



**Letter from the President - Mark Lawrence
Join the Fun at the Finish Line in 2010!**

2009 was a great year for the Steeplechasers! In addition to races, there's been picnics, banquets, breakfast runs, happy hours, adventurous training runs, great competitions, and lots of fun *finish lines!* I hope you're enjoying the information, training opportunities, and the camaraderie that the club provides to help you reach your individual goals. For those of you that want to get more involved with the running community and make your own contribution, join us at the finish line!

We would like all of our club members to look at the race calendar for the coming year. If you see an event for a cause that you'd like to support, plan to help at the finish line. It's a lot of fun and gives you a great perspective on the joy of running. If you've already spent some time doing finish lines and are familiar with the process, you may now be ready to serve as a **Race Coordinator**. *As a Race Coordinator, you will be the Steeplechaser's official liaison to the event of your choice.*

Ideally, having some experience and familiarity with how races are conducted is helpful, but you don't have to be an expert. You just need to be willing to learn and to get volunteers to help you. Responsibilities include coordinating with the Race Director to find out what support is needed (course marking, timing, results, etc), determining the volunteer support necessary, recruiting and coordinating the volunteers, transporting the necessary equipment, overseeing the conduct of the finish line and recording of results. It's a great way to make a significant contribution without taking on the entire challenge of putting on a race.

You don't have to know how to do it all, but by the time you're finished, you'll know much more than you did before. Don't worry. We'll provide you a checklist of what to do and help will never be far away. I'm sure Tim, Dwyane, Anne, Peggy, Paul and all the others that have gotten us through the last 20 years will still be around to help. They just all don't want to be responsible for it week after week. To volunteer contact Tim O'Keefe at timrunr@aol.com

By a variety of members taking turns coordinating support for events, we'll develop broader expertise in the club that will enable us to take on bigger and better challenges in the future (and still have fun doing it!) See you at the finish line!

Happy Holiday to all Members and their Families

Reminder that membership renewal is due January 2010 see the website www.steeplechasers.org for online registration or download a form to complete and mail.



FSRC Mission Statement:

"To attract and welcome new members to the organization and develop ideas for new benefits to organization members."

FSRC - 2010 Offices

President – Mark Lawrence
Vice President – Mary Zielinski
Secretary – Peggy Waxter
Treasurer – Anne Hafer

Committee Chairs

Social – Kim Hessong/Luanne Houck
Membership – Mary Zielinski
Competition – John Stuart
Race Support – Tim O’Keefe
Training – Eva Rosvold
Web Site – Rich Potter/Stephen Dobson
Newsletter – Malcolm Senior

The membership committee welcomes the following new members to the club:

Patricia Sheehan, Tammy Sigman, Kerry Shepherd, Anne Shubert, Kristin Biris, Doug Tipperman, Erin Zusi, Jason Page, Susan Wahl, John Shatto, Cindie Kuhn, Cheryl Hull, Karla Porter, Travis Phaup, Tsahai Tafari, and Sophie Huntington.

Membership is up to more than 280 members this year! The prices remain the same, and we have online registration at <http://www.steeplechasers.org/funform/index.html>. As always, we will still accept the traditional paper registrations, but why waste a stamp when you can register today online?

Welcome to the Steeplechasers Competition Committee Chairperson John Stuart.

John is currently employed with Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) as an elementary physical education and health teacher. Previously was Deputy Assistant Chief of Safety and Health for the US Marshals Service and US Air Force Combat Flight Medic and Instructor completing 3 combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq serving America's Wounded Warriors. He has been running for nearly 30 years. John ran XC and Track at Middletown High School, ran and swam in college, and then ran for fitness and training for other sports, like Rugby but only returned to competitive running since joining the FSRC last year. He has been involved in the competition committee throughout 2009. A keen competitor himself finishing in 8th place for the summer decathlon and an award winner in the Fall GP. He was race coordinator at the Roaring Lion. John was welcomed aboard at the Board of Directors Meeting.

