



Which Way to Boston?

by Ember Johnston

Woo woo! The weekend I'd been waiting for was finally here! My main goal at the Country Music Marathon in Nashville: qualify for Boston. I was nervous about the course because it was quite a bit hillier than I'd originally planned (note to self: don't read marathon elevation profiles late at night in a sleepy haze) and the weather was rainy and warm at 60 degrees. Little did I know, the hills and weather would be the least of my worries. Getting to the starting line was going to be the roughest part of this course. While I can laugh about it now, I'm hoping I never have another start like this one!

5am: My support crew and I awaken. We were staying in a fabulous house 20-30 minutes from the start of the race. We were out the door at 5:45 am because we wanted extra time to get to the start in case the roads were closed, since the race was being run throughout most of the city. Eight of us piled in my car and got on the rain-covered roads. Let's hope the rain lets up by the start of the marathon. 6:15....still in the car....feeling like we were not headed in the right direction, I tap my sister's arm and say, "What's going on? We're lost aren't we?" Umm yep....we're heading east towards Chattanooga! Driver, whip this puppy around and head us back to the city!! 6:45....the city is in sight. Phew. I just might make it. I have all my



gear on...shoes/camel pack/hat....I just need to get to the start of the race! We start to venture into the city on a side street because, like we thought, all the main roads are shut down. The race start is at 25th Ave....we're at 2nd. It's now 6:50. My adrenaline is pumping and I'm

starting to freak out mentally. We get to 7th avenue and are told by the cops we cannot go any further. It's 6:55. So my sister, friend and I hop out of the car and start running like the wind. I'm really upset because I'm thinking about all the energy I'm wasting and watching my attempt to qualify for Boston disappear. At 11th Ave we ask a cop if there's any way they can get me to the start. They call up their people....no. So we continue running. We see a few other runners also lost in the city attempting to work their way to the start. I run up a hill....we're on the actual course....spectators are already out and waiting for the runners to start passing by. They see me with my two cheerleaders following behind. They start cheering!! I'm utterly embarrassed thinking "Quit cheering for me! I'm not even in the race yet! I'm trying to get to the start!!" One spectator gets so excited he jumps out of his chair, knocking it over the in process, whips out a camera and starts taking

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Running Club News:

School is coming to an end, the flurry of spring races is beginning to wane, and the temperature is rising. What a great time to try something new! Have you ever done a trail run, a triathlon, or an adventure race before? Are you running the same route day after day? Summer makes me feel like a kid again, and sometimes I need to feel like a kid in order to risk failure by trying something different. When I do get out of my plastic comfort bubble, though, I find it very freeing, as there is no pressure to meet any goal other than to finish. This summer, I challenge you to do just one thing you're not already good at. Who knows, it might be the start of something big!

We had a wonderful time at the Macon Tracks Social on May 3rd. Many thanks to Neel & Renate Dickey for opening up their lovely home to us. Ten people attended the Race Timing 101 presentation that Steve Corkery gave. With all the new races popping up, it'll be great to have a pool of people who can help out with this important function. Steve may even get to sleep in some Saturday morning in the future! Check the back cover for details on our next event, a pool party at Tom & Elizabeth Jones' house. It's very nice to get to chat with everyone in a relaxed setting and the food is always excellent, which is no surprise as runners tend to also be hearty eaters.

Labor Day Race planning is in full swing, and many thanks to all of you who've already volunteered. The lead volunteer positions are filled, with the exception of 5K Start Captain. This is a great job, because you get to use the bullhorn and nobody starts running until you say so! Send me an e-mail if you're interested. This opportunity only comes around once a year. We also need t-shirt designs! Come on, y'all, I know we've got some artistic runners out there. Put together an idea, and you might even win \$100. Thanks also go out to our newest sponsor, **Dent Tricks**. Troy Tarpley will be in the park after the race giving a demonstration of how he first makes dents in cars and then fixes them. This I've gotta see! **Dent Tricks** joins **GEICO**, **Cherokee Brick**, and **Medical College of Central Georgia** as Labor Day sponsors. Please consider adding your business to the list—we can't run without you!

