

The Presidents Column

75 degrees in November? It just doesn't get any better than this, except maybe 50 degrees in August. The weather has made for some challenging training runs and interesting marathon races.

Congratulations to all that persevered through it all and trained despite the hardship. Speaking of hardship, I just wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of all the Lynchburg Road Runners to thank the husbands, wives, kids, moms, dads, and friends that have supported our training schedules and goal setting. Your encouragement for what, at times, may seem to be our obsession, is greatly appreciated.

The Lynchburg Road Runners Club has been well represented throughout the region and country this fall. We had a number of members support local races like the Big Lick Triathlon, Marine Corps Mud Run, Guatemalan Kids Run, Chatham Sartomer 5K, Vinton 5K, Mountain Masochist 50 Mile Trail Run and last, but not least, the Virginia 10-Miler / 4 Miler. Groups also traveled out of state to the Marine Corps and New York City Marathons. The club played a vital role in organizing and volunteering at the 13th Annual John A. Stephenson Kids Race. More than 300 kids enjoyed a morning of racing at Riverside Park. Catherine Phillips and Heather Royer did an outstanding job as co-race directors.

A big "THANK YOU," to Rebecca Trittipoe for speaking to us at our October club meeting. Her adventures in the jungles of South America were inspiring. We also crowned our race series champions for 2003. Jeff Harrington and Nancy Ferris were this year's winners.

The applications for two local road races are in this newsletter. The traditional **Turkey Trot 5K** is run on Thanksgiving Day. Stick around for the award ceremonies with your race number as there will be merchandise, pies, and turkeys for door prizes. The **Peaks of Otter 10K** in Bedford on December 6 is also a race to cherish. The temperature ought to be right for a PR this time of year. Don't forget, the 1st male and female to make it to the top of the hill and finish the race will get a \$100 bonus.

Finally, with the time change, most of us will be braving the early evening darkness. Please be careful. You'll find some friendly reminders on running safety in the pages that follow.

Happy running,

Jeff

Next LRR Club Meeting
Tuesday, 11 November, 2003
at the Monte Carlo Restaurant
Old Forest Road
6:30 Diner
7:00 Meeting
Guest Speaker:

As always, if anyone has an issue or idea that would like to discuss with the executive committee, they are invited to attend the executive committee meeting on the second Tuesday of every month at the Monte Carlo restaurant on Old Forest Road. We look forward to seeing you.

The **December** meeting of the Lynchburg Roadrunners will be on **Tuesday, 9 December 2003** at the Monte Carlo Restaurant on Old Forest Road.

2003 LRR OFFICERS

President	Jeff Fedorko
Vice President	Darrell Wargo
Secretary	OPEN
Treasurer	Wendy Golden
Membership	Mary Ann Craven
Newsletter	Vic Galan

LRR WEB ADDRESS

The club has a new Web address. Look us up at www.lynchburgroadrunners.org
The Milepost is provided on the Web through the generosity of professor Peter Sheldon as a community service of Randolph-Macon Women's College.

You may also find the latest race information at www.riversiderunners.com

Meeting Minutes

By Vic Galan: Acting Secretary

The October meeting of the Lynchburg Roadrunners Club (LRRC) was held on Tuesday, 14 October 2003 at the Monte Carlo Restaurant. With twenty guests and members in attendance, president Jeff Fedorko called to meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Guest speaker Rebekah Trittipoe gave a most interesting account of her September 18 - 24 participation in the "Jungle Marathon" - a 160 mile six stage race through the jungles of Brazil. With excellent slides she guided us through her travels to Sao Paulo and Manaus and up the Rio Negra to the start, an idyll trip by boat that lulled the forty-seven athletes from ten countries into a false sense of confidence that was soon shattered by the rigors of there ordeals in trying to race and compete while staying alive and somewhat sane. Forty-seven athletes and 35 finished.

