

Running Briefs
c/o Tracey Martinson
1716 Reed Circle
Fairbanks, AK 99709

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Running Briefs

Don't run! Walk to the Olympic Trials

By Janna Miller

In the spring of 2002, I decided it was time to complete my first marathon. That March I began running. As happens every time, shin splints appeared after about three weeks. Frustrated, I had to stop. But then I remembered this thing called racewalking. An Internet search turned up many hits. Reports were encouraging that this could be a legitimate form of exercise and not just loafing. Although skeptical, I decided to give it a try. Based on Internet descriptions and one streaming video, I figured out the basic motion. The next step was to find a web site with marathon training programs. I chose one for beginners and spent the summer traipsing up and down Ester Dome, walking through track intervals, and getting into walking shape.

Equinox race morning arrived and I nervously stepped up to the starting line. After all the runners surged past I found my pace and had a great day. My husband Bruce was the best support crew anyone could ask for. He snuck out the night before and put up signs

for me all along the course. He also popped in and out all along the way, cheering, taking photos, and ensuring I had enough to eat and drink. My goal was to walk the race in five hours. I finished at 5:13 which was still admirable.

The next day I could barely move. It was two weeks before I could wear normal shoes again. My mistake was that I didn't racewalk on my long days. When racewalking, you roll off the very tips of your toes. Not being accustomed to doing that for five hours at a stretch, my toes were heavily bruised. Three toenails eventually departed. Now I had a point for comparison. Naturally, the race must be done again to improve. I went back to the Internet, found a book written by a nationally ranked racewalker and World Cup competitor, brought it home, and devoured it.

The following year I trained much harder with a better program. This time the runners surged past at the start, but it was a game to see how many I could catch. In the end, my time improved a whopping 57 min-

utes and I placed 12th among women – all of whom were running. To make it even sweeter, the next day there was a little soreness but shoes weren't an issue like the year before.

Encouraged, I sent an e-mail to the author of that book, Dave McGovern, asking how I could go even faster. It was quite a shock when he replied that I should take a pass at qualifying for the Olympic Trials. Dave gives a week-long racewalking camp every November. Upon reading his note, I signed up for that. Maybe he's just a really good marketer...

It turned out that my "racewalking" was not fitness walking (normal walking, very quickly, with lots of arm pumping) nor was it true racewalking. It was something in between. This meant that there was indeed the potential for greater speed. At the end of the week, I graduated to racewalker status with a new wiggle in my waddle. Our "final exam" was a 20K judged race, which is, coincidentally, the women's Olympic distance. My goal

(Continued on page 2)

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Running Briefs is published bi-monthly. Unlike two former editors, who write entertaining columns for real newspapers, Tracey writes marginal material for obscure scientific journals. So, please, if you have any exciting news that you would like to see here, write it up and send it to Tracey at 1716 Reed Circle, Fairbanks AK 99709, or email at fntam@uaf.edu.

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Janna's Olympic quest*(Continued from page 1)*

was to finish in two hours and without any red cards. Three of those and you're disqualified. Happily, I had no red cards – quite a feat since my legs were numb the last 5K. The time wasn't as good a story at 2:14, but now I had a starting point. To get into the Olympic Trials, you must walk a 1:48, or about an 8:30 per mile pace.

After that camp, I hired Dave as my coach. He advised taking three months to get better technique and strength before doing a race. I got to know by sight all the people at the UAF SRC, and I became dizzily familiar with the indoor track.

In late February I did my first race. It was held in Augusta, Ga. on a wide sidewalk along the river. We lined up at the chalk starting line, all 20 of us, and someone yelled "go!" We proceeded to make 20 1K loops around that sidewalk, dodging the oblivious tourists who showed up about halfway through. Only six racers did the full distance. This was quite a switch from the Equinox.

A bout of overtraining certainly played into my performance that day. I had been out of commission for a full three weeks just a month before this event. My race strategy didn't work well,

either. I finished in 1:59, a respectable 15-minute drop, but a far cry from the needed 1:48.

Dave sent more workouts and I kept going around the indoor track. The next race was the World Cup qualifier, about four weeks later in Overland Park, Kansas. This race went much better. The pacing was better, I was stronger, and the field was far larger than the previous event. The course was a 2K loop through a wooded business park; much nicer than a sidewalk laced with tourists. We even had a cheering section. I dropped another seven minutes to finish in 1:52. Four more minutes to go!

In early April, RCN was kind enough to lend me the distance wheel. Farmer's Loop is now marked every K from the UAF parking lot to the dog musher's hall, in case you're interested. It was such a relief to get off that darn indoor track. Chronic knee and hip pains disappeared, and this was much closer to actual racing conditions to boot.

The next race was in Kenosha, Wisconsin at the University of Wisconsin Parkside, where they have a racewalking TEAM! I was fascinated. Bruce was able to join me. He nearly hyper extended his neck watching

groups of people cruise past looking just like me—being the only wiggler all the time at home, this was a really fun change. I finished in 1:49:59—still short of my goal. I learned more race strategy and discovered I need to eat more in the morning to avoid feeling about to pass out for the last 5K.

My last chance was back in Kenosha on June 23. This time it was an evening race on the outdoor track. At first I bemoaned the track location but quickly realized that this would be handy for pacing. I gave it my all and had a great race, finishing in 1:49:02. Close, but no (proverbial) cigar.

The Olympic Racewalking Trials were July 18, and I cheered from afar via webcast as one of my fellow campers, Carolyn "Killer" Kealty, qualified. I know that, given three more months, I would make that time. And it's conceivable I could go for it again in four years. For the moment, however, I'm ready to relax and enjoy some of the other things I've had to forego for seven months. Maybe I'll see you all at the Equinox again this year. Four hours seems like a nice, round number...



