

A lucky 7 in Striderland for 2013

What will money buy, a lot, Hy-Vee Road Races

When a really "big dog" enters the road racing world (\$120,000 in prize money-yikes!), everyone speaks timidly, hoping for the best. Their magic in the triathlon world and infusing energy on the blue oval are noteworthy, maybe unbelievable. A corporate giant flexed its muscle but may have stumbled a bit on their first try on-the-roads. Moving to Sunday, dismissing the tree lined and park like course, adding a 6k instead of 5k and dropping the name of the race all seemed a little odd. The 45th edition of the Drake road race may have been a learning curve, let's hope. Hy-Vee is a darn good organizer and will definitely create a smile on every mile of the local road racing scene.

Runablaze continues to fan the flames of Iowa's distance running

Fast running needs help. It is the passion and hope of all great races and running communities. While Iowa high school and college running celebrate speed, road racing lacks appreciation of great performances. So let's celebrate repeat winners of the best runners in central Iowa - Jason Flogel and Danna Herrick. Jason was 8th at Dam to Dam 20k in 1:05:46, sped the Grandview 4 mile (Dubuque) in 19:33 and set a best at Bix-7 in 35:40. Danna specializes in the marathon. At Lincoln she finished 2nd with a best 2:44:16 and ran 3 seconds slower in 2:44:19 at a windy New York City Marathon.

Dowling Catholic dominates the Cross Country world!

Dowling Catholic girls won the state championship edging out Ames, for their 6th championship in 7 year. The boys were 3rd after championships in 2011 and 2012. Dowling Catholic is dominant. While Dowling Catholic continued its winning ways, the Boone boys duo did the same. Chandler Austin and Albert Meier were the best 1-2 punch on the boy's side, always side by side on the podium including state. It was a banner cross country year, as ISU women won regionals on their home course. Iowa Central women & men were 1st & 2nd respectively at the JC nationals and a record 7 individual HS preps were at national xc meets.

So much for tradition, Dam to Dam drops 20k

Just prior to the new year Iowa's Distance Classic drops a 20k bomb, changing their premier race to a Half-Marathon. After 34 years and over 87,000 finishers, the best Dam race in central Iowa added .7 miles to their course. The energetic and exploding Des Moines downtown isn't the sleepy town of 1980, the first year of Dam to Dam. The race was one of the few events in the heart of the capital city at the time. Saylorville Dam and the Western Gateway Park, are bookends to this classy race. Race organizers took the best option in connecting these two landmarks. Savor the 35th Dam to Dam, a little longer this year.

Records for the fall races . . .

Living History Farms has always been vulnerable to Mother Nature, more so this year as the temperature dipped to low double digits with a windy and snow covered course that iced over creeks (until runners started to cross them). Regardless thousands finished the race, far more than the last date when the weather gods played havoc - 1991 with 9 inches of fresh snow race morning. IMT Des Moines Marathon enjoyed a record number of entrants, 10,000, which is more than five times as many as the inaugural year 2002.

Where in the world is Stan Smith?

Stan has been the man at central Iowa races starting in the mid-70s. He was always at the start setting up a sound system, on the course posting direction arrows and at the finish making sure there was a finishing chute. He really did everything, including running fast and long in his younger days. His passion, stories, knowledge and quirky personality are missed. Replacing an icon is tough. Steady long time volunteers are scarce especially in an era of escalating runner expectations and race budgets that require an accounting degree.

Drake highs and low

The Drake Relays had a special year with the USATF mile championship and a London games rematch - heady stuff for Des Moines, Iowa. Over a half million dollars of prize money, gold medalists, world record holders and the list goes on . . . thanks to Hy Vee and Wellmark sponsorships. The last weekend in April is special. But Drake didn't stop there hosting one of the top high school track & field championships and the USATF championships. At the end of the year Drake learned they lost out on hosting the NCAA championships through 2018 after hosting 3 of the last 6 years.

By Cal Murdock, observing Iowa Running for over three decades