (min/km), personal notes, weekly aggregation, injury status, and goal achievement
- **Metrics analyzed**: weekly distance, average pace, average heart rate, race performance (pace per race), distance vs. pace correlation, distance vs. heart rate correlation
- **Visualizations created**: line charts, bar charts, scatter plots
- **Data source**: Data exported from TrainingPeaks
- **Focus of analysis**: training consistency and progression, heart rate and pace correlation, performance tracking over time, and connecting personal goals with physical data

You can access the original dataset used in this analysis here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1lvpHkYrvRWn0THE2UZqHQSpgydAOt6xMrzeqf3lmz8M/edit?usp=sharing