Thanks to the outgoing Competition Committee Chairperson Victor Cretella

A couple of years ago, we were struggling to put together our Grand Prix series. Participation had fallen off and we didn't even have the rules published on our website. Thank goodness we had a member that recognized the problem and was concerned enough to do something about it. For the past two years, Victor Cretella has been that guy. Not only did Victor volunteer to be the Competition Committee Chairperson for the club, on numerous occasions he went above and beyond the call of duty. Victor improved the organization of the Grand Prix orchestrating the split year schedules that we've used the last two years. In the first year, we had two spring events cancel that would've normally doomed the season, but Victor volunteered to serve as the Race Director for the Mission of Mercy 5K and salvaged the event for another year and salvaged the spring schedule in the process. Currently, he's doing the same thing with the Goodloe Byron Run. Rather than watching the event go to the wayside, Victor persisted in his effort to keep the event alive.

In addition to orchestrating the Grand Prix for the last two years, Victor has also organized our club's team efforts for events like the RRCA Club Challenge, the Cherry Blossom 10 Miler, and the Ragnar Relay. At this point, Victor is stepping aside to devote more time to pursuing his own individual running goals, but we certainly thank him for all that he has done.

Womens Distance Festival



For the second year in a row, ten awesome ladies of the Frederick Steeplechasers Running Club (FSRC) put on a very successful 5K race in August called the Women's Distance Festival. This race is for women and about women and would never be as successful as it has been these last two years without the help of the terrific ten: Anne Hafer, Jenny Marino, Luanne Houck, Kim Hessong, Lisa Hickman, Mary Zelinski, Leslie Nuse, Hazel Senior, Suzanne Lewis and Peggy Waxter. What a great group; each person takes on several manageable jobs so that the big job of putting on this race is not a burden to one person. And, we can always count on other women jumping in on race day to give us a hand with other little details. Oh yes, we love the men stepping up on race day too to act as course marshals, lead biker, water stop coordinators, and most importantly, the finish line. Thank you to everyone – we will never turn down a helping hand.

We knew it was going to be a great day as over 200 women had already pre-registered. Most women wanted to make sure that they received the cool magenta-colored technical tee that was guaranteed to pre-registrants. We had over 40 absolutely fantastic random prizes; great awards and an abundance of food. The day was a little warm especially on that second loop around the campus of Frederick Community College, but what do you expect on a late August morning?

What's especially nice about this race is that all women and girls are welcome to participate no matter what their athletic capability may be. We see this race as a chance for the Steeplechasers to promote health, fitness and wellness among women of all ages. We had runners as young as 11 years old and our oldest and most celebrated runner was 82 years old (Helen Schley).

The Women's Distance Festival has been around the State of Maryland for more than 20 years and the Steeplechasers have been a part of it every year. Both this year and last year, we have been able to give the race's proceeds to organizations that help women. This year we are giving to the Heartily House. It is our aim to show all women that fitness and femininity go together. Great job ladies!!



Last minute instruction at the start of the race

Women's distance running history:

In 1979, the RRCA started the Women's Distance Festival in response to the lack of distance running events in the Olympics Games for women. The first Women's Distance Festival events were held on July 13, 1980, the date of the men's marathon at the Moscow Olympics. Today, the Women's Distance Festival celebrates the history of women's rights to participate in running events at any distance and at any age. While women's participation in distance running nearly matches that of men, the Women's Distance Festival continues to serve as a celebration of the determination and dedication of women runners across the country.

Steamtown Race Report - Chad Conners

I made it to the start in Forest City, PA with my good friend and fellow 3.10 marathon seeker Joe Basford. It was very cold with temperatures dipping into the 30's, lots of frost, perfect temperatures expected throughout the run. Joe and I both decided to wear gloves and that was a wise decision as I wore them through the whole race. The only negative thing that happened to us at this point is that on the way up to Forest City Joe forgot his watch and pace wristband. He handled the situation well and realized I could pace us the first 6 miles until we meet up with our wives in Carbondale about 7 to 8 miles into the race.