Although the race took place during the dry season, the jungle is never dry. Also it is not flat. You climb one side of a stinking pile of rotted vegetation and descend the other side to a muddy stream, then proceed to climb the next pile of rot. Yuck!!!

Those present were regaled by such tales as the night of the jaguars, or the night the boa ate the ducks, or this one..... *The trail had been marked with **blue ribbons** by none other than the race director. I was alone following the ribbons when suddenly there were none to be found. Heading in a general compass direction for hours my apprehension of being lost grew. I didn't want to spend the night lost in the jungle. Finally, in an act of desperation I cried out in a loud voice, "God, where am I." A voice in the distance faintly answered, "Over here!" It seems I had stumbled in the right direction and was quite close to the end station for that stage. The native who answered me came with his daughters to guide me to camp. In the hair of the girls were all those pretty **blue ribbons** they had collected in the jungle that day.*

Dave Horton has said often enough that no matter how bad you feel you can come back. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from Rebekah's daily logs:

Days 3, 4: *A real struggle last 2 days. I think I got behind on fluid from day 2. Started puking. Essentially no food and little fluid these 2 days. Got an IV last night. No penalty. I ate a little tonight and feel somewhat better. Now the third long stage over*

next 2 days are scary. I Pray like never before. The jungle sucks. Can't wait to get home.

For her efforts Rebekah finished 2nd Female and 16th overall in a time of 44 hours and 12 minutes. First place Female and 10th overall went to Lisa De Speville of South Africa in a time of 42 hours and 31 minutes.

Conclusion: At least once in one's life, one ought to attempt something daring enough that failure is guaranteed unless God steps in.

President Jeff Fedorko then presented awards for the LRRC Summer Race Series. Jeff Harrington won the overall male trophy and Nancy Ferris carried home the trophy for overall female. Age Group medals were then presented. The list of winners are found in this newsletter.

The awards ceremonies complete, the meeting was adjourned. Next meeting is on Tuesday 11 November at Monte Carlo's.

NIGHTMARIA IN AMAZONIA

By Bernie Davis

Last evening I attended the monthly meeting of the Lynchburg Roadrunners club. Mrs. Rebekah Trittipoe, a local woman noted for her ultra-running feats, gave a presentation about her excruciating experience "running" in a six-day ultra-marathon stage race in the Amazon jungle in Brazil. It was indeed nightmaria! I don't have a poem about Rebekah, but her tale caused me to recall my limerick "Nightmaria," which seems pertinent to her story.

NIGHTMARIA

I went into the jungle with Valeria.

Nothing could be scarier.

I wouldn't go back on a bet.

Everything was all creepy and wet.

The mosquitoes gave us malaria.

Bernie the Bard

The Coach Says

THE LIONESS

Be they giants or be they runts,

Males go out and do their stunts.

They think they're kings.

They do their things,

But it's the lioness that hunts.

John Jerome Runner's Logbook, 2003:

"It's the lioness that hunts."

Slogan of a British women's running club

MESSAGE BOARD

Riverside Runners announces new message board.

Have questions about training? Upcoming races? Local events? Training runs? Visit the message board at www.riversiderunners.com. There you can post questions and announcements.

The Bozeman Trails

The Double Iron Triathlon was held for the third year in a row at Lake Anna, Virginia and was moved back four weeks from its usual time slot in September to October 11th and 12th. The water temperature in the lake was 73 degrees, but wearing a wet suit makes it bearable. The race starts at 7:00 AM and with an overcast morning, it was just enough light to start without swimming with a flashlight attached to your head!

Seventeen international Double Iron athletes started and after the dust settled, I finished 8th overall in 32 hours and 20 minutes of continuous forward movement (only 13 minutes slower than last year - must be due to year older!). I don't have the final results yet, but a German won in 27:30, then American, United Kingdom, France, etc.