The Macon Tracks Piedmont Sports Medicine Race Series is moving along, and we still have 2 runners with perfect scores: Tom Weitzel and Crystal Buttimer. Be sure and run the Day Lily Dash 5K on June 6th and the Salute to Freedom 5k on June 14th to add more points to your collection. Thanks to **Piedmont Sports Medicine** sponsoring the series, we'll be able to have some nice prizes at the end of the year, not to mention the glory.

Sam had the great idea to have pizza delivered to the track for an after-workout feast. Come run with us Tuesdays at 6:30 at Stratford, and you won't even have any dirty dishes to clean up afterward. Hope to see you there!

Kerry ☺



Photo by Tommy Chambers/Peachsports.com

Victoria Coppage broke a state record in all four of her races at the GISA Class A State Track Meet in April, winning the 800, 1600, & 3200-meter events, and she was also on the state record-breaking Covenant 4x100-meter relay team. She trained hard with us, even during the winter when it was cold and dark at the track, and all her hard work paid off with a stellar performance at her final meet of the season. Way to go, Victoria, we're so proud of you!

Pace to the Finish

by Ryan Bailey

Of all the hundreds of distance runners I have coached, “Bill” was probably the most exasperating. Bill had tremendous natural talent as a runner and could have been one of the best I’ve ever coached, but he never realized his potential. Despite the fact that he could have easily taken over the top spot on my cross country team, he preferred to play soccer and spent most of his time “riding the pine” for the soccer team instead of developing his talent as a runner. Bill was very good runner, but a second-rate soccer player, at best. I guess the idea of playing a few minutes of second-string soccer with a grandstand full of people watching appealed to him more than the relative anonymity of being a cross country star. However, that is not the thing that used to leave me pulling my hair out. It was his unwillingness to listen to my advice to pace himself in any race that drove me crazy. Bill also had an unreasonably high opinion of himself and, consequently, his attitude didn’t sit well with me either. He knew he wasn’t the fastest runner on the team, but I think he knew deep down that he could be, so he was always ready with an excuse for why the other boys outran him and he certainly wasn’t above “talking smack” with teammates that he thought he could beat. He was particularly harsh with a freshman named Jason and I had to have a few discussions with him about his mouth. His boasting never sat well with the team, either, but he usually backed up his talk by scoring for the team so they tolerated him.

Despite my constant instruction, Bill ran every race the same way. The starter pistol would sound and he would race off in front of the pack like his shorts were on fire. About halfway into the race I would see him jogging along almost doubled over from cramps and panting like a dog in August— with a steady stream of opponents filing past him. As he passed by I would usually spend some time berating him for ignoring my warning to pace correctly.

“Your first mile was 30 seconds fast and now you’re walking!” I would yell. “What did I tell you about pacing?” I would say in frustration.

“But coach! I was in the lead” he would gasp.

“Well, you’re not in the lead now . . . Bonehead,” I would retort.

“I got this, coach. I got this,” was his unreasonably self-confident response.

“Yeah, you have something. I just don’t know what ‘it’ is,” I would say.

Bill’s pace would struggle along at a near crawl as he tried to regain his breath and his composure while runners from other teams continued to blow past him. He would limp through the second mile gulping air like a carp on dry land while he tried to recover. I couldn’t accuse him of giving a half-effort. He definitely gave one hundred percent in his own way. It wasn’t guts or lack of talent that held him back. It was thick-headedness. Bill had to be admired for his ability to push himself, but coaching him was like watching a Greek tragedy. You knew it wasn’t going to end well. He couldn’t seem to grasp the idea that continually repeating the same mistake was resulting in the same painful failure every time. In fact, if Bill was Greek, his name would have been Sisyphus.

“Hey, Sisyphus! Let me help you break that rock into pieces, then you could get it up the hill and be done with it.”

“No thanks. I’ll get it this time. Just you watch and see. I got this, Coach. I got this.”