The civil war cannon fired and off we went starting down the first steep hill coming down from the High School. The first volunteer said to us about a half mile into the race to “hang in there...” many runners around us started to laugh and think hmmm.... I hope at this point I can hang in there or I am in some serious trouble. We settled in nice to our marathon goal pace hitting 7.16 on the first mile. We continued as planned down the 8 mile 650 ft elevation drop refusing to go any faster than our goal pace. We were running a smart race, which ended up being the key to our finish. With my issues of cramping up at the end of marathons, I really hydrated well which created other problems, such as several pee stops throughout the race. The first coming around four miles into the race. I told Joe to go ahead and I would try to catch up. I did catch up, but was worried that the varied pace would hurt me at the end. This section of the course was highway that was lined with woods on each side. Very scenic as the fall foliage in Northeast PA is nearing it's peak. Splits for 2-8 7.14, 7.13, 7.11, 7.15, 7.16, 7.15, 7.15.

Down we went into Carbondale where we were to pick up Joe's watch and to see our families. When we got there, my little girl Nina looked cold and tired as she waved to Daddy. I also looked over to my surprise to see my Mom was there. She had told my wife that she was coming in to see me but wanted to surprise me. I was surprised because Steamtown is a long trip from Western, PA. On we went down through the valley. I have to say that for a midsized race the fans and volunteers along the course were fantastic. Several people had stands set up giving out bananas and full water bottles. They did a great job of getting fluids to all the runners. As we headed to the half waypoint in the race we hit the clock in the perfect pace 1.34.50. Mile splits 9-13 7.23, 6.55, 7.08, 7.12, 7.09. Again, at mile 9 I had to make a pit stop and then spent the next mile playing catch up.

The next section of the course was the most scenic as it included several miles of rails to trails. This brought a welcomed change to the pounding of the roads. The beautiful Lackawanna River and trees with brightly colored red and yellow leaves lined the trails. This section also included a park with some paved jogging trails. Towards the end of this part, I felt strong and told Joe “we were going to do it, no doubt.” We began picking up the pace and then told ourselves to relax we still have a long way to go. The only real issues I had was that my hands were cold enough I couldn't do much with my fingers so to take gels I had to make a fist to get the gel out. We also saw our family coming out of the trail section, which gave us a nice lift heading into miles 18-20. Splits 14-18 7.08, 7.07, 7.13, 7.09, 7.03.

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Steamtown continued from page 4

The next section of the course had us exit the park and brought us into Olyphant home of the anchor memorial, which sits at one entrance into the town around the 20-mile mark. Splits 7.09, 7.13. 7.13.

Finally, what the marathon all comes down to the last 10 K. Really started feeling good and excited and started to pick up the pace and Joe and I started passing people. We then meet up with a pack of 5 to 6 runners really hammering and we decided to try to keep pace. Splits mile 21 and 22 6.55, 6.59. As we came into the last real flat section my legs began to feel tight but still feeling strong, we charged up the first significant hill with the pack of strong-paced runners. This actually felt good to work some different muscles and go uphill. We got a nice downhill until the next and steepest hill of the course which winded up a little to the top. During this part, we had lost the group that was pulling us for the last few miles as they pressed on. Splits 23-24 7.06, 7.12.

The last two miles had many turns with a one big hill right near the finish. I can remember a volunteer saying last turn and no more turns all the way to the finish. Once I made the turn I saw Coopers Sea Food Eatery and knew that I just needed to make it to the top and I was home free. As I climbed I began to think about pumping my arms and thought about my form. Man, that hill seemed to take a long time to climb. Joe and I each passed each other offering words of encouragement to one another. We finally crested the hill to see the finish line. Joe began to take off pumping his fist saying, "we did it, we did it, come on, let's finish this together." I became emotional thinking back to all of the hard work and months of preparation, that got me to this point. Splits 7.12, 7.27 = 3.09.16 place 124th PR by about 28 minutes. It really was just as I had planned and it made it more special because I had the opportunity to do it with a good friend. After finishing I could see how happy my wife and how proud my Mom was for me. Boston has a lot to live up to in order to equal Steamtown 09. I will be back!!



Congratulations to Chad and Joe for qualifying for Boston. Picture of Chad with his wife Cheryl and Mum after the race.