Yukon River Trail Marathon

By T.G. Taylor

We stumbled upon this marathon while on the Internet. The marathon's Web site, www.yukonmarathon.com, depicted spectacular scenery along the route, and was straightforward about the challenging course. So we decided, after having completed the Equinox a couple of times, and never having visited Whitehorse, to start marathon training a little earlier than normal this year and give this race a go.

The race organizers were wonderful about accommodating out-of-town runners by promptly answering questions via e-mail and even offering a special bib pick-up time. This was comforting because of the long drive we had ahead of us, 10.5 hours to be exact. We arrived on Friday evening to make the Saturday morning bib pickup and to give us a chance to see Whitehorse.

We made arrangements to stay at a bed and breakfast about 20 minutes outside of town. If you're visiting consider staying at www.L'Aubergeyukonnaise.com where Nicole and Henri made us feel right at home and even made an exception to policy to let our dog Ben join us on the trip. Many times a bed and breakfast

either the same or less than a hotel and you get fed a good breakfast. This perk of staying at a bed and breakfast was especially appreciated on race-day morning as we filled up on pancakes and fresh blueberries.

We drove into town on Saturday to pick up our race packets, which included Sugoi Coolmax long-sleeve race shirts. This definitely made our \$50 race fee worth it. After the packet pick-up, we soaked up the Whitehorse downtown area and enjoyed a nice lunch at a local deli specializing in game meats. After a nap, we had a pre-race pasta meal at the Wolf Den restaurant and then retired for the night.

We both thought that after running the Equinox that this race couldn't be that bad. We were wrong. After five kilometers along the Yukon River we hit the trails hard running right along a steep embankment where a misstep could have landed us into the river. Then it was across the footbridge (try to avoid running behind others on the bridge as it can be a bit of a challenge) and up the trails that ran along the north side of the Yukon. Right about this point was where we started thinking about the conversion from kilometers to miles as the course was only marked for distance

every 5 km. It took us about 10 km to figure out that the marathon was actually 42 km plus a bit more. The trail continued to be very challenging as we continued away from the river on a loop that put us back at the footbridge. At this point we had about nine miles (I still can't get my mind to think kilometers) to go along some more very steep up and down trails along the north side of the Yukon River. After a short (about one km) detour caused by some miscreants who thought it'd be fun to take down some trail markers, I finally got back on track for the final challenging loop around a lake, which led to one last extremely steep climb before an even steeper switchback descent down to river level, all this between miles 23-25. Did I mention that it was steep? Thankfully, the last mile and half was along a flat, paved bike path that led back to town along the river.

Though painful, the race was an excellent experience with beautiful views. Times ranged from ten to twenty minutes slower than Equinox times. After a short nap and little recovery, we headed back into town for the race banquet. What a spread! There were four kinds of salad, three pasta dishes,

Running Away from Home	
Mad City Marathon, Madison, WI, May 30, 2004	
Paulette Goodwin	3:41:11
Hatfield-McCoy Marathon, Williamson, WV, June 12, 2004	
Bob Hildebrandt	6:11
Mavor's Midnight Sun Marathon, Anchorage, AK, June 19, 2004	
Dietrich Hildebrandt	4:48:15
Bob Hildebrandt	5:59:24
Yukon River Trail Marathon, Whitehorse, YT, August 1, 2004	
Tina Devine (Winner!)	3:42:48
Kristen Rozell	3:45:33
Ned Rozell	3:45:01
T.G. Taylor	4:04:23
Ann Farris	4:05:25
Libby Burgess	4:20:15
Susan Nachtigal	4:36:46
Karen Taylor	4:56:26
Roxanne Rigo	5:35:08

chicken, and even dessert. To top it all off, the free ticket to the banquet also gained us a ticket for a free local beer. Free beer?! What a race. If you're looking for a good time and for a marathon course to challenge yourself, then next year sign up for the Yukon River Trail Marathon. There is also a half-marathon, a two-person relay, and a four-person relay.



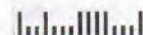
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WANTED: RCN Award Nominations!

It's time once again to start thinking about nominations for this year's RCN Awards. Each year, RCN gives awards for Most Inspirational Runner, Race Director of the Year, and Volunteer of the Year. These awards are given at the Flint Hills Series Awards potluck (slated for Oct. 16).

So, as the summer winds down, start thinking about folks to nominate. Submit your nominations to Bev Weis (bweis@alaska.com). Nomination forms will also be available at the Equinox Marathon bib pickups and the Equinox Marathon awards banquet on Sept. 18.

A list of past recipients for each of the awards will be posted on the RCN website in the near future.

RACEWALKING CLINIC

Do you love to run but hate the injuries?

Are you looking for some great exercise?

Do you want a really nice butt?

Come to a free racewalking clinic to learn the basics!

Janna Miller, who recently made a bid at qualifying for the Olympic Trials in the women's 20K racewalking event, will host a clinic on Saturday, Aug. 14 at the track behind the Big Dipper. We'll meet at 2 p.m. and stay until everyone's questions are answered.

Bring your most flexible running shoes or walking shoes if you have them. Shorts are also a must to observe technique. If you use a sports bra for other sports, wear it. You might want a notepad, too.

Topics will include:

- The rules for legal racewalking
- Recommended footwear
- Practice on the track with feedback
- Stretching
- Training programs
- Racing

Questions? Call Janna at 479-5585 or e-mail her at janna@alaska.net.