

I'm pleased to announce that the new Macon Tracks website is now up and running. Check it out at www.macontracks.org. You can find information on group runs, links to upcoming local races, Labor Day Road Race information, view past newsletters, and more. I need help with content. Send me pictures, suggestions for new additions, and anything else you can think of. We also now have our own discussion forum at www.macontracks.org/forum. Take a few minutes to register, then post your favorite running route, ask for training advice, or get the scoop on upcoming races. With everyone's participation, this will be a great way to connect with other middle Georgia runners.

It's less than 5 weeks until the Macon Labor Day Road Race. Thanks go out to our two new sponsors, **GEICO** and **Cherokee Brick**. There will be a pasta dinner the night before. Check www.macontracks.org for details! *Kerry Oedel*

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www.macontracks.org

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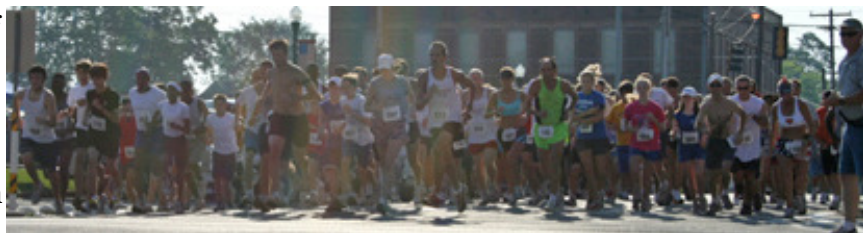


Runners Have a Blast at the Firecracker 5K/10K

by Suzanne Wood

Many runners make the yearly trek to Atlanta on July 4th to run in the annual Peachtree Roadrace. For many, it's the camaraderie of the crowds, the challenge of Cardiac Hill, or the coveted t-shirt that keeps them coming to Atlanta year after year. For some of us, however, the Peachtree Road Race means traffic, huge crowds, trying to run down Peachtree Street with 55,000 other people, and having to ride Marta back to your car with 55,000 stinky people afterward. This year, I found an alternative 4th of July race practically in my backyard.

This 4th of July, I went to Wrightsville, GA and ran in the 6th



annual Firecracker 5K. The race is one of the signature events of the town's Fourth of July celebration, and the money raised through entry fees helps pay for the fireworks show the town puts on the night before. Macon's Dr. Chris Troup, a native of the area and a licensed pyrotechnician, helps put on the show, and it's one of the biggest and best in the Middle Georgia area rivaling anything a big city has.

The 10K begins downtown bright and early at 7:15, then the 5K race starts afterward at 8:30. Macon's Lisa Troup, who grew up in Wrightsville and plans and executes the races, registered over 100 people for the 10K and 5K, which is a town record so far for entries. The race has several long-term sponsors, including the Wrightsville Rotary Club, and Macon's Dr. Randy Brown with Macon Cardiovascular, which has helped in its longevity.

I chose to sleep in and missed the 10K race, but arrived in town for the 5K. The race started in the town square, a quaint area full of shops and restaurants and a few long-term landmarks like the Johnson County Courthouse

and Nana's Kitchen country restaurant. The race was flat and fast, and well-organized. There were lots of volunteers on hand to give out water to the runners and cheer them on. Many people entered both the 10K and the 5K races, which I plan to do next year. Lisa tells me she made changes to the 10K route, and it is now "fast but challenging."

The best part of the day occurred following the races. After the winning trophies were handed out and pictures made for the upcoming edition of the Johnson Journal, there was a parade down the main street complete with a marching band, horses and (new this year) belly dancers. Since I had connections, my children and I got to ride in one of the cars and throw out candy to the crowd. My 12-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son loved being a part of the parade, although the 6-year-old accidentally hit a little old lady in the head with a Tootsie Roll. I'm hoping my good connections will keep him from being banned from next year's parade.

My family and I had a great time celebrating Fourth of July in Wrightsville. It brought back memories of my childhood and brought out the kid in me. Next year, be sure to put the Firecracker Road Race on your running calendar.

Peachtree Road Race—Three Great Races in One

By Paul Langan

I ran Peachtree for the 6th straight year and had such a good time I had to write about it. Peachtree is the largest 10K in the world and second only to the JP Morgan Chase Corporate Challenge 3.5 mile in Frankfurt, Germany in size. The size intimidates many, yet I am surprised at how many runners in Georgia I know who have never run this amazing race. We had a contingent of 14 from around the Southeast meet to have a great time. What I like the most is that we all ran a different race. Let me explain.