We had a little "military competition" this year with a Royal Marine (who spent combat duty in Afghanistan and Iraq), SEAL and an old U.S. Marine (me). The Royal Marine came in third and the SEAL finished 10th. They don't have age divisions in this race, so everyone is "equal." The youngest competitor was 24

and I was only one over 50 (age 57), so I guess one could say, I won my "age division." This Double was my 14th finish and I still hold the American record for most completions. Guy Rossi of France has the World record at 21.

Just like NASCAR, you need a good crew to "refuel and push" you to the finish line. Thanks to my "Pit Boss," Debbie for her yeoman duties at our "KOA Campground" (we won best campsite!) and "thanks" to Dan Schlader, Brian Powers, Roy Ilch and Al Montgomery for biking and "jogging" with me for those many hours. If you think running at night (no street lights) is fun, try biking for 7 hours with only lights on your handlebars. Pretty weird out there.

As to the Marine Corps Marathon, I finished in 4:28 and Debbie finished in 4:29. It turned out to be a hot and humid day, almost as bad as Shamrock 2002, but not quite.

Debbie and I are preparing for the JFK-50 miler in November, and then it's time to relax and eat, drink and be merry through Thanksgiving and Christmas. Stay safe and enjoy the journey - see you on the roads.

Steve Bozeman

UPCOMING RACES

Nov. 15, Richmond - Sun Trust Marathon
8 a.m. \$35 by 9/8. Info: (804)673-RACE or
www.richmondmarathon.com

Nov. 27, Lynchburg - Genesis House 5k & Youth Mile
9:00 AM, \$15 entry fee. Timberlake Christian School.
Contact: Don Lucy 434-385-7420
Email: dalucy1@aol.com

Dec. 6, Bedford - Peaks of Otter Christmas Classic 10K & 5K Run
8:30 a.m., Bedford Middle School.
Contact: Bedford Area Family YMCA (540)586-3483



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enjoy every run for the gift it is.**

RACE RESULTS

Sept. 20, Lynchburg - Virginia 10 Miler & 4 Miler & Amazing Mile.

Congratulations to all who participated in this year's 30th Anniversary run. We especially honor our local thirty year runners of this event, Frank McPhatter and Bill Fastabend. Keep the streak going guys. Hey, Louise Martin at 88 years young ran this year's race. I know that one of you at her age can beat her time of three hours. For those who think that's slow, try walking the course in under three hours.

Oct. 4, Lynchburg - 13th Annual Youth Run

The **Dr. John A. Stephenson** Memorial Youth Run
Race Directors: Heather Royer and Cat Phillips

The race was a great success and the children appeared to have a great time! The weather was perfect and Teddy Spaghetti was a big hit with young and old alike. This year the race quickly filled with over 300 runners ages varying from two to thirteen. It is great to promote fitness in a fun way. Next year come out just to see those determined, smiling faces for yourself!

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped in creating a wonderful time for all!

Oct. 4, Roanoke - Women's Distance 5K

18. Candice Michalik	24:50	3 rd F 55-59
91. Patti Jurker	33:51	13 F 45-49

Oct. 5, Hartsville, SC - Family YMCA Triathlon

4. Donna Elder	2:27:08	1 st Female
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Donna returned to Forest being crowned the fastest female at the 2003 Hartsville Triathlon. She completed the 1.5K swim in 28:02, the 40K bike course in 1:14:51, and the 10K race in 43:57. Way to race Donna!!!

Oct. 11, Vinton - Fall Festival 5k

1. Jeff Harrington	17:38	1 st OA
Belinda Brinkley	23:07	
80. Melissa Hudson	38:46	

Oct. 11, Chatham - Sartomer 5K

21. Horace Ellis	21:47	1 st 60-64
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Horace continues to dominate his age group.

Oct. 12, Chicago - Chicago Marathon

The windy city was no match for the following:

Paul Carrasco	3:02:59
Nancy Ferris	3:27:56
Wilbert Hooper	3:30:24
Andrew Wilds	3:49:38
Anna Newman	4:36:23
David Skulina	4:51:23

Oct. 18, Forest - Running With The Wolves X-C

Weather: Temperature 65 degrees under sunny skies.
540 High school and middle school athletes competed and then watched their coaches, bus drivers, and parents run the challenging terrain of the Wolf Branch Farm cross country 5K.