Come join the running club at FCC! Our focus is to introduce the fun of running to everyone willing to participate. Not a seasoned runner? Not a problem. We accommodate participants of all abilities and run as a team. There are none turned away and no one is left behind. It is not our goal to be the fastest or furthest running team in the world, but rather our goals are to run as a friendly group and to share a common interest in the enjoyable and healthy activity of running with any who are willing or who desire to run with us.

Runs vary in length, primarily depending on the distance the group elects to run on any given day, and are generally around 2-4 miles. Our Running club seeks to expand its participation base and is freely available to all students and faculty at FCC. The overall plan is to train for and compete in public running races such as the Thanksgiving Day "Turkey Trot" and the Baltimore 10 miler.

The official running days are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 6:30am. Runs begin on the steps of the Field House to stretch and decide how far the day's run will be. At 7:30, access to the college's showering facilities is available for those who wish to clean up before leaving.

Frederick Steeplechasers Running Club
Run for the Pie 10k

“Grand Prix Event”
Saturday November 7, 2009



A very interesting race from race director Mark Lawrence with a little help from the bakery!

Location is the entrance to the Frederick Watershed. It's an out and back course on lightly traveled Mountindale and Putnam Roads that roll along the base of the Catoctin Mountains between Frederick and Thurmont. It's really a gorgeous area especially in the fall. A hint of smoke was in the air from the log cabins nestled in the trees.

Registration is on the morning of the race no entrance fee for club members, but everyone is encouraged to bring a pie, \$5.00 for non-members. The 10K course is out and back, two roads only, Mountindale Road and Putnam Road, downhill for 3.1 miles turnaround and what seems a lot more than 3.1 miles back up to the finish. No chips or computerized results, no numbers come to think of it. Basically run and when you finish record your finishing time on the sheet provided, your time must be slower than the person above you on the sheet.

Awards are pies (the title of the run kinda gives that away) - it is a fun race so you don't have to be fast to win one. Twenty four runners competed for the 21 pies but plenty of Starbucks coffee at the finish. The run's appeal had reached the ears of some out of town runners and we had participants from Annapolis and Alexandria. The men's winner, Doug Oates, had been taking it easy since winning the Mountain Marathon in April. He started picking up his training sometime after the birth of his second child, Ryan William, on September 20. His time - 34:50 - appears to be a course and event record. The female winner - Cassy Crouse-Rizoulis - also appears to have set a course record; however, Janet Urbanski still holds the event record from when the race was held in Brunswick. As there were only runners and Victor acting as lead on his bike, water stop attendant all the pies were on a table 'alone' for 35 minutes.



Winter Training - important rules

Wear Microfiber material it is soft, durable, often water resistant, and wicks away moisture.

Be seen to be safe. Reflective vests, reflective taping, and blinking LED lights all help you to be seen by others. Flashlights or headlamps are also a good idea.

Proper hydration, whether in warm or cold weather, helps the body to function properly, keeps you moving throughout your workout.

Before embarking spend 10 or 15 minutes indoors **warming up**, gentle stretching, jogging in place, walking up and down stairs.

Be Warm, be safe, be healthy and Keep on Running

Mountain Masochist 50 Mile Trail Run

By Steve Dobson

Photos: Clark Zealand

At 5:30 am on Saturday, November 7th nearly 300 shivering runners lined up near the James River visitor's center on the Blue Ridge Parkway near Lynchburg, Virginia in below freezing temperatures to run the Mountain Masochist 50 Mile Trail Run. The air was crisp and the sky was clear. The weather forecast was calling for a high in the mid 50s with no rain in sight. Perfect running weather. This was the 27th running of the MMTR and it was shaping up to be one of the best ever. The men's side featured at least seven runners who could win this thing including Vilmar Nunes of Brazil, the current Badwater 135 course record holder. The women's side featured last year's champion, Justine Morrison and the 2005 Western States champ, Annette Bednosky. Although his protégé, Clark Zealand, was now the race director for the second year, this was still a David Horton production featuring "Horton Miles" so the total mileage was in question although Horton claimed the night before that it was between 51 and 51.5 miles. I had previously heard estimates of up to 54. For those not familiar with David Horton directed races, "Horton Miles" are distances that are usually longer in length than the standard 5280 foot mile.

