



Labor Day Partnership Race in Baghdad a Success

by Brady Alland

It started out as a dark early morning. The signs were set up, the registration table was ready to go, and the moon was shining bright. Then they started showing up. The first two were there. Then two more. Then came a group of 10.

Our nation's best showed up in force to run the Labor Day 5k at Camp Rustamiyah in Baghdad, Iraq. The 6am race was a shadow of the wonderful "Classic Race of Middle Georgia" run by the fine people of Macon, Georgia. Thanks to David and Kerry Oedel, who lead the Macon Tracks Running Club, the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines stationed aboard Camp Rustamiyah had an awesome time sweating it out on an early Sunday morning.

Macon Tracks Running Club agreed to sponsor the race, providing shirts, race numbers, and even trophies for a number of different categories, male and female alike. Not only were the servicemen and women ecstatic about the shirts, but they were also excited at the chance of taking home a trophy proudly stating that they were the best of the best; an opportunity that does not present itself too often in the deserts of the Middle East.

Rustamiyah broke the century mark with over 125 service members in attendance. There was even a remarkable team of English runners, two of whom won awards; one for second fastest

time overall and one for winning his 30-39 age division. However, the fastest time went to a Staff Sergeant who completed the course in 19:20 to take home top honors. For the females, it was a repeat by an Army Captain with a winning time of 24:00 minutes flat. Dave Oedel and Jim Marshall, a Congressman from Georgia, proposed a deal for the troops. Any soldier who beat the Congressman's time in the 5k would receive a signed certificate. The soldiers are still

awaiting Congressman Marshall's time for this year, however, this morning thirteen soldiers beat his time from last year.

After the race, the soldiers were consuming a seemingly endless supply of fruit and beverages as the sun was rising above the horizon.

Some were shaking hands and slapping

backs as others were taking a quick stroll to try to regain their breath. Only two questions were asked post race, "Can we have our shirts?" and "When's the next race?"

Editor's note:

Jim Marshall ran a 22:17 in this year's 5K, fast enough to beat all but 14 of the Operation:Baghdad race contingent. He was 4th in the 55-59 age group at the Labor Day race this year.

Thank you, Brady, for giving us this opportunity to support the troops!



Labor Day Road Race, Part 31

By Kerry Oedel

Congratulations to all the 31st Annual Macon Labor Day Road Race finishers! It was so great to be out there with you all enjoying a beautiful day, great fellowship, and friendly competition! I am pleased to report that we had a 17% increase in the number of 5K & 10K finishers this year over last. Next year we hope to get even more people participating in this wonderful community event. The wicking shirts, the team competitions, and the trophy mugs were well-received new items this year. The website was a powerful tool (almost 82,000 hits just for the first 6 days of September), and we already have lots of great suggestions for next year's race posted on the Macon Tracks discussion forum. I learned a lot under Steve Corkery's tutelage, and Dave and I are looking forward to co-directing the race next year with everyone's help.

The race volunteers were amazing in their dedication – how can I begin



Morgan Seneker was one of the Mt. De Sales cheerleaders who called splits for us at the race. (Photo by Peachsports.com.)



Lance Merritt & his Mt. Zion Church youth group cleared the course. (Photo by Peachsports.com).

to thank you all? The loyal folks who endured the 4-day lock-in at the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame assembling and passing out packets and Soy-joy bars, the folks who woke up in the middle of the night to haul tables and the folks who were there to pick them back up again (these guys got as much of a workout as the runners did), all my super-organized lead volunteers who shouldered so much of the load and got their crews together so that the race went off without a hitch, our faithful treasurer keeping the books in order, the fire, police, EMA, and REACT folks who kept us safe and cool (maybe instead of cold sponges next year, we should ask for about 5 more fire trucks!), and the Red Cross & Boy Scout volunteers who kept us well-hydrated. You all made a difference in a lot of people's lives, and thank you so much for being there. We most certainly could not do this race without all of you.

