

««« A lucky 7 in Striderland for 2012 «««

««« Dam great changes! «««

For 33 years Dam to Dam finished at Nollen Plaza, a downtown landmark. As the race grew from 1,000 to over 10,000 runners, change was inevitable. New was the finish area near the Central Library, start area in the middle of Saylorville Dam, packet pickup at Veteran's Auditorium, crossing the Center Street Bridge, 5k route to the State Capitol and the list goes on. The changes were well received by the weather gods, as a perfect day made for a perfect race. The hope is the new Drake Relays road races with a Sunday race, starting at the Capitol and finishing in the stadium (shades of the marathon days many decades ago) do as well.

««« The state crown "baton" is passed to the boys «««

Dowling Catholic girls won 5 consecutive state cross country championships, 2007-2011. The Dowling Catholic boys are now in-charge of the crowning achievement in high school long distance running. They won state in 2011 and again this year with a solid and easy victory. Like the dominant girl teams, the boys followed their lead - - upper class leadership, state individual champion (Jason Thomas) and qualifying for Nike Team Nationals. Good luck to the boys as they attempt more state championships to keep the dynasty alive.

««« The club that gives it all . . . «««

The Capital Striders running club started unofficially in 1983 and officially in 1987 to represent Des Moines runners and gain a foothold in the community. A few decades have passed and running is the norm plus races have run wild. The Striders changed their mission to a club with a great social standing and giving back to the community. They give scholarships to high school seniors, youth track clubs, Make-a-Wish Foundation, Central Iowa Trail Association, Boy & Girls Club and wherever the need is great. Many races have large budgets as entry fees fill their coffers but the club is like a tortoise with small events that pay off in big ways.

««« Blazing Fast «««

The Runablaze Iowa team has matured. The team concept to assist post-collegiate athletes began in 2006 and has sprouted a team of 34 top runners, over 25 victories at Iowa races in 2012 and 5 runners at the Olympic Marathon Trials. The best of the team are Jason Flogel and Danna Herrick (Kelly). Jason had an all-star year with a 2:21:53 at the trials, 31:06 10,000 meters on the track, 24:38 8k, 51:10 10 mile, 1:04:28 20k and 1:07:35 Half-Marathon. A banner year for Jason. Danna was no less impressive with a 2:45:42 at the trials, 29:15 8k, 59:22 10 mile, 1:15:38 20k and 1:19:41 Half-Marathon. Danna had a powerful year. The pride of Iowa, Runablaze athletes.

««« The Perfect Distance «««

If you like to race distances of double figure miles (10 to 13.1), you are in good company. Nationally the Half-Marathon distance is the champ. Striderland proves the message, Drake Relays with over 1350 Half runners, Dam to Dam with almost 7,000 in the 20k, Capital Pursuit had record numbers in the 30 year old 10 mile and DM Marathon had 3275 Half runners. As thousands of finishers can attest, run long enough to test endurance but not so long to wear the body out for months. The Half-Marathon distance has grown to be king for the serious runner.

««« 36 hours «««

Fall is all about cool weather, great marathons and cross country running. Oh and fast computer skills to enter the best end-of-the-year race in the US, Living History Farms. The farm race opened registration a few months prior to race day and 36 hours later the race filled with 7,500 runners from throughout the midwest. 32 states to be exact. Nebraska's 510 runners edged out Minnesota's 459 runners for the largest entrants out of state. The farm race didn't disappoint: a beautiful running day in November with great competition, team spirit, costumes and runners who stayed around for hours after the race, reveling in the sun.

««« Color, Mud, Fire, Neon - this is running? «««

"Entertainment" races collected hundreds of thousands of dollars in entry fees going to out-of-state profit making organizers. What did the Striderland runners get? Paint and mud . . . what is this all about? OK maybe it was fun, but running?

What about Lisa Uhl, 13th at the Olympic 10,000 meter in a 31:12.8 best, ISU Betsy Saina winning the NCAA XC Championship or Diane Nukuri-Johnson setting a Dam to Dam record of 1:07:52? Now that's running!

By Cal Murdock, observing Iowa Running for over three decades