

***** A lucky 7 in Striderland for 2010 *****

***** The Big 3 get Bigger & Better, guess that equals Best *****

If numbers alone tell the story, the 31st Dam to Dam, 9th Des Moines Marathon and 32nd Living History Farms continue as the best races in Central Iowa. Take a bow race directors – Dam to Dam's Kurt Schaeffer with 9,215 finishers, DM Marathon's Chris Burch with 6,647 finishers and Living History Farm's Steve Bobenhouse with 7,285 finishers. This trio of races appeals to a wide spectrum of runners from the 5Ker to Marathoner. From point to point, to over hill & dale courses and serious to rollicking fun events. If any city could be blessed with a better group of races please step forward. They set the road running standard, inspiring all the other races and race directors. Thank you Dam to Dam, DM Marathon and Living History Farms.

***** Lisa Koll, you make us Proud! *****

As a Ft Dodge high school runner Lisa gave no indication of what was to follow. Boom, it didn't take long as she claimed NCAA title after title. Her senior year at Iowa State she scored a college record in the 10,000 meter, with an oh so fast 31:18:07 on the track, giving her the 6th best US women's time ever. Following college graduation she wasted no time becoming part of a prestigious running group in Oregon and winning the Quad Cities Bix-7, the first Iowan in over 30 year to do so. While Lisa's distance running prowess overshadows any Striderland prep in history, 2010 saw former Roosevelt HS runner Kiel Uhl finished 6th for ISU at the NCAA 10K with a 28:58 and former Johnston HS runner Obsie Birru now at Grandview become an NAIA All-American.

***** Good golly it's Captain Midnight *****

Midnight Madness can often get lost in the current road racing landscape. Maybe it's age of 39 years or midsummer humidity has taken its toll. Not so anymore as it has brightened the midnight sky. A record 2,469 finishers ran through the streets of Ames, surpassing the long time 1983 record when it was the biggest race in Striderland. It's hard not to like this race with 24 year veteran Roman Lynch at the helm. His cape and charm woo those with speed, first time runners and anyone that likes a joke, even if he has told it already (and he has). The Captain has inspired this sleepy race into a can not miss "Race of the Summer" featuring a wonderful youth run with tots in capes, a big time 5K, a speedy 10K, a challenging 15K combined timed event, silver medalist Danny Harris announcing and a party into the wee hours. Golly, this is one great race.

***** Got some speed, show it off *****

Striderland, can you feel the breeze? Runners of the world are at your doorstep, running sub-5 minutes per mile. Not every year matches up but a 2:14 DM Marathon, 10 men under 1:05 at Dam to Dam 20K and 5 men at DM Half-Marathon between 1:05:10 to 1:05:18 goes down as one very speedy year. The Marathon time was the best in Iowa history and same goes for the competitiveness of 20K and 13.1 miles. While the men were dominated by non Iowans the women had home grown roots. Runablaze Iowa women placed 3 of the top 5 at the DM Marathon and 5 of the top 8 at Dam to Dam. Six women team members have blazed to sub 2:55 marathons of late as the most powerful women's group in Iowa history. The best of Iowa men was Runablaze Jason Fogel with 3 marathons within minutes of breaking 2:20

***** No one had the Blues *****

Relays week never had it so good for road runners. While the current trend in running is to go long distance, along comes the Blue Mile. It quickly captured the hearts of hundreds of runners in many competitive divisions ending with world class speed vying for thousands of dollars. The first Blue Mile, the brainchild of Relays Director Brian Brown, was greeted with perfect weather, huge crowds, a festive atmosphere and a quick stroll in downtown Des Moines. It was the talk of the town, and still is. Striderland running needs a signature event and the Blue Mile for all was just the start of another great week at the 101st Drake Relays and 42nd On-the-Roads. A month later Drake played host to the USA Track & Field championships. Does it get any better?

***** Those darn Dowling Girls did it again *****

Coach Father Kirby lost to graduation the best 1-2 punch is Iowa History, as Katie Flood went to Washington University and Ashlie Decker to Minnesota University. Their leadership crowned 3 state cross country team titles along with their 4 individual titles. So how did this year shape up? Who would have guessed but the team placed 5 in the top 20 team scoring at the State XC meet and took the 4A crown by a wider margin than the previous year. Next they proceeded to finish 17th in the nation at the High School Nike Team Nationals in Oregon. It really doesn't get any better. The team now tops the list for most consecutive wins by a Striderland high school team, beating the boys teams from yesteryear. Only 8 more months to XC season, will the Dowling girls continue to surprise?

***** Less we forget, completing the circle *****

Races punctuate the Striderland landscape, laying claim to what makes a great running community. There's another trio of races that does it just right by picking the right season or cause. During the dead of the winter, February seems like an unlikely time for a race, or does it? The Y's Red Flannel race pulls it off just perfectly. 1,422 finishers think so too and all for a good cause, the youth of Des Moines. Just prior to spring races, St Pat has grown as quick as any race now with 925 finishers, along with donating to many DM charities. In the fall the biggest "cause" race in Des Moines is just a perfect celebration of life and living. Race for Cure with over 20,000 in attendance boosts some speedy running too. Races complete the cycle in Striderland but there's certainly alot of glue to keeping it together. FitnessSports.com has become the standard for daily runner information, while volunteers like Joe Kobes, founder of Dam to Dam, have provided endless hours of service. Thanks for your 30 plus years of devotion Joe.

By Cal Murdock, observing Iowa Running for over three decades