Course records: Justin Hatch, Christiansburg, 16:15 and Shannon Saunders, JF; 18:41

1. Shane Guinn	17:50	(the Christiansburg H.S. head coach)
2. Drew Flowers,	18:25	
3. David Longhrum,	19:05	
4. Lauren Jefferson,	20:22	
5. Scott Kadak,	21: 34	
6. Lori Flowers,	22:13	
7. Jack Henecke,	22:13	
8. Sue Jones,	23:33	
9. Bernie Copsey,	24:05	
10. Brent St. John,	24:12	
11. Debbie Sullivan,	24:42	
12. Harlee Pascal,	24:47	
13. Jamal Bass,	24:49	
14. Elizabeth Settje,	25:38	
15. John Clark,	25:42	
16. Hollis OWens,	25:45	
17. Jeremy Rector,	26:16	
18. Wayne Owen,	26:36	
19. Brian Campbell,	27:19	
20. Jonathan Givens,	27:35	
21. Rachel Glover,	28:02	
22. Shoulda Benthere,	28:03	
23. Tom Eppes,	28:21	
24. Nancy Saunders,	28:29	
25. Ann Allison,	29:32	
26. Kyle Short,	29:42	
27. Emmi Owen,	29:57	
28. Donna Copsey,	30:41	
29. Jen Lempner,	31:20	
30. Ryan Mead,	31:21	
31. Kelly Smith,	34:58	
32. Carolyn Pascall,	36:32	
33. Gayla Worrel	45:11	
34. Pat Neeley,	45:11	

Oct. 18, Lynchburg -
21st Annual Mountain Masochist Trail Run - 50 Miler
Congratulations to the following LRRC Members who completed this unique course.

14. Bethany Hunter	8:14:47	Course Record
30. Eric Davis	9:16:53	
70. Bill Barnett	10:13:04	
108. Rebekah Trittipoe	10:49:50	
128. Darrell Wargo	11:04:37	
132. Mary Anderson	11:05:19	
188. Bernie Davis	11:36:35	
197. Camille Rabon	11:43:58	
201. Sam Rabon	11:48:26	

“A Fast Year” ***By David Horton***

The 2003 MMTR promised to be a fast year with it being the last race in the Lynchburg Ultra Series and the Montrail Ultra Cup ... **and it delivered!**

The MMTR is a big family reunion of runners as they come together for a weekend of reminiscing and sharing in Central Virginia. Year after year, many the same runners reassemble to test their conditioning in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia on a course that is EXACTLY 50 miles long!!!! The course and mountains do not get any easier. Some runners get faster nearly every year, while other runners see aging or lack of training make the 12-hour cut-off harder to meet than ever before. The 12-hour cut-off is tight and unforgiving. The other two big 50 milers in the East, Bull Run and JFK, have cut-off times of 13 & 14 hours respectively.

Runners from 32 states, Canada and DC assembled in the pre-dawn darkness for the start at the James River Visitor's Center. The women's field looked to be the fastest ever at the MMTR ... and it was!

In the women's race, local Bethany Hunter and Luanne Park (Redding, CA) took the lead from the start, one wanted to win the MMTR ... the other wanted to win the Montrail Ultra Cup. Through aid station 6 (17.5 miles), Hunter and Park basically stayed together, only separated by a few seconds. Jenny Capel (Reno, NV) kept them close, trailing by 4 minutes at this point. After aid station 6, there is a big downhill. Hunter took advantage of it and pulled into the next aid station (7 – 20.2 miles) 2 minutes ahead of Park and 5 minutes ahead of Capel.