Bill was usually able to recover enough to resume actually running in the final 1000 meters of the race and, due to some respectable leg-speed would usually make a show of kicking past a fair number of contestants in the final stretch. But he never ran up to his potential. In fact, as time went on, most of our opponents figured out that Bill was actually pretty easy to outrun. They just had to wait until he blew a gasket, then build a big lead while he was still trying to put himself back together. His lack of sensible race tactics were responsible for painting a figurative target on his back and he finished in a progressively worse position each year as his career progressed. His boasting came back to haunt him as his own teammates began to outrun him, one after another. At the state championships when Bill was a senior, Jason built a significant lead and outran him by a narrow margin, taking tenth place and the final All-State medal out of Bill’s reach. I have to admit, it seemed like poetic justice to me. I turned a deaf ear as Jason gave Bill a taste of his own medicine on the ride home.

I have a saying that I drill into all my runners – “pace is the key”. I do this because I think *the single most important factor to success in distance running is pace*. Pacing in training and racing is a matter of reaching the correct balance between the runner’s ability, fitness and the distance to be covered. Every

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year, I demonstrate to my runners (the ones that will follow my advice) that “pacing” their training correctly will produce their peak performance at the end of the season – when it really counts. They also discover that running an evenly paced race will produce their fastest times. Of course, there are plenty of other factors that will contribute to a great race. However, a disciplined runner who *knows their pace* and runs “even splits” (or slightly negative splits) always has the greatest chance of setting a season’s best or personal best.

A quick look at the split times for any world record in distance running will show very even splits for the bulk of the effort. Out of the last five men's

world records in the 10,000 meter run, two were run with nearly identical splits for the first 5k and second 5k, and the other three were run with the second 5k being just slightly

faster than the first 5k. When marathoner Paul Tergat broke the marathon world record, he ran the first 13.1 miles in 1:03:04, and the second in 1:01:51 (a difference of 1:13 or 5 seconds per mile!). Correct pacing early on left him with enough “juice” to push the pace in the second half and he ultimately ran negative splits and set a world record.

Now, maybe you aren't in the position to break a world record. I don't think that matters where training and racing is concerned. I always tell my runners this – “Even if you haven't won a championship, you should train and race like a champion”. It takes a lot of discipline, but ultimately it is worth it. Let the “mile-one maniacs” go and then laugh as you roll by them in mile three. If you run the fastest race you are able to run, then your placement at the end will take care of itself and you won't have to fret about the idea that you could have run faster. If you paced correctly,



Top: Wanda Atkinson and Carol Carden give Run4Missions a thumbs up.

Left: Sam Martinez, Michael Corrigan, Duncan Siror, & Andrew Swicegood paced themselves to run a great race at Run4Missions.



there will be very little doubt in your mind about that. You will be too busy lying on the ground wondering if you popped a lung.

Pacing is such a basic, elemental dimension of being a distance runner, it doesn't seem like my advice here is necessary, but I am often

amazed at how hard it is to get some runners to actually follow it. The temptation to go out fast seems too difficult for some people to resist even if they know it is hurting their race. I guess a lot of people are like Bill. They would rather show off for the crowd at the start of the race and feel like hero for a few minutes than run a smart race. Personally, I admire the runner who crosses the finish line first. I want to know how fast I can finish the race, not how fast I can finish the first mile.

Don't be like Sisyphus (and Bill). Break your stone up into nice little, even bits and get to the top of the hill. The view is nice up there.

Editor's note: Ryan Bailey is Mercer University's Cross Country and Track coach. We appreciate him sharing his expertise with us!