Our sponsors really came through as well. Because of their generosity, when I

got the e-mail from Brady Alland in Baghdad, Iraq asking if we would sponsor their race, I was able to respond immediately with a big "Of course, we'd love to!" It made our race extra special this year knowing we were running in partnership with our troops in Iraq. They were so very appreciative of our support I think even more than they were of the race supplies. Thank you, Run Fit Sports, Walthall Oil, Security Bank/Fairfield Financial, GEICO, Cherokee Brick, Chambliss Higdon Richardson Katz & Griggs, and the Medical Center of Central Georgia for making this possible.

Be sure to visit the Peachsports.com website and get your race photos, and watch Don McClellan's photo show of the race (links are on the www.macontracks.org home page). They both did a wonderful job of "capturing the mo-

guys got as much of a workout as the runners

ment!" We also have extra shirts for sale at Run Fit Sports, a real bargain at \$10 for the wicking, \$5 for cotton. I'll keep the website updated with what sizes are available.

There are lots of other activities going on in your running club as well. Sam Martinez is working on getting Macon Tracks shirts for us. Check out graphic artist Keith Lopez's snazzy new logo on the cover of the newsletter, which also will be used for new Macon Tracks Running Club shirts. Our Tuesday night FPD track workout is going strong, and the Thursday children's home workout is starting to become a regular event. We often have over 25 people starting the loop with us on Sunday mornings now. Lots of people are training for the Chickamauga marathon (or for the 10-mile race at Chickamauga) in November, and Elizabeth Jones is doing a great job of keeping up with our mileage for Challenge of the Miles. We set a new record on the forum of having 117 users online at one time this week! As always, I look forward to hearing your ideas of what else we might do.



Vontrika Cherry of Armstrong charges to the 5K finish! Armstrong sponsored 40 of their employees to run the Labor Day Road Race this year. (Photo by Nadia Ward.)



Krista Wieters looking strong at the 10K finish, with Don McMahan right behind her. Krista won her age group, and she and her husband, Chris, got 3rd in the 10K husband/wife team competition. (Photo by Nadia Ward.)

I've already had several people volunteer for next year's Labor Day race. I'd love to hear from you, too!

Kerry Oedel

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The Wright Thing to Do

Anne Wright reports that she and Bob are going back to Honduras on a medical mission trip again in January and want to collect t-shirts and baseball caps (it doesn't matter if they're used or new) to bring them again this year. There is a greater need for small and medium but the need is great and the people are ecstatic with anything they get -- large and XL included. Donations can be dropped off at Bob's office (1502 Forsyth Street, next to Sid's Sandwich Shop), or Anne will pick them up. This is a great chance to put all those many race t-shirts you've been collecting over the years to good use and clean out your closet at the same time!

A Silver Anniversary at the 31st Annual

Macon Labor Day Road Race

By Steve Corkery

A warning to readers: This article may become corny, sappy and rambling at any time. Read at your own peril!

It all started at a school on Houston Avenue in the fall of 1982. Don Edwards was principal at Charles Bruce Elementary School, where he was saddled with a new school psychologist to serve his staff and students by the name of Steve Corkery. When the discussion turned to running, he introduced me to the Macon Tracks Running Club, and by the spring he had me serving as Secretary for the Club due to a resignation. And as they say, the rest is history...

It was September of 1983 when I was assigned the Vineville Avenue water stop at the Labor Day Road Race, stretching a hose from the front of Carlisle's garage to fill the water cups. Now for you youngsters, there *was only one* race at that time, the 10-K. The next year, my prowess at POF cards was discovered and I helped out at the finish line. This became my home away from home for the next several years. Back then, we would finish the race, and then take all of the cards to the Macon Telegraph, where we would spread them all over the floor, get them in order, and have the staff there enter each by hand for publishing in the next day's newspaper. We were happy to finish this job by around 3:00pm. After a few years of this process, the chronomix timing machine came along. Names and times were merged in Gary Jenkins' computer and we brought them to the Telegraph where they were converted into a typed format for publication. A few years ago, something called 'chips' came along. Talk about teaching an old dog new tricks! When I asked Neil, Mr. Chip, if I should also do POF cards, he told me to feel free to do so, although it was absolutely unnecessary. It was the most nervous day for me, hoping that these little plastic things would register, wouldn't get lost, and could somehow provide fast, reliable results. Needless to say, it is old hat now! And time marches on...