Aid Station 10 (26.9 miles) is the theoretical halfway point of the MMTR. Runners of all speeds are able to double their times at this point and get an estimate of their finishing time. Hunter checked into aid station 10 at 10:33 a.m., 4 hours and 3 minutes (2 x 4:03 = 8:06)???? Could she keep this pace up? Capel passed Park and was 7 minutes behind Hunter with Park another minute back.

Hunter's lead stayed at 7 minutes to the 5-Mile Loop (33.6 miles). Hunter ran the loop in a great time of 50 minutes, increasing her lead to 10 minutes by the end of the loop over Capel and 15 minutes over Park. At this point, it was apparent that Hunter was going to win and set a new course record ... the question was by how much?

Hunter crossed the finish line in 8:14:47, knocking 12 minutes off Janice Anderson's course record of 8:27:01. Capel finished in 8:23:35, also breaking the course record, but finishing in 2nd place. However, she achieved the big goal of winning the Montrail Ultra Cup. Park finished in 8:30:10, to make it the fastest women's field ever at the MMTR. Janice Anderson (Marietta, GA) rounded out the top four finishing in 8:51:23.

In the men's race, Sean Andrish (Leesburg, VA) took the lead from the start with Dave Mackey (Boulder, CO) staying close on his heels and Eric Grossman (Louisville,

KY) a few minutes behind Mackey. From aid station 5 (14.9 miles) to aid station 13 (33.6 miles), Andrish and Mackey stayed within one minute of each other.

By the end of the loop (38.6 miles), Mackey had a 2-minute lead on Andrish. Andrish tried to catch Mackey on the downhill after the loop and just couldn't. Andrish later admitted he let up there after he realized he couldn't catch Mackey. The question now was ... could Mackey break Clark Zealand's course record time of 6:52:11 set in 2001? After the loop, Mackey was 2 minutes behind Zealand's time. At aid station 14 (41.5 mile) he was only one minute behind pace. Mackey pushed it from there on in breaking the tape in 6:48:31 ... knocking almost 4 minutes off Zealand's course record!

Andrish finished 2nd place with a time of 6:58:16. Grossman maintained his pace and finishing 3rd in a time of 7:16:14 with Dink Taylor (Huntsville, AL) rounding out the top four with a time of 7:24:03.

There were many other stories to tell as well as those of the front-runners. Local runner, Bernie Davis (66 years of age) completed the MMTR for the 16th time. His son, Eric (36-Los Angeles, CA) completed his first ultra in 30th place (9:16:53).

David Kirk and his son, Matt (High Point, NC) finished together in 10:31:03. Salli O'Donnell (Chesapeake, VA) finished the MMTR for the 11th time ... the only female member of the 10-time Finisher Club. O'Donnell is not supposed to be running. She has had a number of knee surgeries and this past summer, she had major back surgery. After she crossed the finish line, she raised her shirt so her back was exposed, and had me take a picture of her in front of the finish line banner. You could see two four-inch scars on both sides of her spine in the lower back region! What a commitment!

Joining the 10-time Finisher Club this year was Dink Taylor and Mark Konodi (Seattle, WA). It was an honor for me to give these men their 10-year jackets. Bill Turrentine (Centreville, VA) received an embroidered golf shirt for finishing his 15th MMTR.

Tom Green (Columbia, MD) continued his remarkable string ... the only person to compete and finish the 21 Mountain Masochist races. This was his fastest time in recent years, 9:57:41 ... good enough for 51st place. For however many years the MMTR is in existence, I know Tom will do his best to run each one!

Bethany Hunter and Jonathan Basham (8:07:19) were awarded the Mountain Woman and Mountain Man Award for the top local finishers. Kevin Budd (Lynchburg, VA) won the "Fat Boy" division (200+ pounds) finishing in 9:35:10 and starting at a tonnage of 202 pounds. Matt Yeager (Summersville, WV) won the "Best Blood" Award. Matt did a face plant during the race that really messed up his face and chin. It was such good blood, that Dr. George Wortley (our Medical Director) gave Matt four stitches at the finish line!