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pictures! He thought I was the first runner. I'm still not quite sure how he mistook me for a Kenyan. I climb up the hill, cursing the fact that not only am I wasting time and energy running to the start but I'm having to run uphill!! At the top of the hill there are more spectators. One has a bike. I stop and ask this man how much farther to the start. He tells me 1.25 miles. Say what?! If I have to run that far, I'm definitely going to be out of gas to attempt to qualify for Boston!!! I beg him to borrow his bike. He is obviously reluctant to fulfill my request. I plead. I cry. I swear to him that it will be returned. My cheerleaders catch up and help me convince the gentleman that I am not a crazed maniac and they'll get the bike back to him. And I'm off.... now on a bike!! Now there's a reason I'm a runner and not a cyclist....as you will see. I'm cruising down the course now, learning how to adjust the gears as I go, continuing to pass more runners also trotting towards the start. I'm cursing the fact that the race has started and I'm still 3/4s of a mile out. But then I do enjoy the sight of seeing the elite runners pass me. I've never been able to experience that before!! Then the corrals start to let loose. A cop tells me to get off the roadI find a spot to cruise up onto the sidewalk. The bike wobbles quite a bit but I manage to stay on. Phew! However the sidewalk is quite crowded. It's slowing me down tremendously. I see a break in between the corrals so I jump back on the road and continue racing towards the start. I'm now just a quarter mile out. I have to get back on the sidewalk because another corral is let loose. No good place to jump back on....so I do my best to attempt to jump the 2 inch curb....WHOOOSH!!! I go flying off the bike, skidding across the sidewalk into the crowd of spectators. The spectators all gasp in awe at the clumsy runner on the bike who just lost control! I jump back up immediately, faintly aware of some sore spots. I pedal down the final quarter mile, put the bike behind a wall, and walk up to the front of corral 5. Not bad. I was originally supposed to start in corral 3. The gentleman standing next to me looked me over and asked if I was ok. I said "yeah...

ready to run!!" Then I looked at what he was looking at. I had blood running down my shin and my hand was cut open. No time to focus on that...corral 5 is let loose! I spot one of my cheerleaders and notify her where I left the bike (she does manage to find Glenn Hinton, the owner, and return the bike). Now it was time to focus. I used all the supportive comments from Mike Stafford and Curtis White during our training runs to help calm my nerves and settle into a groove.

Things went well for 20miles. Then I got tired and hot and my quads started to whine. At mile 22, while I was deep into focusing on just maintaining my pace, out of the port-o-john pops Leslie Spiegel at my side! "Hi Ember!" she cheerfully says. All I can manage at this point is "Un-nugh-ga." She looks great! We separated after about a mile and I focused on continuing to put one foot in front of the other. Soon after that I saw the blessed finish line with the amazing supportive spectators hollering at the top of their lungs for each runner coming down the final 0.2 of the course. 3:33....I cross the finish line!! My heart is full of joy!! I did it! I qualified!!! And who was there to congratulate me with a massive hug!? Dave Oedel!! What a surprise that was!! He also qualified with ease for Boston. We waited for Leslie to roll in, who for her first marathon, with multiple injuries plaguing her, also managed to qualify for Boston!! What a stud!

So in summary, the course was full of rolling hills, the spectators were numerous and full of pep for hours on end, and Glenn, the bike owner, was a true saint amongst thousands, trusting a complete stranger with his bike. Without him ... I know I would not have been able to qualify for Boston. I recommend this course--just make sure you know where your driver is headed and you leave enough time to get to the start of the race! PS. Not only am I technically a du-athlete now, but I'm also an ultramarathoner! Ha! Woo Woo!!

Also qualifying for Boston at the Country Music Marathon were Leslie Spiegel (3:40), Leslie Tuck (3:30), and Dave Oedel (3:19). Looks like we've got a group headed to Boston in 2009!

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Autumn Perry racing the Run4Missions 5K on May 3rd, a few steps ahead of Tommy Chambers, Glen Clements, and Tim Cook. Last time I saw her run, she was pushing a bed at the Cherry Blossom Festival bed race!

Macon Tracks Pool Party

Mark your calendars now for **Sunday, June 22nd, 2:00—5:00 pm**. Elizabeth and Tom Jones have graciously invited us to their home for a pool party with special guest Scott Ludwig. Scott is an ultra-runner extraordinaire, and was an official finisher at the Badwater Ultra in 2003. He has an unbroken running streak of 28 years! He'll talk about his experiences and have copies of his book *Running Through My Mind* for sale and signing, the proceeds of which go to charity. Bring a swimsuit, your kids, a summer salad, snack, or dessert to share, and your alcoholic beverage of choice if desired. Tom & E. live near Wesleyan College, at 387 Alexandria Dr. From the Tucker/Forsyth intersection, cross the tracks to Rivoli, turn right, then left on Alexandria. See you there!