They Call It Dopey For A Reason

By Kim Shire

For the last 2 years I have written about my January travels to the RunDisney Marathon weekend in Florida. I have, in fact, gone to this event for 7 consecutive years with my family that consists of John and Sally, my parents, who live in Florida; and Nikki, Dave, and Preya, my sister and her family, who live in Hampden. Everyone has done at least one race a year.

For the last few years we have embraced the freedom to dress up that just seems right for Disney. Two years ago the girls dressed up and raced the 5k as "Minnie Mouse." Last year 5 of us ran the 5k as Dalmatians and my mom was Cruella de Ville. This year all 6 of us chose to honor Pluto (the mascot of the 5k) with our choice of attire. The costumes were great, but did lose a little bit of their impact because we had to layer multiple shirts, fleece, leggings, hats, and gloves under the tank tops, skirts, and shorts to accommodate the 27 degree weather that descended on Florida that week. Not really the expected conditions, but despite the cold, the race was fun and we had a great time.

The Pluto 5k is just the beginning of the long weekend of races and is held on Thursday. On Friday there is a 10k. Saturday is the half marathon and then the weekend culminates on Sunday with the full marathon. Disney, a company that is great at creating excitement to spend money, began offering Goofy’s Race and a Half Challenge in 2006 which involves completing the half and full marathons for a total of 39.6 miles. I survived this challenge in 2015 and actually had a blast with it.

In 2014 Disney decided that people were dopey enough to pay for, and actually want to do, all 4 races for a total 48.6 miles over the 4 days. They were correct, and the Dopey Challenge was born and was instantly a sell-out event (over 7,000 Dopey registrations in 2018). This year was the 5th anniversary of the Dopey Challenge as well as the 25th anniversary of the marathon and one thing that seems to have become a guarantee is that “anniversary” year medals are even better than the regular medals.

During the event, running was tiring, but waking up was the hardest aspect of the Challenge. Disney is popular. There are thousands of people to get to the start, shuttle through security and into the corrals. The races start early so the parks can open. I woke up every morning at 2:50 am and was on a bus by 3:30 am. I was at the staging area by 4 and into the corrals by 4:30 for remarks, anthem, and staging for the 5 am race start (or thereabouts – I was never in the first corral). I waited patiently for my turn with all the other exhausted, crazy, but enthusiastic participants. They call us Dopey for a reason.

I did follow the Hal Higdon Dopey training plan (it’s that popular that Hal covers it). My goal was never PR or speed. It was pretty much a focus on survival—of both the training regime and the actual event. Workouts started off as back-to-back and as the training program progressed they were back-to-back-to-back-to-back. Getting used to running day after day after day is key. They do call it Dopey for a reason.

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The President’s Corner

by Johanna Szillery

Dear Sub 5 members and friends,

Welcome the height of the running season in Maine! Hope that training, racing, running, jogging, race walking, or whatever you find yourself involved in are fun and fulfilling.

This is the busy time of year for racing. The next races on the Sub 5 calendar are:

Tour du Lac 10 miler in Bucksport – June 30 at 7:30am
One of the favorites in the Sub 5 series, with homemade jam prizes! Rolling hilly course.

Walter Hunt 4th of July 3k in Brewer/Bangor – July 4 at 10:45am
A fun and fast race from Brewer to Bangor along the 4th of July parade route.

Registration information on these and other races in the area is available on our website at www.Sub5.com.

Each year, Sub 5 holds an annual meeting of its membership, generally in March. This meeting serves as an opportunity for members to elect the Sub 5 Board, and for the Board to then elect the officers. This year, the meeting was on March 17, preceded by a run, potluck lunch, and gear swap. The meeting featured a talk by physical therapist and runner Tim Wakeland on shoe fit and biomechanics. We would like to thank two retiring Board members, John Peckenham and Pam Nourse, for their service. John Peckenham has been a Board member and served as board President for over five years. John is an avid runner, coach, and teacher. He has shared his joy of running with generations of not only his kids, but also others through his coaching. As the President of Sub 5, John served as a pragmatic, focused, and hard-working leader. Pam Nourse has been the editor for the Sub 5 newsletter for many years... her commitment to this role extended to the west coast. While Pam has been completing doctorate studies in California, she has continued to serve as newsletter editor for Sub 5. Her gentle and consistent service is much appreciated by many Sub5 members. It is not easy to fill a newsletter, as most of us would rather be on the roads and trails!

The Sub 5 Board welcomes Joe Roberts, as member at large, and Geoff Dapice, as newsletter editor.

Sub 5 regular Board meetings and the Annual Meeting are open to the membership. We welcome your input and volunteer efforts!

Happy Running, See you out there!

The newest addition to the Sub 5 family, Owen Revitt (son of club secretary Matt Revitt), meets President Johanna.
My First Boston Marathon
(Spectating…)

By Ezra Dean

I couldn’t have picked a better year to watch. The weather couldn’t have been better, and by better I mean bitter…cold.