We had 19 local finishers and many others who had graduated from Liberty University and moved elsewhere, but came back to compete in this year's race. We are proud of the fact that many ultra runners have come out of the Central Virginia area.

I keep mentioning that this is the fastest year ever in MMTR history. There were 3 single year age group records set by males and 7 single year age group records set by females. Of the top 5 fastest female finishers ever ... 3 occurred this year. Two of the top four fastest males ever, occurred this year as well.

The 2004 Lynchburg Ultra Series (LUS) will consist of the Holiday Lake 50K (February 14, 2004), the Promise Land 50K (April 24, 2004) and the MMTR 50 Miler (October 16, 2004).

The 2004 MMTR will be the final race in the LUS and the Montrail Ultra Cup (MUC). It will also be the Championship race in the MUC. Runners who participate in the 2004 MUC will have to run in the 2004 MMTR. This will result in the 2004 MMTR being a highly competitive field with the very best runners in the nation coming to Lynchburg on October 16, 2004.

As a result of the above, we will be limiting the field of runners to 320 (expecting about 300 to start) for the 2004 MMTR. First come, first entered! PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO WAITING LIST OR SUBSTITUTIONS (particularly all normally last minute entrants and Lynchburg runners.) Once the 320 limit is reached, registration will cease and no one else will be allowed to enter. Please pay attention to our website: www.extremoultrarunning.com for registration numbers and further information.

MMTR

Saturday's local fifty-miler

Was generally a single-filer.

Finishing in twelve hours

Proved still within my powers

And made me a happy smiler.

Bernie the Bard

Oct. 26, Washington, DC - Marine Corps Marathon.

On a warm day in Washington, the following results:

Craig Mather	3:37:37
Beth Wright	4:05:23
Horace Ellis	4:16:52
Chris Wyndban	4:19:55
Steve Bozeman	4:27:35
Robert Polarek	4:28:00
Richard Brooks	4:29:45
Debbie Bozeman	4:29:47
Keith Owens	4:34:40
Richard Stone	4:36:48
Clyde Clements	4:40:11
Jeanie Stone	5:42:27

Nov. 9, New York, N.Y. - New York Marathon

With temperatures in the 60s, more than 30,000 runners competed in the 30th running of the race. The Kenyans dominated, with Martin Lei the 26.2 miles in a time of 2:10:30 to win. His countryman Margaret Okayo set a course record for females with a time of 2:22:31.

Lynchburg was well represented with:

Thomas Jennings	38	3:42:30
Katie Diminick	32	3:55:03
Sarah Glass	32	4:09:00
Kristen Cook	35	4:09:36
Robert Cook	42	4:09:59
Lauri Wynnyk	35	4:12:24
Timothy Courville	40	4:42:03

Congratulations to all on a run well done.

LRRC SUMMER RACE SERIES**AWARDS****Overall Male**

<u>Place</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Points</u>
1.	Jeff Harrington	170
2.	Mike McPhatter	160
3.	Pete O'Brien	145

Overall Female

1.	Nancy Ferris	195
2.	Beth Wright	175
3.	Sue Jones	155

0 - 12 Female

1.	Bilynda Brinkly	150
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30 - 34 Female

1.	Donna Rinker	190
2.	Kelly Jennings	165
3.	Tiffany Tompkins	165

35 - 39 Female

1.	Wend Golden	160
2.	Nancy O'Brien	150
3.	Leigh Cheatham	140

45 - 49 Female

1.	Lori Flowers	150
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50 - 59 Female

1.	Amy Rockhill	150
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13 - 19 Male

1.	Drew Flowers	150
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20 - 29 Male

1.	Nathan Brandley	200
2.	Bryan Carter	185

30 - 34 Male

1.	Paul Carrasco	185
2.	Jack Flippen	160
3.	Darrell Wargo	140

35 - 39 Male

1.	Kevin Willis	195
2.	Gary Morris	145

40 - 44 Male

1.	Lee Eagle	190
2.	George Mrus	175
3.	Brett Boman	150

45 - 49 Male

1.	Preston Evans	245
2.	Wilbert Hooper	230
3.	Alan Jones	160

50 - 59 Male

1.	Craig Miller	245
2.	John Justice	175
3.	Richard Stone	140

60 - 64 Male

1.	Tommy Harris	240
2.	Horace Ellis	180
3.	John Kurisky	160

65 - 99 Male

1.	Bernie Davis	250
2.	John Billingslea	175

DISCOUNT

The following businesses offer discounts on select items for your patronage. Please ask which items are discounted when you stop by and see the good folks at:

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SAFETY RULES THE ROAD

As fall changes to winter so do the daylight hours available for running. Here are reminders that will keep you safe while you are out training.

REFLECTIVE GEAR –

Make the investment in clothing and gear that reflects light. Most quality reflective shoes, apparel and vests should be rated for a distance of at least 1200 feet. Look for apparel with light, bright colors and with reflective strips, logos, and designs. Blinking, clip-on lights and armbands are also a good idea. Reflective gear keeps you and those you run with visible.

KNOW YOUR ROUTE –

Being familiar with your running route contributes to a safe run. Remember that even running on sidewalks has its hazards. Beware of dangerous intersections or cross streets. We are all familiar with areas of our favorite runs where motorists just don't pay attention. Timing your run on your route can be crucial. Don't forget...some desolate weekend routes turn into weekday highways.

RUN AGAINST TRAFFIC –

Running against traffic can provide you with a more complete picture of what is happening around you. Making eye contact with motorists can provide helpful clues as to the direction a car may take (especially at intersections). If sidewalks are not available, run as close to the shoulder of the road as possible.

STOP THE MUSIC –

There is nothing like a great running song for motivation. However, save it for the treadmill. Wearing a radio or CD player while exercising increases your chances of not hearing on-coming traffic or pedestrians.

A 50-mile Slog

By Eric Davis

To all my running, rowing & biking friends:

I have a fun story to share, and I hope you don't mind if I brag a little...I don't think I've been so proud of myself for an athletic achievement since breaking 5 minutes in the mile as a kid. The only thing which might rival this on the "feel good" scale was the come-back to the national team in 1999.

Anyway, this weekend, I finished the Mountain Masochist Trail Run, a 54-mile slog in the Blue Ridge Mountains just North & West of Lynchburg, Virginia, my home town. My dad has done the race for 20 years, but I never really had much ambition to do anything like it until last year when the old man barely made it through the last check-point on pace to break 12 hours and finish before dark. Because the race organizers are afraid of losing people in the woods in the dark (and the cold), runners are officially pulled off the course if they don't get through the 43-mile check point by 4:30PM. My thought last year was that my dad might only have a few more years left to complete the race as an official competitor, so if I was ever going to run the thing, I may as well do it while he's still in the event.

The race itself is rugged, especially the 2nd half. With 9,000 feet of total cumulative elevation gain, and 7,000 feet of cumulative decline, there isn't much flat ground. More importantly, the footing in a lot of places is pretty treacherous. The route from miles 43 to 47, besides being hilly, is barely even a trail -- basically an old deer path highlighted by white streamers every 50 to 100 yards. The former course record holder is a 2:19 marathoner who covered the supposed 4 miles from 43 to 47 in 45 minutes during his record setting run. He said he felt like he was really moving.

There were 240 starters, and the batch of folks I was with are true "ultra marathoners", meaning they do several ultra's per year. This, of course, was my first. Yesterday's winner lives in Colorado and recently won the US 50-mile trail championship in Washington state. (Interestingly, he runs 100 to 120 miles per week, but his best time for 10K is only 34 minutes.)