The course, a point to point run, starts and ends with a little asphalt, the rest is a mix of old jeep roads, gravel roads and some technical single track trails thrown in just to spice things up a bit as it winds its way through the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains climbing a total of 9000 feet and descending 7000 feet as it makes its way to Montebello, Virginia. Regardless of the surface, the one constant is hills. There are many. Some short and steep others long, slow grinds. A twenty time veteran of the race described the course as a twenty mile warm-up followed by a really tough marathon followed by a nice four mile downhill finish. There are cut-offs to be met at each aid station with a 12 hour maximum for the race. For the first half, you get a ten minute buffer with a warning. After that, if you don't make a cut-off, you're done. A woman told me she once finished the race in 12:00:16 and was told she was not an official finisher and was refused the finisher's premium.



Quoting Dr. Horton during the pre race pasta dinner; "The first part of this is really stupid. You run up the parkway one and a half miles, turn around and come back". After crossing the James River, the course loops back under the bridge and proceeds for what is listed as another 4 miles. It was actually about 5.5 miles before we finally hit the single track Cashaw Creek Trail that turned into a rough double track old jeep road that rolled gently through the woods. As we hit the trail, the sun was just coming up and there was just enough light to be able to see where you were running. The entire course was well marked with white streamers hanging from the trees and pink arrows painted on the ground. The pink arrows took precedence over the white streamers if any discrepancies arose due to streamers being moved by persons who seem to think those kind of things are funny. After blowing by the first two aid stations, I stopped at the third one long enough to get my bottles of Accelerade Hydro topped off and grab a banana and a quarter ham & cheese on wheat w/ mustard which turned out to be really good. My biggest hindrance of the day was remembering that the fully stocked aid stations were not all you can eat buffets. With the exception of "The Loop", most of the aid stations were between 2 and 3.5 miles apart. The first significant climb of the day was a long dirt road climb after leaving the aid station. This was followed by a pretty significant downhill. Not knowing fully what I was going to be facing throughout the day, I decided to run the course on the somewhat conservative side. I wasn't going to push the up hills nor pound the downs. Coming into aid station four at Otter Creek, we had the first real stream crossing of the day. A nice row of rocks provided a path across but, you know, I have been nicknamed 'Splash' so ... After passing through a tunnel under the Blue Ridge Parkway, the course turns onto a fine gravel road that continued on an upward climb for about two miles. I ran most of this portion with a lady from Nashville named Ginger who was running her first 50 miler, (like, you know, this was my 2nd, I was sooo much more experienced than her) and was having ITB problems. She would drop back, catch up and, at one point, built up a significant lead on me. This climb was followed by an equally pounding down hill. The start of the dreaded eight mile climb began at around mile 22 near the Lynchburg Reservoir. The first half of this climb gently rolled with one decent climb between aid stations nine and ten. The tenth aid station at 26.9 miles was considered the half way point. With the temperature beginning to rise, I began to strip off the excess clothing I was wearing as I was approaching the aid station (sorry if you're eating while reading this, I know it's not a pretty image). Our drop bags had been laid out in nice rows based on which of the five shuttle buses we took to the start line. A race official asks how I felt as I stuffed my clothing into the bag. I told her I was feeling amazingly good. This would become the question of the day at just about every aid station in the second half. I had been out there for about four hours and forty minutes. I figured I wasn't breaking nine hours and, by all accounts, the worst was yet to come so I wasn't sure I was going to break ten. I had already decided to

