

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

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

RCN 2005 Event Calendar

Boston: Baseball and marathons	2
A Marathon tour of Alaska	3
Running away from home	4
Editor's odds-n-ends	4



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Running Briefs

Running at the bottom of the world

By John Gallagher

On October 14th I started a long journey, heading south for the winter - as far south as one can go. Like dozens of other Alaskans, I made the sun-chasing migration to Antarctica to work the austral summer season on the continent we affectionately call The Ice. I'm working as a meteorologist at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, one of three year-round U.S. research stations managed by the National Science Foundation. This is my fourth trip to the Pole, working the summer season that goes from late October to mid February.

Besides being an interesting adventure in many ways, living at the South Pole is a great opportunity to get in good shape. We sit atop the thick polar ice cap at an elevation of 9,300 feet above sea level. And due to the thinner

polar atmosphere, the air pressure here is more like what you'd feel at close to 11,000 feet in the mid latitudes. The thin air combined with temperatures that are always well below zero provide a situation where any outdoor exercise is a great calorie-burning workout. We do have indoor exercise facilities with weights and aerobic machines, but when the wind isn't blowing too hard, I prefer to get out in that vast open space and go for a run or ski. The terrain is flat, packed snow but running on it is no easier than running up Ester Dome. My pace is turtle-like at the beginning of the season, and gradually picks up to a somewhat less sluggish, but still decidedly slow trot by Christmas time.

And it's usually on Christmas Day when we have the annual Race Around the World. Since we're right at the geographic South Pole,

one can trample across all the world's longitudes by merely dancing around the pole marker. For the race, one of the equipment operators will groom out a track around the pole and we'll run around it three times for what's typically a total of two miles or so. And this festive event is not limited to runners. We have walkers, skiers, and riders as well. Some folks get creative and make "floats" that get pulled around the track by a tractor or a snow-machine. But to be counted as a winner, you have to go on foot. Since our Christmas feast and party tends to be the night before, some of the participants struggle to make the starting line on time and are a tad hung-over. I've run in the race all three of my previous seasons at the Pole, and I have the dubious distinction of coming in second place every time! ("Always the bridesmaid and never the bride" was how one friend so nicely put it.) It's been a different person taking the top spot each time. My most recent race (in 2001) was the only really close one, and I lost that one in the final stretch.

So, one week into the season my training has started. And that may be pushing things a little as I'm still adjusting to the altitude and the temperatures are very cold. I'm still getting winded from walking up a flight of stairs, but I just couldn't resist trying a short run in the brilliant sunshine of my first day off. It



John Gallagher cools off after running the "Race Around the World" at the South Pole.

(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 technical jargon for musty scientific journals. So, puhleeze, 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. Your fellow RCNers will thank you.

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Gallagher at the South Pole*(Continued from page 1)*

was a PR of sorts for me in terms of cold weather running. Checking the temperature on my way out the door, I confirmed that it was minus 63 Fahrenheit. But with a face-mask and goggles and my turtle-chasing pace, it was not bad at all. While we don't have the varied terrain and scenery that make Alaska trail running such a pleasure, the open space and dazzlingly bright light of the

polar world do provide some inspiration. And the altitude training pays back great rewards at the end of the season when I return to sea level and do that first run in the warm, lush air of New Zealand.

Although I'm about as far from Fairbanks as one can get, I'll be sharing that Fahrenheit - Be-Darned attitude of high latitude running with my fellow Alaskans for the next few months. I'll just be doing it in a season called summer, sans

darkness, but in similar temperatures. So for now, get out there and "just do it!" and I'll send another report your way after the Race Around the World.

**Boston: Baseball and marathons****By Matias Saari**

The Red Sox trailed the Yankees three games to zero, and though I'd signed up I had all but ruled out running the Cape Cod Marathon two weeks later. After a humiliating drubbing at the hands of the Bronx Bombers, traveling cross-country to run 26.2 miles in the vicinity of Fenway Park had lost its appeal amidst another grand autumnal disappointment.

So the next morning I ran 21 aggressive miles with several of Fairbanks' top runners and collegiate skiers and settled in hours later resigned to witness the Sox's final insulting demise. But then something remarkable happened: down to their last few outs, Boston won in dramatic fashion that night, and again the next. There was hope in Red Sox nation, and a few days later the club pulled off the greatest comeback in baseball history by dethroning their hated New York rivals in a game 7 rout at hallowed Yankee Stadium.