But those are only the technical parts of the race. Labor Day is a special race for our community. It

provides a time for people of all walks of life, all ability groups, and young and old, to come together and participate in an event that promotes camaraderie, competition, and family fun as well. To see the looks on the faces of finishers of their first race, of setting a PR, or of setting state records makes it all worthwhile. Of course being race director in the pre-e-mail days meant many, many phone calls. These would begin a couple of weeks before the race, rise to a crescendo race week, and peak



on Tuesday. My family's first cue was when I changed the message on our answering machine to address packet pick-up times, directions, and other race-related information. And, of course, when the results were printed in the Tuesday paper, our home number was there for any questions. I would almost look forward to Dr. Turner Gaugh's phone call, an annual event where he would say that we had his time off by a few seconds. Then there was the streak of three years when poor Danny Williams' name just vanished from the results. One year, okay, two years, hmm, but three years, that was kind of spooky. I began to scan the results first for his name, then for other results!

Back in those early days, most of the planning meetings were held at the Telegraph. I got to know my way around there really well. The bad part of that relationship was that they kept promoting the Promotions person whom we dealt with for the race. Each year required new training! But back then, it was the Telegraph employees who would set up and take down the course. They would pick up the extra shirts and bring them back to the paper. Macon Tracks would provide the finish line and results expertise and receive a small stipend. There was the infamous year in the 80's where the bottom line was

targeted, and, despite our club's position to the contrary, the entry fee was raised to \$20. The runners spoke loud and clear, with the numbers dwindling that year. Then the Olympic Committee trio'd with us. This was a big hit, with former Olympians being present at packet pick-up and at the race to mix with the runners. After a few years, the Telegraph decided to pull out of the racing business, and the race became solely the responsibility of the Macon Tracks Running Club.

My involvement with this event has truly been a labor of love.

I have problems delegating, procrastinating, and balancing as my school system job gears up at the same time. But with the help of many others over the years, we are able to put on a

top-notch event for all of middle Georgia and beyond. Ricky Masicott and Bob Wright are two folks who were there many times. The 4:15 crew at Dairy Queen, Caryl Deems' many appearances at packet stuffing and pick-up, and the previous presidents of our club. Suni's connections in getting unique pottery and glass awards (thanks also to Zoe!), as well as balancing food and beer responsibilities. To all the volunteers who helped stuff packets, hand out water, man /woman intersections, place cones, and pick up cups. It is truly not a one-man show, but a community's coming together. And to our sponsors over the years, especially Allen Huckabee at Saturn who stood by us for many years, as well as our new sponsors. To our last minute shirt printers and fixers at Macon T's—Mike, Gwen, Kit & mom (won't butcher the spelling of her name).

I was very touched by the check presented to me at the awards ceremony. I lost my best friend and sister within two weeks of each other to leukemia during my senior year in high school. It is these inspirations that keep me going. And I thank each one of you for the support you have given me, this race, and our club. We are entering an exciting new era with new leadership, fresh ideas, and a renewed sense of exuberance. The future of the Macon Tracks Running Club is bright indeed, as will be the Labor Day Road Race. Kerry is a great organizer.

She initiated race planning meetings, hosted them, and followed up with a lot of details. I'm not disappearing over the sunset, but merely taking a step back to relieve a little stress, and to smell the roses! Last but not least,



Brandon Long, Wendy Boston, Parker Faircloth, and Chris Faircloth race to the 5K finish. (Photo by Nadia Ward.)

I want to thank my wife, Laura, and childr--, okay, young adults, Scott and Stephanie, for their love and support as well. They made deliveries to me downtown, served as last minute split-callers, and gave runners directions at 6:00 am on race day.

Thanks, guys.

Joby Peake is now a freshman at Auburn University. At his first meet on Saturday he ran a 15:58 5K, beating his fastest cross-country time by about 20 seconds. He finished 5th for Auburn, and 17th overall. The meet included Alabama, Georgia Tech, Ole Miss, UT Chattanooga, and others. Way to go, Joby!

Need to Renew? Check your mailing label for your renewal date. Membership Applications can be found at www.macontracks.org. Thanks for supporting your local running club!

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Photo by Nadia Ward

Another great year for the Macon Labor Day Road Race!