



Curro ergo sum
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www.pgroadrunners.ca

October 2005

Greetings from the Prince George Roadrunners!

With the fall race season recently behind us, many local Roadrunners are eager to rest, relax, and recount their accomplishments with friends and family. This year, Prince George was well represented at Melissa's 22km Run, the Quesnel Women's Fall Challenge, the Chicago Marathon, the Kelowna Marathon and Half Marathon, and the Royal Victoria Marathon and Half Marathon. Congratulations to all those who set goals, trained, and gave their all on race day!

As put your feet up and recover from your fall race, take some time to enjoy this expanded edition of the P.G. Roadrunners newsletter and to share in some of the experiences of your fellow runners.

Sally Rowe Memorial Award ...and the winner is... **Julia Gerlach!**

Congratulations to Julia Gerlach, the 2005 recipient of the Sally Rowe Memorial Award for Endeavour!

According to the Webster's Dictionary, endeavour is "a serious or determined effort directed toward a set purpose." Each member of the Prince George Roadrunners has clearly worked hard to reach their own personal goals this year. Nevertheless, Julia's commitment to her individual goals has been truly remarkable. In recent months, Julia has overcome many obstacles in order to meet her personal, academic, and athletic goals. She has been released from the hospital, relocated in order to refocus her studies, and regained much of her physical strength.

Congratulations Julia! We were happy to see you back in action at the Greenway Trail Run and look forward to seeing you at other local events soon!

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The Prince George Road Runners is a non-profit society that supports area runners and walkers by providing well organized races throughout the year. The club is open to people of all ages and athletic ability, from learn to run runners and walkers to competitive racers. Our goal is to offer a venue for fun competition.



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Melissa's 22K September 24th, 2005

By Oliver Hui

I no longer remember whose idea initially it was. Some time early this year, Mary Jo and Paul Thibodeau and I discussed entering the well-known Melissa's race in Banff and running a half marathon. We knew it would be filled very early and watched the Running Room website like hawks, waiting to pounce as soon as the website indicated that on-line registrations would be taken. Thousands had the same idea. Repeated attempts to register in the morning failed. On a whim, I tried again during my lunch hour and got through. I phoned Mary Jo and she was out for lunch. She tried in the afternoon and the race was already full! Only 1500 registrants were accepted. Time passed. The Running Room posted some information for those who wanted to see if they could swap entries or otherwise get in on some sort of a faint hope basis. Mary Jo and Paul had no success (or gave up).

In the meantime, I injured myself during the Y half and endured a very long recovery, doing essentially no running at all during the summer. However, I kept my registration at Melissa's. Eventually, it came to decision time. Was I really going to go? A week before, I was still only able to run 20 minutes (with some walk breaks) so running the whole thing was out of the question. Dr. Laura Brough mentioned to me that she had walked most of the marathon while doing the Ironman and I should just walk it. Since getting into the race was so difficult, I concluded I would just go down for the experience, come what may.

Being just a little bit competitive, I figured I would run as much as I could (without aggravating my injury). That called for a strategy. I remembered reading somewhere that anyone can run three times as much as their usual training runs without doing any preparatory long runs. On this probably less than scientific basis, I calculated I could run about 60 minutes. Doing it all at once seemed to me to be courting disaster. However, if I ran one minute and walked two, I could probably do the 21k in 3 hours, running a total of 60 minutes and not allowing my leg to get too fatigued. So that was the plan I settled on.

I left on Friday morning as the race was on Saturday morning. The Banff weather forecast was for 2 cm of snow on Friday night. If I was unfortunate, there could be a lot more of the white stuff on the Icefields parkway, which after all, is significantly higher and colder. Saturday was a beautiful day. There was plenty of fauna to be seen (a wolf, numerous deer, and mountain sheep). The mountains were encrusted in fresh snow, which went down to the highway in places, but the highway itself was bare and dry along the way. There was a police roadblock at the Icefields visitor centre. A bunch of cyclists whooshed by. It wasn't until I got to Canmore that I found out it was the Lance Armstrong and friends tour.

