

A lucky 7 in Striderland for 2017

DAM - 39 forever!

Dam to Dam shocked the central Iowa running world September 18 when it was announced the beloved race would end with the 2018 edition. Iowa's Distance Classic was started by runners with the desire for a great road race in Des Moines - mission accomplished. The race has been true to its roots - low entry fee, volunteer organization, good competition and all runners & families are treated to a great race weekend. It became obvious to the long-time organizers as the race grew to 10,000, a change was needed. Assuredly there will be another race early summer from Saylorville Dam to downtown, but none like this DAM race.

Friedman and Moeller "retire" from competitive running

Robyn Friedman (Newton) and Erin Moeller (Mt Vernon) while not living in the heart of Iowa, are Striderland winners at the Drake Relays On-the-ROADS, Dam to Dam, Capital Pursuit and more. They are the best twosome to hit the roads in Iowa. Their best day was at the Women's Olympic Trials the day before the Boston Marathon on a spectator friendly course where Robyn finished 9th (2:35:02) and Erin 10th (2:36:51). The Wartburg College graduates and Runablaze Iowa teammates have captured the hearts of Striderland.

Johnston High School Girls capture another XC title

Another Central Iowa dynasty? Dowling Catholic girls won the state cross country title 6 straight years (2007-2013), now it's time for Johnston. They set a point total record at the 2016 state meet. They returned in 2017 with 1st-3rd-4th individual finishers, taking the team crown for the 3rd time in 4 years. At the collegiate level the Iowa State men had their best finish in decades, taking 7th place at the NCAA Championship. Their storied years were 1st - 1989 & 1994, 2nd - 1990 & 1991 and 3rd - 1993.

Runablaze Iowa, one of the top amateur running teams in the US

Iowa's fastest runners make up one of the best running teams in the nation. This year the men were 3rd at Shamrock 8k (Chicago) and 12th at USATF Club XC (Lexington, KY). Runablaze Iowa women have top performances too: Alexina Wilson making the Olympic Trials steeplechase, Obsie Birru prowess on the roads and Danna Herrick running a 2:34:53 at Boston. Iowa grows more than just corn, we grow great runners too.

Drake Relays road races will turn 50 in 2018

The road races at the Drake Relays announced they would celebrate the 50th year by moving the race to Sunday prior to the relays week. After years on Saturday relays weekend, the move was unexpected but will allow the race to finish on the blue oval. In past years the race has been on a Sunday (1979 - 1987) and finished in the stadium (1969 - 1978). A Drake Stadium finish prior to relays weekend might prove a winning combination to help celebrate the 50th year.

Sweet 16 - IMT Des Moines Marathon (and Half-Marathon, 5 mile, 5k, Marathon Relay)

No longer the new kid on the block, the fall spectacle is now mature and all grown up. The fall classic has it all with a big expo, races for everyone, community support and runners from throughout the midwest. The full and half marathon topped out with 6917 finishers in 2013 . . . the current 4996 finishers still makes it feel like a big time race.

The changing face of road racing

A survey of Striderland 25 races in the mid-1980s - - volunteer organized, reasonable entry fees and running for PRs. Fast forward 30 years - - for profit organizers, steep entry fees and running to finish. Medals for 5k finishers and minimal race preparation are setting the tone for today's races.

By Cal Murdock, observing Iowa Running for almost four decades