

## \*\*\* A lucky 7 in Striderland for 2011 \*\*\*

### \*\*\* The End of an Era? \*\*\*

It happened swiftly, a 5 minute phone call, and the organizers of the Drake Relays On-the-ROADS were done after many decades of service. Drake and the profit making D.M. Marathon joined forces to take the race in another direction. The past version of the race with 2500 runners, time standards and low entry fees in the end wasn't good enough. "It broke my heart", related long-time race organizer Cal Murdock. The race had been Iowa's Marathon, a nationally recognized 10K and the current Half-Marathon/8K combination. For many runners it seemed like the perfect race, starting adjacent to Drake stadium, a tree-line and park like course, then finishing on campus. While there was some talk of honoring the past race organizers, in the end it was a dishonorable ending. The future is murky but already it means doubling the entry fees and catering to potential walkers.

### \*\*\* Farm fills almost as fast as you can run it, WOW \*\*\*

The end of running season wouldn't be complete without a ace on the farm. Competitive, zany, spirited, fun for sure and muddy. Living History Farm off-road race is definitely one of a kind, everyone agrees. Registration opened early October and filled in days. It was crazy! No one was disappointed day of the race as weather was near perfect and runners celebrated Thanksgiving a little early as the race donated over \$150,000 to local charities. Beef stew at the finish, camaraderie along the course and the true spirit of running shined throughout the morning. It was another spectacular ending to the running season.

### \*\*\* Runablaze Iowa captures the roads \*\*\*

Having started in 2006, Iowa's best runners create a team that now numbers 15 women and 15 men. They are a perfect match to the Iowa running scene, as the homegrown talent produced five who qualified for the Olympic Marathon Trials – Jason Fogel, Robyn Friedman, Erin Moeller, Ashley Tollakson and Danna Kelly. The team was represented at almost every Iowa race, winning often and demonstrating that speed is what makes a "race a race". The stated purpose of the team is to support post-collegiate, Iowa-based distance runners – mission accomplished.

### \*\*\* Des Moines Marathon celebrates Year 10 \*\*\*

In the early years the DM Marathon was mired in controversy, but no longer. The race celebrated a decade as one of the best mid-size marathons in the Midwest. This is no easy task as 26.2 miles is the hardest of races to run (and organize). While the total finishers at the race took a slight dip, there were race records in every distance: marathon, half-marathon and 5 kilometer. It was an amazing day that went off without a flaw, signaling a bright future for the next decade.

### \*\*\* Dowling Catholic XC girls win again and now the boys take the podium \*\*\*

It may seem like a broken record at the State Cross Country Championship, "Dowling girls win again" but it's true and for the 5th straight year. The boys didn't disappoint. 30 minutes later at state, they too won. The future looks especially bright for both squads. The girls return their one through five runners and the boys only lose their number one runner. The boys and girls start their season with a 3 day camp in the Rockies and end it on a flat Ft Dodge state course. Coaches Father Jim Kirby (girls) and Tim Ives (boys) assuredly can't wait for the fall.

### \*\*\* Women first, for sure \*\*\*

Early in the 1980s women were just starting to hit the roads, then Joan Benoit won the 1984 Olympic Marathon and things haven't been the same since. Just like when Frank Shorter won the Olympic Marathon in 1972 for men, Joan sparked a running boom for women. At the D.M. Half-Marathon there are almost twice as many women finishers as men. Dam to Dam 20K saw more women finishers than men in 2010, a first. The women duplicated the feat in 2011 with 53 percent of the total finishers. Living History Farms is on the verge of more women finishers too.

### \*\*\* Dam to Dam starts anew \*\*\*

After 32 years of finishing at Nollen Plaza, Dam to Dam is changing. The race will now finish on Grand Avenue near the Central Public Library in the Western Gateway Park plus cross the beautiful airy Center Street bridge. Iowa's Distance Classic has been struggling to accommodate over 10,000 runners and equal number of spectators at the Nollen Plaza, so moving the course made sense. Additionally the 5K will have a new and perfect course too. Volunteer race director Kurt Schaeffer, since 1999, deservedly is one of the best in Iowa as he leads an Iowa's Distance Classic.

By Cal Murdock, observing Iowa Running for over three decades