Suddenly I was ten days out and well into my marathon taper. I figured the Red Sox had a good chance to win

the series, which would put me in town for the biggest celebration New England had ever experienced. The Cape Cod Marathon was slated for Sunday, Oct. 31, the morning following Game 6 and preceding a possible game 7. I envisioned a game 6 win, followed by an all-night party and an early morning drive to the Cape to race a marathon mostly on adrenaline. I could recover on the flight home.

To my amazement, since the Red Sox have always made things difficult, Boston swept the series. Instead of a nail-biting series finale, I arrived for the victory parade attended by an estimated three million fans. They came in hordes, having waited 86 years for the day. With a former Fairbanks friend who drove up from Connecticut, I found a spot in the second row and whooped it up as "Duck Boats" carrying the World Series trophy and Sox players and executives rolled by. (My Red Sox fandom traces to my birth just north of Boston in 1970. Though I lived there just one year, I embraced the club only to suffer through a series of

agonizing defeats the past three decades.)

At 5 a.m. the next morning it was off to Falmouth for the 27th Cape Cod Marathon, a one-loop course that rolls through small New England towns, traverses back roads brightened by fall's colorful bounty, and parallels at times the Atlantic Ocean. Though the course was surprisingly hilly and the temperature 60 at the start and 70 at the finish, I managed an even split 2:54, proving it's possible to have a decent race despite a very unorthodox taper. This was good for 25th place out of 1,200, and a spot in April's Boston Marathon. (It would have been one rung lower had race officials not caught the cheater who ran seven miles with the leaders, vanished for awhile, then hopped back in at mile 25 and crossed the finish line in second place before being disqualified.)

So a return trip to Boston next spring is scheduled, as much to run the world's most historic marathon as to grab a seat in Fenway Park's bleachers and cheer on baseball's new champions.

A marathon tour of Alaska

By Jane Lanford

Ever wanted to finish in the top 10 in a marathon? Your chances of doing so are very good at the Tongass Marathon near Ketchikan, Tony's Run in Dillingham, the King Salmon Marathon in Cordova, or the Crab Festival Marathon on Kodiak Island. If your goals are more modest, say, to finish in the top 50, you might try the Frank Maier Memorial Marathon in Juneau or the Prince of Wales Marathon on Prince of Wales Island (a three-hour ferry ride from Ketchikan).

Lots of marathoners these days, it seems, are "50 Staters", with a goal of running a marathon in each of the 50 states. While I think that'd be fun (OK, so I'm warped already), my job doesn't require much travel, and I couldn't see myself having the time or money to join that club.

A flash of inspiration a few years back, I came up with my own goal: I'd run all the marathons in Alaska. What a neat excuse to visit new places in the Greatland!

Using word-of-mouth and the Alaska Runner's Calendar for information, I eventually found nine marathons in our great state. I'd done three before I began this quest three years ago, and I finished the last one in September 2004. If you know of others, please tell me! The races tend to be small in numbers but high on enthusiasm, and I continue to be amazed at the effort put forth by the organizers to host quality events (quirks and all!). It's been great fun, and I'd certainly encourage your participation in these races.

Following is a short guide to Alaska's marathons.

MAY

Prince of Wales (POW) Marathon—Getting there is half the fun. You island-hop by plane from Juneau to Ketchikan, take a ferry from the airport to town, take a bus to the other ferry terminal, take a 3-hour tour over to POW

Island, and ride a shuttle bus to Craig. That last leg – the shuttle bus – gives you a tour of the course. You start 26.2 miles out of town, and run the rolling, paved highway into Craig. (This theme repeats for several of Alaska's marathons.) It can be miserably windy and/or rainy, as it was the day before my marathon, or you may have a day of perfect running weather – cloudy, 50s – as it was for most of my race. (This weather theme repeats also.) In 2003, nationally famous running journalist Joe Henderson was there as guest speaker and relay participant.

Crab Festival Marathon, Kodiak—Part of the fun is that the race is during the Crab Festival! Again, you start 26.2 miles out of town on the road. When I ran the race in 2004, the road was newly paved for 19 miles, which is to say, the first seven miles were gravel, and from there on in it was blacktop. Kodiak's road is very "humpy" (OK, that's another marathon) – it goes up and down along the coast as the island's ridges reach to the sea. You run short, steep ups and downs for the first half of the course, and then it levels out somewhat (not much). For weather, see POW description above. With luck, you'll finish in time to watch the bed races and other fun stuff at the festival.

JUNE

King Salmon Run, Cordova—Cordova has one road out of town. So guess what? You start 26.2 miles away from town. In 2000 when I ran it, there were BIG brown bear tracks at the starting line. I was grateful for my local driver/volunteer who was my rolling aid station, photographer, and protector. The first 13 miles were on gravel, and the rest was paved; the whole course is flat. There were also half-marathon, 10K, 5K, and 1-mile races the same day on the same road. Once you reached the half-marathon point, you had aid stations that were set

up for the shorter races. Marathoners were asked to time themselves. A great salmon bake/awards ceremony followed in the evening, with lots of prizes. For weather, see POW.