Overall, the race was almost full-on "fun" for me. As per instructions from the race director, David Horton, one of America's best-ever ultra runners, I went out really slow in the first half. I ran almost all of the first 20 miles with a really fun, "hotty / smarty" 41-

year old Yale grad who was doing her 5th ultra in the last 8 months. My sister would call Rachel a super "party favor", in that she's a walking load of fun. She got to know me really quickly and had a good time making fun of me for being an Ivy league dumb jock and not knowing how to read. My best friend from high school joined us up at mile 10 and ran with us to mile 18, adding to the almost party-like atmosphere. A lot of guys knew the Yale hotty / smarty, so I was often with a group of 2 - 4 other ultra vets who would float in and out of our conversations, making the event feel more like a rolling picnic than a "race".

In the first 20 miles, I ran exactly as per the "conservative plan", walking up almost all of the significant hills, as everybody around me did. As per instructions from Dr. Horton, I drank a ton, taking a full cup of sport drink at every aid station and carrying a half a water bottle with me between each stop. (The advice I got was drink so much that you have "to keep peeing all day", and I definitely did that.) I grabbed a handful of food at each aid station, and over the course of the day, I sucked down a Power Bar and 3 goos that I carried in my back pocket from the start. Bottom line on the fueling & hydrating, I never felt "bad" at all. My quads started to feel beaten up by mile 20, but I always had a lot of energy in reserve.

By the time I got to mile 22 or so, I started to feel a little confident, so I left the fun times with the Yale hotty / smarty and her ultra groupies. All I really did was start to walk "FAST" up the hills, and suddenly I was putting major distance on my old group and passing people like mad.

Anyway, I went through the major aid station at 27 miles in 5 hours, and everybody says that if you've paced yourself, you can simply double your time to calculate your overall finish. Thus, I was on pace for a 10-hour day, definitely something I would have been happy with. In fact, all I really wanted to do was just finish.

I picked up another friend from Lynchburg and Harvard at that 27 mile mark and we kept to the "walk up the hills" plan. I was trying to be more aggressive, but at the same time, I knew I had to save something in reserve for what everybody said would be the hardest part of the course, the "loop" from miles 33 to 38, and the "deer path" from 43 to 48. Frank and I moved through some people pretty quickly on the loop, but I still didn't know what to expect for the last 12 miles.

Anyway, after leaving Frank at mile 38, I had a goo,

and just started to feel "good". My quads were already completely trashed, but my energy level was super. So instead of walking up the hills, I started running them. And that's when I just started to plow people down. By the time I got to mile 42 or so, I was starting to calculate my finish time -- getting greedy. Except for the steepest of cliff-type hills, I pretty much ran the rest of the way home, and for the last 5 miles I was pretty much running as fast as I would ever run on my normal, Monday morning, post-bike-ride, 5-mile run in Santa Monica (certainly 7:00 pace).

Anyway, my last "half" of the race was about 4:15, which I was pretty pleased with. What that tells me, though, is that all of those people under 8:30 are pretty damned good. At least for the last 25% of the race, I was pacing myself like I might in the middle of a hard marathon -- grinding, running for time, not fooling around. Certainly, those guys running in the low 7:00 range are incredible. Full-on studs.

Amazingly, my dad ran 45 minutes faster than the prior year, and easily making it under the 12 hour cut-off. Now having seen the entire course, it's amazing that any 66-year old would want to subject themselves to this kind of self-torture. And it's even more amazing that MY DAD, with the limited strength, flexibility and balance that he now has, can make it over so much rough terrain so relatively quickly. Interestingly, my time of 9:15 was just a wee bit slower than his best time on the course which he ran nearly 20-years ago when he was regularly running marathons in the high 2:40's and running 70 to 90 hard miles per week.

It was so interesting to be exposed to the world of ultra marathoning. The racers were really friendly and supportive, and the event had a completely different feel than any other "race" I've ever been in. Ultra marathoners seem to have a sense of patience and perspective that you certainly don't find in the average population. Perhaps the best advice I got from my dad before the race was that no matter how bad you feel, just hang in there. He said the race is so long, you've got plenty of time to recover and feel good again. Just hang in there, don't give up, keep chugging. You'll do just fine.