forget about time and enjoy the day. The next three miles was an uphill climb to the Buck Mountain aid station. I caught back up to Ginger who was still struggling but her spirits were good. Along with her was Tim from Harrisburg, Pa. who looked familiar. It was later that I realized I had previously met him at the inaugural Rehoboth Beach marathon last November. He was having problems with his feet and some stomach issues. He would eventually drop at around 40 miles. Around a mile or so into the climb, I heard a few notes of music and knew that the tease was beginning. I wished Ginger and Tim the best and pushed onward and upward. As the trail switched back and forth, I could hear the music getting louder and then softer, finally the music was blasting as we neared the aid station at the top of the climb. But instead of the 'Amazing Grace' I was hoping to hear, they were playing the theme from 'Rocky'. While still an inspiring pick-me-up, I was really looking forward to 'Amazing Grace'. Leaving the aid station, I was greeted with a nice two and a half mile downhill followed by a quick uphill to the start of 'The Loop'. I had heard mixed reviews about this portion of the course. It was a five mile loop that would put you right back where you started. Some said it was their favorite section of the course; others had a different opinion of it. The start of the loop was nothing short of sweet. It was a nice smooth, flat single track that felt like it was cushioned with a spectacular view of the valley below. This began to change as the trail became a little rougher and started to climb. Then things became real nasty real fast. The trail became narrow with short, steep, rocky climbs and descents. In the middle of it all, the trail passed over what some would call a rock garden. More like boulders. Large boulders. But since there was no water to fall into, I managed to stay upright. Coming out of the loop, I'm asked again how I was feeling. I replied; "Amazingly good!" He responded with; "You're the first one to say that. You look good, you've have 13 miles to go and you should be able to pick off a few runners along the way." About that time I felt a slap on the back and a shout; "How about a high five for the comeback!!" It was Ginger who was looking like she was about ready to run a 5K. "Let's go. We can finish this!" A half mile later, as we're racing down a dirt road, I check my GPS and we're running a 6:30 pace. A little faster than I wanted to go. I told her I was dropping back and to keep going. She was looking great. At the 43 mile mark, the course turned off of the dirt road onto a blue blazed trail which is an old section of the Appalachian Trail. The next three miles climbed up a narrow, steep at times, winding trail made a little more difficult by the leaf coverage. The final four mile descent was a little treacherous at times with wet leaf covered rocks on steep descents but the majority of the rest of the trail was a nice run. Leaving the trail for an old dirt road, the descent became a little more pounding as I picked up my pace knowing the end was near. As I turned onto an asphalt road, I was surprisingly told I had about a quarter of a mile to go. As I rounded the bend in the road, I could see what looked like the finish line area. I picked up my pace, probably a little too much as I began to feel a little queasy. I figured I could throw-up after I crossed the finish line so I pushed on. I crossed the finish line in Montebello with a 40th place finish out of 226 finishers with a time of 9:17:43. When it was over, I was feeling great. I really felt like I still had many miles left in me. Which, of course, now leads to the over-analyzing part. Did I have one of those days where everything went right or did I run too conservatively knowing this was only my second 50 miler? There is a fine line between doing well and crashing and burning.

One of the best things about an ultra is that you are right there with the elites. After the race, Valmir was standing around when he saw me and stuck his hand out. We shook hands and congratulated each other. He had finished fourth and seemed to be extremely happy with that. He loved the course but was amazed that at every turn there was another hill to climb. The winner, Geoff Roes from Alaska, ran an astonishing 6:27:55 beating the old course record by over 20 minutes. After 27 years, very few have ever broken 7 hours. Geoff had just broken 6:30. The women's winner, Tamsin Anstey of British Columbia, ran the fifth fastest women's time ever in 8:09:07. And Ginger, she ran a 9:08:08 which was good enough for fifth woman overall.

The fact that there were 41 DNFs shows that this course is not a stroll through the woods. In addition to the long climbs and quad busting descents, the cutoffs are considered to be brutal by some. Although the course is tough, it is a beautiful run through the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. The organization is second to none. And Horton, well ...the jury's still out on him.



Started in 1983 the Mountain Masochist Trail Run has earned its reputation for being one of the "best trail races in the east." The course itself is a challenging combination of roads, jeep trails, and single track that can cause even the most experienced runner to breathe a sigh of relief at the finish line in Montebello, VA.