Mayor's Midnight Sun Marathon, Anchorage—The biggest marathon in Alaska, which I ran in 1993 (when it had about 400 finishers) and in 1997, after it became a Team in Training destination with several thousand participants. My best advice is to start faster than you normally would, because the bike path is pretty narrow and really gets clogged with all those people. Otherwise, it's not a bad course, as I recall – on bike paths and gravel roads, and hilly enough to be interesting.

AUGUST

Frank Maier Memorial Marathon, Douglas (Juneau)—Douglas Island is just a bridge away from downtown Juneau. This course is an out-and-back on Douglas' flat paved coastal road; there's also a half-marathon. For weather, see POW. In my case, the heavens opened when I was at Mile 2, and it was a downpour the rest of the way. But it wasn't windy, I didn't go hypothermic, and I ran it in really good time. Go figure.

Humpy's Marathon, Anchorage—This marathon, along with a half-marathon and 5K, was run entirely on Anchorage's basically flat bike paths. I understand that the course has been changed since I ran it in 2002 and now ends at its sponsor, Humpy's Great Alaska Ale House, in downtown Anchorage. The marathon is Alaska's third largest, with about 300 finishers the year I ran it.

Tongass Marathon, Ketchikan—Other than our own Equinox, the Tongass Marathon has by far the most interesting course in Alaska. It's entirely outside

of the city of Ketchikan and traverses gravel roads (including some not normally open to the public), improved trails, and a bit of pavement. It has some out-and-back sections and can be confusing—you need to keep your wits about you to stay on course. It's hilly. It's neat. It's very well organized, including a pre-race tour of the drivable parts of the course and a pasta feed the night before. It includes a relay and a half-marathon.

SEPTEMBER

Tony's Run, Dillingham—Dillingham's road out of town goes to Lake Aleknagik. So that's where you start. It's a gently rolling paved road through forested lands in all their autumn colors. There were aid stations every 2.6 miles but no mile markers. I kept myself occupied for miles trying to figure out my pace! Near the end of the course, there is a dogleg to the hospital (in case you need it!). For weather, see POW. As you approach the coast, it can get seriously windy. It was also drippy wet the entire way when I ran it. Despite the weather, the volunteers were enthusiastic and wonderful. Marathoners were few, but there were also half-marathoners and relay teams of runners, walkers, and/or cyclists.

Equinox Marathon, Fairbanks—We Fairbanksans know this one intimately. With about 650 marathon and relay participants, it's well-organized, very challenging (rocks, ruts, roots; steep and long ups and downs; rude pavement in the late miles; final insult hill at Mile 25), scenic (fall colors, great Denali view on a clear day), unpredictable (weather-wise, anything from a gorgeous fall day to snow and ice; competition-wise, you never know who'll show up), and a perennial favorite of many of us locals. In my estimation, it's the best marathon in Alaska.

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Running Away from Home

Portland Marathon

Portland, OR

October 3, 2004

Dietrich Hildebrandt	3:47:01
Kyndall Hildebrandt	5:22:36
Bob Hildebrandt	5:53:23

Old Mulkey Marathon

Tompkinsville, KY

October 23, 2004

Bob Hildebrandt	6:04:28
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New York City Marathon

New York, NY

November 7, 2004

Mike Kramer	2:50:49
Bob Eder	3:57:57

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Discounts for RCN members! Jim Spencer, one of the newest Lifetime members of RCN is offering all RCN members a 10% discount at his store, The Athlete's Foot (in Shopper's Forum Mall on Airport Way). Thank you, Jim!

New List-serve for RCN news. With Stan Justice's help, the RCN Executive Council is replacing our old group email system with a List-serve system, similar to that used by the Nordic Ski Club of Fairbanks. Anyone interested in running can subscribe to the list but posts must be approved by the list moderator. No spam here. If you were already signed up on Jane Lanford's RCN email list, your email address will be automatically subscribed to the list and you need do nothing more. If you were not, details on how to subscribe will be posted on the RCN website (www.runningclubnorth.org), and will be made available in the February issue of *Running Briefs*.

Running Briefs to stay in print. And for those of you who are wondering why you are still getting *Running Briefs* in the mail, the RCNEC decided to keep providing this service to its membership. If you REALLY would rather not get it, send a message to the editor (addresses listed on page 2). Issues are also posted on the RCN website (in PDF format).