Race number pickup was at Melissa's restaurant in Banff. Picture the usual race registration scene, however in a crowded bar. Race morning dawned bright and cold. I had to scrape a thick lawyer of frost off the windshield. Parking in Banff is at a premium at the best of times; it was a chilly walk through downtown over the bridge to the recreation grounds where the race starts (not to be confused with the recreation centre, which is at the opposite end of town). I had a lengthy chat with a fellow from London, Ontario. He had run the 10k and the 22k (it really is 22k, not a half) several times and had registered, but was unable to do the run because of injury. Perhaps wiser than me, he was dressed in jeans and only spectating. He was enthused about the outdoor lifestyle in western Canada and was planning to move later in the year (if everyone out east finds out how good we have it, the population will explode!).

The start is a little chaotic, given they put 1500 22k runners behind the 10k people on a narrow gravel road. Nothing life threatening, though. The course is a double loop. The first loop goes to the east through the Banff golf course. It has a few small hills but feels fairly flat. I seeded myself close to the end and found myself pretty lonely for the first couple of kilometres as the crowd stamped off. However, I was pretty soon encountering quite a few stragglers paying the price for their early enthusiasm. The first loop ends at about 14 km. Then there is quite a long hill which climbs up to the Cave and Basin area, where there is a strong odour of sulphur from the hot springs. Those who have really overdone it up the hill may think they are being welcomed to hell. For those whose exertions have brought them to the cusp of nausea, the stench may take them over the edge!

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Melissa's 22K (con't)

By Oliver Hui

The second loop is mostly paved trail, which a little stretch of real trail near the end. It is very rolling. Some people seemed to be really suffering and I found myself giving some words of encouragement to these brave souls. After two hours, I was feeling good enough that I abandoned my carefully thought out plans. I started running one minute for every minute of walking. Then two. Then three. I didn't feel noticeably worse so I ran the last kilometre, though I was prudent enough not to sprint or pick up the pace too much.

I finished in around 2 hours 47 minutes. I didn't notice until I got back to the car that my chip was missing, so I don't know whether I got an official time. Not that it really matters when you do it for fun.

Most of the course is in the trees, though occasionally you get glimpses of the mountains. On this clear day, their snow capped summits were etched against the sky. I'm told this is the usual weather at this time of year.

I noticed some logistical issues:

- 1) There were plenty of water stations but no sports drink. Either the frontrunners cleared them out or there was none. You might want to pack your own.
- 2) Though the race package said there was food, it was difficult to find and I gave up.
- 3) THERE IS NO FINISHER'S MEDAL. I thought maybe I was just looking in the wrong places, but the race package doesn't mention one.
- 4) The t-shirt is nice, but the same for the 10k and the 22k ...so no bragging rights for going the extra distance.

If you can get in, Melissa's is a fun race to run. I felt a little guilty, because I wasn't very tired crossing the finish line. However, you notice so much more when you aren't beat. I did notice that a lot of the back of the packers put in a lot of effort and determination just to go the distance.

So here's to them!

A Writer Among Us

I've noticed that runners tend to be a well rounded group of people and that many runners have unique talents and interests outside of running. One such runner is Norris Whiston, who travelled across Canada this summer in order to complete a race in each province.

You may recall that Norris, and his friend Jim, arrived in Prince George in July and completed the Highland Ridge Run before heading back to their homes in Nova Scotia. Since then, I have received several emails from Norris and learned that, in addition to being an avid runner and enthusiastic traveller, he is also a dedicated teacher, a talented artist, and an amazing writer.

Norris has compiled a series of short stories, entitled Running on Empty, in which he eloquently recounts many of the sights he has seen, trails he has conquered, and friends he has made throughout his years of running. I found his stories to be a sort of "Chicken Soup for the Runner's Soul" which I inadvertently devoured in a single sitting. I enjoyed the descriptions of the Maritime landscape, empathized with the victories and disappointments of training and racing, and related to the camaraderie of being part of a running community that extends across the country and beyond.

If you are ready to change gears, relax, and reflect after a strenuous fall training season pick up my copy of Running on Empty. I'm more than willing to lend it out... provided it remains free of coffee, wine, and/or those pesky Gatorade stains!



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The Quesnel Women's Fall Challenge

October 2nd, 2005

By Harmony Watts

Being an "equal opportunity runner", I have always been a little reluctant to participate in an event which specifically excludes half of the human species. Nevertheless, I had several reasons for putting my misgivings aside and participating in the Quesnel Women's Fall Challenge this year. First of all, I was eager to participate in a fundraiser for Breast Cancer Research. Secondly, I was impressed by the grassroots nature of this local event. Finally, after months of long slow training runs I was itching to engage in something short and fast to boost my confidence in preparation for the Victoria Half Marathon. And so it was decided that I would run the 5km race in Quesnel with my mom and my friend Christine.