The Kenyans and some upstart Americans all run at the front of the pack for the money. They finish the race before most people begin. Our local talent like **Josh Myers, Joby Peake, and Alan Black** are right on their heels, a mere 3 to 5 seconds behind them at the gun. These athletes run a race few of us reading this will ever know about. Josh Myers ran a blistering 32:50 and finished in 61st place!

I run in what I consider the second race. I always start 30 to 45 seconds behind the elite athletes. My race is not against them, but against my little brother or an old high school buddy. We get in the Time Group 1A which is 50 yards behind the elite athletes. This is the race I love. When we take off it is a little crowded, but we actually start running at the gun before we even reach the starting line. Within a quarter mile it sorts out and, in a way, the crowd holds back our natural urge to run too fast out of the gate. I always hit my target pace for the first mile then fall apart up the hills from miles 2.8 through 5.2. Fortunately, this year, I went with a new goal. No longer was I shooting for a PR because this was not the course or weather for that. This time I was content to go and win one of the top 1000 finishers mug. Instead of being disappointed for missing my PR by 2 or more minutes, I was just happy to be there with our gang and having fun. I lost to my little brother, who pulled off a top 500 finish, but I came across the finish line with a big smile 3 minutes later in 952nd place (43:38). I did not see her, but was excited when I read that our own **Leslie Tuck** came in the top 50 for Masters women (46:05). She must have been close to me as she started a mere 53 seconds behind



Paul & Lauren Langan often race together. This picture was taken at the Salute to Freedom race.

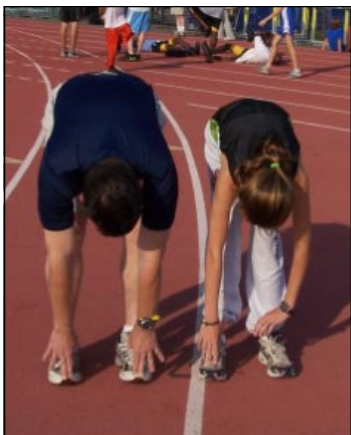
the Kenyans. It really is America's race, and to get into one of the up front time groups is reasonable for many of us. They accept times for the prior 2 years with your registration. I am placed in time group 1A for having a qualifying time between 42 and 50 minutes. The group 25 yards behind me is Group 1B who can submit times between 50 and 55 minutes. If this is within your reach and you don't have a qualifying time to submit, then run the Labor Day Road Race this year. There is no better place to run a fast race. Once you race Peachtree from the front, the crowds don't come into play because they will be behind you next year!

This year my oldest brother ran his first race ever. He ran with his wife, my wife Sharon, 2 of his boys, Catherine Rader, my daughter Lauren, and some of my brother's neighbors. We all stayed at my brother's house which is only ½ mile from the starting line in Buckhead. They ran what I consider the third race. For a few the goal was to finish which they all did. Others do it because they love to run with their friends. This group stays behind and they actually watch the elite athletes race on television before taking off for the starting line. Many others do the same from their hotel rooms all around Lenox Mall. The time groups in the back are mostly about fun, finishing, and maybe beating your friends. Some people ran dressed like Uncle Sam while others dressed like super heroes. My favorite running outfit was a few years ago when Georgia had the famous runaway bride story and at least 10 women showed up in wedding gowns to run the race.

The race spills out into beautiful Piedmont Park. Finding everybody is a breeze as there are huge balloons spread out in a field with the letters of the alphabet on them. Pick a letter before the race and everyone shows up telling their running war stories. I will be back next year to make it 7 in a row. I think my older brother may have picked up the bug so my little brother's Buckhead house should be packed again!

Grace Tinkey Makes Top Ten at Regional Junior Olympics

The Junior Olympics qualifying so far has been competitive and, at the same time, a wonderful experience. Both the runners and parents learn from watching other athletes run. The Region 3 Championship in Richmond, Virginia was the most competitive division yet. Each state from Maryland to Georgia was allowed 5 runners in each event. There were many runners on the starting line and many were stacked 2-3 per lane. The kids were seeded



David Tinkey helps daughter Grace prepare to run at the Junior Olympics.

based on their times in the state championships. Grace was seeded 6th in the 800m, 4th in the 3000 meter, and 10th in the 1500m. With so many runners leaving the starting line at one time, Grace and many runners found themselves having to run and, at the same time, avoid blocking, tripping, pushing, boxing runners in, and many other obstacles that aren't normally encountered at a regular GISA track meet.