The MMTR is event #5 in the Beast Series

**Bank Of America
Chicago Marathon**

Finally, A Marathon I Enjoyed!.....By Crista Horn

It took me almost two years before I mustered the courage to run another marathon. After running two marathons where I hit "The Wall" and never recovered, missing my goal of a sub 4:00 in the Marine Corps by 3 minutes, I decided I was done for a while. Instead I enjoyed a range of half-marathons. During that time I joined Tim O'Keefe's Sunday running group and met friends who inspired me to overcome my fears and try again. Conversations during those many miles convinced me the fall of 2009 was the year to get over my anxiety, break through the infamous "wall", and enjoy a marathon. I registered for the Chicago Marathon in late spring, planning to run with my cousin Jenny who lives in downtown Chicago (she injured herself during the summer and did not run the full marathon). Fellow Steeplechasers Tim O'Keefe, Malcolm, Ron Robisch, Byron Stay, and Rick O'Donnell were huge influences in my decision. Not only did they lead by example they taught me a lot about running.

I decided this time around I was going to increase my training to include more weekly miles, speed work, and a faster training pace for long runs. My number one goal for this marathon was to have fun, which I was not convinced was possible. I had to believe Tim, Malcolm, Byron and Ron were not making it up. My second goal was to break the 4:00 mark.

As always, I loved training for the marathon. I am a mother of two very active children. It is not often I have a few hours to myself, making 20 mile runs enticing (I don't get out much). The addition of speed work mid-week added a little zest to my running. Long runs were enjoyed with great people such as Ron, Rick, and a new running friend Kerry Shepherd.

When the weekend of October 11th finally arrived, I was excited and nervous, but not anxiety ridden as I had been for the Marine Corps in 2007. I flew to Chicago by myself, my husband stayed home with the kids. (I failed to mention how incredibly supportive my husband was during all of my marathon training. It takes a special person to understand the commitment to training).

The morning of the marathon I was up early after sleeping maybe 3 hours. Race jitters! I left Jenny's house by 5:40 am in 30 degree weather wearing many layers, including a black garbage bag to hold the heat. I walked almost a mile to the train station, all of which Jenny and I practiced the day before so I was confident I knew what I was doing. I was joined by half a dozen other runners at the train station. The train pulled up a few minutes later packed with runners. I could already feel the adrenaline running through my body. I arrived at the start at Grant Park with more than an hour to spare. The start was well organized with the most enormous bag check I have ever seen. No lines either! I walked around a bit enjoying the excitement of all the runners. I watched the sun rise over the skyscrapers and buildings of downtown Chicago near Michigan Avenue. What a beautiful sight! With 40 minutes to spare I decided to get in line for the port-a-potty one last time, noticing that the lines were now very long. By the time I used the bathroom the corrals were closed. I followed the masses and jumped the fence. I ditched the garbage bag and found myself well insulated by the sheer volume of people in the corral. There was not an inch to spare as runners continued to jump the fence. As 7:30 approached, sweatshirts, sweat pants, long sleeve shirts, etc were flung to the side, covering many a face in the sea of runners. It was comical, as everyone was in great spirits.