I truly believe that Mother Nature knows best; thus, one should never haul herself out of bed before sunrise! However, on Sunday, October 9th, I made an exception to this rule and woke at 6:00 in preparation for the drive to Quesnel. Knowing that registration for this event closes at 8:30 sharp, we planned to leave the house at 6:30, stop for gas and coffee, and be on the road by 7:00. Our perfectly timed plan was foiled first by heavy fog, which slowed us considerably on the highway; then by some "official" looking arrows leading us not to the start line but, rather, to a nearby garage sale; and finally, by a lack of parking near the event site. We parked the car on the shoulder of the road at 8:28 and sprinted towards the registration table. Somewhere along the way, Christine and I lost my mom to the outhouse line-up. The two of us arrived at the registration table, out of breath, just in time to hear the event organizer announce that we would be the last registrants able to enter the race ... Ahh, I knew that eventually my mom would appreciate my ability to forge her signature! With our fees paid and waivers signed we too headed to investigate the outhouse line-up, which I estimated to be about 21.1km long. Realizing I would not make it to the front of the line up before the official start, I headed into the bush where I found that about thirty other women had similar plans for overcoming the outhouse line-ups. At this point, I breathed a sigh of relief and silently thanked the race organizers for making this a "ladies only" event where one could squat in the bush without worrying about being spotted by anyone of the opposite gender.

At 9:00 sharp the race began. Hundreds of runners scurried across the timing mats; through a pink balloon arch; and around crowds of individuals who were, perhaps, a little optimistic during the self-seeding process. Loud music pushed us onward as we headed up the scenic hills around Dragon Lake. Before long, we were able to see the fastest of the 5km runners heading back towards us after completing the turn-around. After leaving the 10 and 21km runners and making the turn ourselves, we pushed hard to take full advantage of the gentle downhill and finished the course in a time of 30:48 (only seven seconds behind my personal best).

As we waited for the 10 and 21km runners to come in we listened to lively music and chatted with many local runners who had made the trip to Quesnel. Those who thought to bring extra clothing enjoyed this social time tremendously. Those who did not have warm, dry clothes quickly made their way to Tim Horton's for some socializing of their own.

Following the event, everyone was invited for a light lunch, awards, and draw prizes at the Senior's Centre. The race organizers had souvenir merchandise available ranging from water bottles, to hats, to hoodies. Those who had money to splurge were satisfied knowing that the proceeds of their purchases would help to fund the local mammography unit. Those of us who did not bring spending money waited with baited breath as over one hundred draw prizes (including souvenir water bottles, gift certificates from local merchants, a weekend package from the Hills Heath Ranch, and a diamond ring with matching bracelet donated by Sean David Jewellers) were given out to participants based on age, early entry dates, completion times, and/or luck.

I was shocked when, while sitting beside Christine (who won the ring at the Billy Barker Run this spring), I learned that I had won the jewellery package. In hindsight, I've decided that it may sometimes be worthwhile to beat Mother Nature out of bed in the morning... In fact, I plan to get up even earlier next October in order to make it to the Women's Fall Challenge with a little more time to spare. I invite women looking for a "girl's day away" to come with and hope you enjoy a little Prince George luck... they say these things sometimes happen in threes!



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LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon

October 9/ 2005

By Richard Stewart

My first marathon was in 1988 and I wanted to do something special for my 20th race. I've hankered to run the "Big 3", being Chicago; New York; and the Marine Corps marathons, for a long time. This year it was to be Chicago - I made a good choice: 40,000 runners, 1.2 million spectators, 25 cheerleading squads, numerous bands (you can't come to Chicago and not sing the blues!), 17 aid stations, and me.

I flew all the way, and despite a run in with an officious airline clerk at the airport over getting my boarding pass, the trip was uneventful. I can't wait for the Westjet connection to Seattle, Vancouver and Seattle! A Tip - if you don't have your passport for travel - get it now - it makes crossing the border much simpler. I have mine - believe me, it greases the wheels.

We stayed with a friend who lives in this city and works for the University of Chicago. She has a very nice high ceilinged/loft type apartment. They are busy big time converting old storage buildings to condos and apartments and are feverishly building more.

The start/finish is held at Grant Park in the city centre a few hundred metres from Lake Michigan. My friend lives a kilometre from the finish (the course runs right by her front door) and the package pick up and runners expo at the Convention Centre are a mere 20 minutes stroll.