On Friday, Grace was passed by a runner in the middle of the 800 meter who went outside of the track onto the infield, cut back in front of Grace, sending both her and Grace into the metal rail that separated the inside lane from the infield causing both girls to really stumble. Fortunately, Grace caught herself before hitting the ground but that gives you insight into the level of competitiveness at this level.

When we arrived the stadium was virtually sold out with standing room only and the crowds were roaring with teams cheering for runners and, I can tell you, I am thankful for prayer and Grace's gentle spirit because it was certainly an overwhelming entrance into the stadium. Before the Junior Olympics started each day, religious songs were played and when we came to the stadium for the 3000 meter after the accident Friday night, it brought tears to my eyes as a beautiful version of Amazing Grace was being played and the words just spoke right through to Grace's heart giving her a real peace about that day.

Grace did very well with placing top 10 in both the 3000 meter and 1500 meter. She brought home a ribbon in 7th place on the 3000 meter. We found that both the

800 meter and 1500 meter are now considered sprint races from the start. The speed at which the runners come out of the starting line is just unbelievable and the races are really tough as they are almost sprints the entire race. Grace found the 3000 meter (8 laps) a great race because it is about endurance and speed but is not a full sprint the entire 8 laps.

Grace looks forward to picking up running with everyone when she returns home. We appreciate so much all of you family and friends.

The Tinkey Family

Iron Couple Completes Coeur d'Alene

Tom & Elizabeth Jones both finished a full ironman triathlon in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho in June. That's 2.4 miles of swimming, a 112 mile bike, and then a 26.2 mile marathon. Elizabeth survived to write about this impressive feat as follows (Tom survived, too):

It was the toughest Ironman I have ever done. The conditions were only there to test our strength and mental tenacity!! Very cold and rough water, 30 mph winds, huge hills that, here in Georgia, would be classified as mountains, and then the run. We saw each other several times on the run due to out-and-backs and it was a two loop course. We stopped and even talked, but I never could really figure out how far ahead I was. I just wanted to keep moving forward!!

Tom wasn't surprised about me finishing first; he said it was going to happen one day. We, however, felt great all day. With that said, during an Ironman every emotion one has ever had is felt. The thing that both of us are very proud of is how hard we trained and mentally we were ready. It really was a fabulous day.

My tears came on the 25th mile in the run when I started thinking about being in a neck brace just this past February. I am so blessed with my health now and, because of that, the time on the clock really didn't matter.

Thanks for your encouragement, I thought of everyone while I was out there ALL day, and knew they were thinking of us. Now I'm going to our beach house for 2 weeks to recharge my battery. I can't wait to ride my fat-tire bike with flip flops on!!

In good health,

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Peach Festival 5K, Fort Valley By Dave Oedel

The Telegraph recently ran a story about the troubles that Peach County and Fort Valley are facing with the peach crop down 85% in the aftermath of the Easter freeze. Despite those woes, spirits were high in Fort Valley on June 23, 2007 when a fine, flat and fast 5-K kicked off promptly at 7:30 a.m. About 160 people pre-registered, but 75 more showed up to register on race day. The t-shirt supply ran out thanks to the unexpectedly large crowd, but there was no shortage of joy and high spirits as the runners took off on a beautiful, early-summer morning.

The course looped through some shaded, well-kept neighborhoods of older homes. A pack of fast guys broke out from the crowd. In the end, Jeff Dobias, Salute to Freedom 5K winner, was first and Peyton Hoyal, who had won the Run for Missions 5-K a few weeks ago, second. The rest of us hit the finish in keeping with our more casual paces. At least, our slower paces may have seemed casual to the fast guys, even if our paces didn't seem so casual to us running them! Andrew Strickland, for instance, was seen back in the pack careening down toward the finish in an impressive burst of speed and enthusiasm. On the women's side, Kerry Oedel cruised in at 20:19 for the win, with 12-year-old Junior Olympian phenom Grace Tinkey not far behind.

After the race, the Peach Festival was opening up for the day downtown, and racers stopped by to browse and eat peach ice cream. There may be a general shortage of peaches in Peach County this year, but by insistent public demand, peach ice cream is the last thing to be cut. Thanks to the Fort Valley crew for putting on this gem of a race.

Andrew Strickland finishes the Peach Festival 5K in fine form. Check out his running website at www.tighurt.homestead.com, detailing exploits of his Tighurt "team of one". Tighurt stands for "this is gonna hurt," in case you were wondering!

