

秀秀秀 A lucky 7 in Striderland for 2006 秀秀秀

秀秀秀 Iowa Women, Ablazing on the Roads 秀秀秀

Arguably, 2006 was the best group of Iowa women runners in history. At the beginning of the road race season they displayed their talent at the Drake Relays On-the-ROAD. In the Half-Marathon Robyn Friedman won topping three other Iowa women, Erin Moeller, Bethany Lewis and Lisa Marshall. The time separating them was 58 seconds. At the marathon distance they ran superior times in 2006 - - Bethany 2:48:27, Robyn 2:42:19 and Erin 2:41:08 joining only eight other Iowa women in the all-time sub-2:50 club. At the end of the season they teamed up, creating the women's RunAblaze team finishing sixth at the USATF team cross-country club championship in December. Iowa women were hot on the roads.

秀秀秀 Des Moines Marathon matures into Major Iowa Road Race 秀秀秀

The past is history. Chris Burch, race director of the DM Marathon, has captained the race from turbulent waters into calm seas. The marathon captured over 1000 finishers (a hundred more than 2005) along with top winning times. The half-marathon continues to grow as a record 1595 finished, again with top winning times. The new 5 kilometer was well received along with an amazing expanded runner expo. Any race that makes it to year five must be consider a success. In the case of the DM Marathon it's now one of the best races in Iowa.

秀秀秀 Dam to Dam just keeps getting Better 秀秀秀

Is there a race in Iowa that just does everything right? Dam , this is one wonderful race. A storied history, unique course, pre and post race food and celebration, beautiful results booklet and the list goes on. Year number 27 didn't disappoint as a record number of finishers were in the 20km, 3530 and 5km, 1224. The top runners were there in force as Mike Morgan, Hanson Team member out of Michigan, struck early and won in the third best time ever, 1:01:24 (4:56 pace). On the women's side Casey Owen, former Roosevelt HS star, became the youngest winner ever scoring a 1:15:06. Mike and Casey were awarded money as 2006 Roads Scholars by the RRCA, a signal of an up and coming runner. Dam to Dam is Iowa's Distance Classic, they prove it every year.

秀秀秀 Living History Farms part rock festival, part speedy running 秀秀秀

Everyone comes early to this November race. The cold doesn't phase the thousands as the energy of the race warms everyone. The start featured Adidas beach balls bouncing above the hoards, a prayer of Thanksgiving and the National Anthem that brought a tear to the eye of many. Then boom , the race starts with a hoop and a howler that is heard throughout the farm. The course is perfect, the finish even better as the 1875 town excites those wearing costumes or hardly anything on at all. Over 400 came from Nebraska and the Minneapolis Star Tribune featured the race with a full page article. The winner, Matt Downin of Madison, WI, weeks later won the USATF team XC championship. Almost 5,000 finishers continues to give this race a split personality, rockers and speedsters coexist.

秀秀秀 Cross country youth on display, unbelievable talent 秀秀秀

At the high school level Katie Flood, a Dowling freshman, lost in her first race of the season by two seconds. That didn't happen the rest of the season. She won the state meet, tearing up course records along the way. Stephan Dak, a Marshalltown Senior from Sudan, breezed through the season, winning big at every meet including a minute margin at the state meet. Iowa State sophomores Lisa Koll of Ft Dodge and Kiel Uhl of DM Roosevelt , provided collegiate excitement. In February Kiel won the USATF Junior Championship, the fourth ISU runner to do so in history. In November Lisa won All-America honors at the NCAA meet. Katie, Stephan, Kiel and Lisa have quietly and proudly put in the training and work to become the best runners in the nation.

秀秀秀 Midnight Madness is the true test of a runner 秀秀秀

Anyone can run with the crowds on a cool morning but real runners test themselves. Midnight Madness for 35 years has provided the ultimate test. Can you run in evening heat and humidity? 2006 was no exception as those that toed the start strained to complete the distance. Matthew Chesang won again, this time beating former Drake great Jason Lehmkuhle by seconds, winning in 30:05 (2 seconds faster than his 2005 win). Jason's Team USA Minnesota teammate, Kristen Nicolini won the women's race in 35:07. The legends of Iowa running have proved themselves at Midnight Madness. The everyday jogger becomes a real runner at this race.

秀秀秀 Great races make great running communities 秀秀秀

And great race directors make great races. Thank you Kent Kelderman, who is stepping down after a three year stint directing Loop the Lake and Capital Pursuit. Rarely do race directors take on two races per year, so Kent's double duty deserves a big pat on the back. Kent left both races in great shape. The 8km Loop the Lake had record 2006 numbers and the 10 mile Capital Pursuit was near the best years, 1984 and 2002. The health of any running community is its' races, thanks to Kent and many others, Central Iowa is in good shape.

秀秀秀 Not in the top 7 but notable 秀秀秀

Jason Flogel continues to move up the runner ranks, now the best in the area with a second at Drake 8km, fourth at Dam to Dam, eighth at Midnight Madness and a late season 1:08:23 Half-Marathon.

Fifth Season 8km, down the road in Cedar Rapids, had a race for the ages as 20 men broke 24 minutes (sub 4:50 pace) rivaling the best Drake 10km years of 1989-1991. Blake Bolden, ISU Assistant Coach, ran a 23:45.

By Cal Murdock, observing Iowa Running for three decades.