This city has taken this race and made it clearly their own. The organization of the race was monumental and efficient - best marathon as far as support, organization and volunteers that I've run yet. The runners expo is huge and the souvenir jacket/medal are great as you will see.

The TV race coverage began at 6am with the start at 8am. It dawned cool and cloudy. I had planned to try the 4:30 grouping but the crowds were so thick I couldn't get close to them. There were at least four TV news helicopters hovering overhead at the start. The Star Spangled banner was sung and we were off. There was a big cheer and we headed out to the tune "Sweet Home Chicago." I didn't even hear the blast of the starting horn because of the buzz and cheers of the runners. It took me 13 minutes to get to the starting mat to activate my chip. The footing was tricky with the piles of discarded clothing, garbage bags and water bottles so I had to be careful for the first kilometre. It got really slick in the water/gel/banana locations too. It was cheek to jowl throughout the race till 18-20 miles where the crowds finally thinned out a bit. I nearly knocked down a chap in the first 3kms trying to cross against the torrent of people. I guess he didn't see all 40,000 of us. My Garmin gps immediately tanked because of the skyscrapers.

Forget your PR plans in this one and run it for fun. Even the pace bunnies for the pace groups were out of luck in maintaining pace. I was passing pace groups for finish times well below my eventual finish forecast. The race organizers were, for once, not liars when they said the course was flat. It is REALLY flat with minuscule climbs only when crossing bridges over the Chicago River.

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LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon (con't)

By Richard Stewart

The temperatures climbed as the sun came out. It stayed very bright out and I got sunburn on my shoulders. I had been bothered by leg cramps pre race and these came back around 20-25 kms. Then for good measure I got some stomach cramps that forced me to walk a mile till it eased. So much for gels in the future.

The spectators were great. There were thousands of encouraging signs and, in addition to the official cheerers, there were a few that also brought a smile and chuckle. The transvestites in evening wear at mile 7 were different. One of them had a "Marge Simpson/Bride of Frankenstein" bee hive hairdo three feet high. I saw runners dressed as a member of the Blue Man Group, Spiderman, Batman, and a turkey. Lots of people had their goal on the back of their shirts- "Beat Oprah 4:29:00."

There were moments of courage as well. I saw one man limping very painfully with one leg packed in ice. Another man was running with a prosthesis leg and was one hurting unit. I stopped feeling sorry for myself. With 200 metres to go I had to dodge an ambulance that cut across my path with the finish line in sight. Lots of food was provided- (even beer!) at the tables for the runners. Chicago is great fun and a must do marathon. Great Italian food, shopping, and the Field Museum are great ways to walk off the sore quads too.

Winner/Male - Feliz Limo-(Kenyan)-2:07:46
Winner/Female - Deena Kastor(U.S.)-2:21:25
Me 5:02:14... Just couldn't reel in that Kenyan...
Maybe #21

Royal Victoria Race Weekend

October 9th, 2005

By Harmony Watts

I have always said that if I were to run a big race it would have to be out of town because, personally, I think that the months of training that go into preparing for a race are deserving of a nice hotel, dinners on the town, and lots of shopping. Not surprisingly, my first half marathon began as an excuse for a girls' weekend away.

The plan was made when Amy Beeman returned to Prince George for her wedding in June. She mentioned to Heather Kostovich, Angela Wilson, and myself that we should meet in Victoria to run the half marathon. I was initially resistant, thinking I could never run that far. However, after a few glasses of wine, I changed my mind and decided that we should not only run the half but also get tattoos to commemorate the occasion! Before long, I had roped my mom (Yvonne) into my half marathon/tattoo plan and inspired my dad (Sig) to come along to run the full. I also met a new running partner, Christine Cote, who was training to run the half in Kelowna.

I stuck to my training plan, checking off each run on the schedule, with a level of dedication that impressed even Cory. Mondays I met Heather for a recovery run; Tuesdays and Thursdays I ran with my Learn to Run group; Wednesdays Heather, Christine, and I did hill repeats (with the occasional company of a black bear); and Saturdays I ran long with Christine and my mom. By mid-summer I had set my goal to complete the half marathon in under 2:30.

The days leading up to the race were relaxing as we enjoyed the local shops, restaurants, and runners expo. Saturday night was marked with the traditional Prince George visit to the Old Spaghetti Factory.

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