Finally, the gun went off and the 4:00 corral started to move forward. By the time we crossed the starting line a few minutes later we were able to actually run. I was worried I'd run 10 minute miles in the beginning of the race because of the huge number of runners. That was not the case. When my watch signaled the mile one marker I was shocked to see I had just run a 7:44 mile. I had to tell myself to slow down. I was absolutely swept away by the number of people who came out on a freezing Sunday morning (literally freezing - it was 30 degrees) to support the runners. Still, I needed to slow down. I stopped at the first water station between mile 1 and 2, not because I was thirsty but because it was part of my race strategy. I was determined to stay hydrated and planned to stop at every water station. My second mile was a 9:10. My third mile was a 9:44. Now I told myself to speed up. (A few weeks prior to the race I asked Tim O'Keefe for help with race strategy. One piece of advice given was to stay within an 8:50-9:05 range. Another piece of advice was to not wait until I felt thirsty to drink or hungry to refuel. Thanks Tim, your advice was golden!) I ran mile 4 in 8:23. I took a GU and water at the aid station between mile 3 and 4. The next few miles were good, with mile 5 an 8:35, mile 6 an 8:48, mile 7 an 8:37. I was feeling great, enjoying the masses of race supporters. At mile 5 I remembered I had my iPod shuffle with newly downloaded songs. I laughed because it took me five miles to remember. The crowd support was that awesome. I turned on my iPod to a low volume so I could hear the crowds as well as the other runners. Around mile 6 the sea of runners broke out in song to serenade a fellow runner for her birthday. So fun! I was having a great time. With the miles flying by I thought perhaps I should slow down a bit, fearing hitting the "wall" again around mile 18. I decided to keep pace because I was feeling so good. Mile 8 was an 8:23 and mile 9 was a 9:01. I clearly was not running an even pace, but it was working. At the half marathon point I was feeling so good I contemplated speeding up to see if I could run under a 3:50. I quickly decided against it because of the ever so fearful "wall." I was accomplishing my first goal of enjoying a marathon. Why risk that? I continued on pace, taking GU every 4 miles and drinking water at every aid station. My cousin Jenny met me at mile 20 to run the last 6 miles with me. Jenny, my petite social bug cousin, recognized a friend running the marathon along side us at mile 21 and proceeded to introduce us. We ran together for a little while but lost each other at the next aid station. The run through Chinatown between mile 21 and mile 22 was AWESOME. The streets were fully decorated and completely packed with people. I was still on pace, running 8:40, 8:58, 8:59, 8:58. Then at mile 23 I started to slow a bit. I was starting to get tired. Knowing I had only 2 miles left when I hit the mile 24 marker, I apologized to Jenny and cranked my iPod up loud. It was exactly what I needed. I ran mile 24 in 8:53 and mile 25 in 8:30. I was determined to finish strong. I crossed the finish line with a 3:54:22 time. I was ecstatic! I accomplished two very important goals. I finally enjoyed a marathon and I broke 4 hours. Wahoo!



Crista and Jenny enjoying their sub 4 hour Chicago marathon

At the finish I called my wonderfully supportive husband to share the news. He was of course happy for me, but promptly followed his congratulations by asking me if I had it in me to shave 9 minutes off my time to qualify for Boston. Wow. I decided to thank him for his confidence in me but told him I wanted to enjoy my accomplishment for a little longer.

Now the question is, can I really shave 9 whole minutes off of my PR to qualify for Boston?

Grand Prix 2010

leigh bells ring, carolers sing and the 2010 Grand Prix is getting into full fling! Welcome to a new year and a new grand prix series. This year we are looking to change things up a bit. In an effort to increase participation, and competition for all our members, we are going to try a year-long format.

The schedule for this year will offer 14 options for the men, and 15 choices for our lady runners. The races are evenly split between “longer” runs of 15k and above, and “shorter” races below 15K, with an additional “ladies only” event.

After long, thoughtful, and sometimes raucous deliberation, here is the 2010 Grand Prix schedule:

| Month | Date | Race Title | Distance |
|-----------|--------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| January | Saturday 23rd | Lewis 10 miler | 10 miles |
| February | Sunday 28th | Club Challenge | 10 miles |
| March | Saturday 20th | Needwood | 5 miles |
| April | Saturday 10th | New Market Elementary | 5K |
| May | Sunday 2nd | Frederick ½ Marathon | 13.1 miles |
| June | Saturday 5th | Hillcrest Elementary | 5K |
| July | Saturday 31st TBD | Catoctin 50k FSRC Summer Decathlon | 50K 2 miler |
| August | TBD TBD | Pie Run Women’s Distance Festival | 10K 5K |
| September | Saturday 11th | Market Street Mile | 1 mile |
| October | | Freedom Run Marathon | 26.2 miles |
| November | Thursday 25th Saturday 20th | Emmitsburg Turkey Trot JFK 50 miler | 5 miles 50 miler |
| December | TBD | Goodloe Byron | 15k |

Rules for the 2010 Grand Prix can be viewed on the Competition web page

We are excited for the new year, and the new grand prix – hopefully, you are as well! Any questions/comments/concerns/whatever, please feel free to contact John Stuart – john.stuart@fcps.org

Race Calendar - Check the website and forum for the latest updates and further details www.steeplechasers.org

Quotable Quote

"You have to forget your last marathon before you try another. Your mind can't know what's coming." - Frank Shorter

Please forward any articles, quotes, stories or suggestions for the newsletter to Malcolm Senior