It was cold, windy, rainy, gusty, but it was all Boston. I have been watching the Boston Marathon for years, but decided it was finally time to take it all in in person. Someday I will qualify and take it in from a totally different view but for now this will have to do.

I started the day by going on a quick 5 mile run. Just this short run gave me a taste of what the runners would face in the less-than-ideal conditions and let’s just say I was not a fan! I got back to the hotel and tuned in to the local news to catch the start of the elite woman. The gun went off and there they went on their long journey from Hopkinton to Boston—the
same roads where other greats like Clarence Demar, Johnny Kelley, Boston Billy, Joan Benoit, and Grete Waitz made history. The 122nd Boston Marathon was underway. Twenty-eight minutes later the elite men and first wave started that same journey, a journey that will test the mind and push the body to the limits. That is exactly what I saw on display on those streets heading to Boston. Runners from all across the globe come to one place to run from one point to the next. Seems crazy, and maybe it is, but it’s a good crazy!

I had gone down Sunday night, with a friend and training partner of mine and, we stayed in Newton just 1.5 miles from the course. We hopped in the car and headed down to the course to start watching from mile 17 in Newton. We were lucky enough to find “shelter” under a cedar tree. Still exposed enough to experience the atmosphere to the fullest but sheltered enough to stay at least a little dry. There was an old timer standing there who lived right by the course. She started telling us of her days in the 70’s and 80’s watching Bill Rodgers run by. She spoke of the “Duel in the Sun” in ’83 and Joanie winning in ’79. It was like taking a page from a book and having it read aloud. It was a pleasure listening to her stories and it helped the time pass as we waited for the first runner to round the corner and into view.

Around the corner they came, one soggy runner after another. On all their faces they wore determination and grit. It’s humbling to see even the best of the best grimace with exhaustion and fight all at the same time. Not far behind this first group we saw our very own Tracy! As we shouted her name she recognized us, her smile grew as she came to our side of the street. A quick high five and shout “Marathon! I had to hold tears back as I watched her celebrate. A sense of American pride came over me just like in 2014.

I watched the celebration for a bit and then it was time to go cheer on some more hearty souls. There was still a lot of running left! Some runners would be out there for many more hours.

We drove and wove our way back around closed streets and parked cars and eventually got back to mile 17. We were able to scream out some names of runners we knew passing by: Pete, Deedra, Kathrine! I like to think that we needed my “whoop, whoop” but it felt good that I was able to cheer them on. After watching the runners pass by, one after another, you realize that these are the heart and soul of the race. The elites may get all the attention but these runners make the race what is it. They can all tell a different story and each one had a different path to get to where they were. But today they were all together on the streets leading to Boston. Male, female, old and young all trying to accomplish the same goal—to finish!

Eventually it was time to hit the road and north we went, out of the city, as runners continued to make their way to the Citgo sign and beyond. As we drove away I could not help but feel that we had just witnessed history, and those running got to run on the very roads that history was made on. But in my book they all made history, and the runner who finishes in 2 hours is just as much a hero as the one who finishes in 6. They all ran the same distance, had the same hills and felt the same pride that is BOSTON. And I cannot help but be drawn closer to the race: for now it may be spectating, but watch out, ’cause those streets will soon feel the soles of my Sauconys headed northeast to Boston!
Boston...
Big, Small or Something in Between?

When it comes to picking a race, size matters. The pros and cons of big and small events.

By Amanda Loudin, RRCA Journalism Excellence Winner – 2017

If you ask Janet Sherman, nothing beats a big, raucous race, full of spectators, energy and fantastic amenities. When the 53-year old Wyoming-based school teacher plops down her race fee, she likes to feel as if she is getting something in return, and big races fit the bill, she says. Of the five to 10 races she runs each year, the vast majority are in the large category.

Eric Collard, by contrast, prefers his races on the small side. The 39-year old public relations professional from Ottawa has done his share of big races—everything from the Ottawa Marathon to Ironman-branded events—and found they’re just not his jam. He’ll pick small over big every chance he can.

There are pros and cons to every race size. What’s important is discovering what fits your personality and preferences best so that you can get the most out of your experience. This means knowing your goals and then finding the races to help you achieve them.

“Size definitely affects the experience of the race and can impact your time,” says RRCA-Certified Coach Kristina Craig, from Buffalo, NY. “I always recommend that runners consider the size in conjunction with the course.”

There are other factors that come into play as well: Do you like to travel to races and make a trip out of the experience? Do you prefer sleeping in your own bed the night before? What about the medal, the shirt, the crowd support? All are factors to weigh before signing on the dotted line. The beauty of it is: There’s a right fit for everyone.

A Case for Big

Carly Pizzani, a Vermont-based RRCA coach, says that it definitely takes some trial and error to figure out the best fit for your personality and goals. But for many new runners, she says, big is a great way to go. “They offer so much support for the runners,” she says. “They usually have the organization down pat, so they have plenty of volunteers, aid stations, and are well run.”

While Sherman has been running for years, she’s learned that the bigger races provide plenty of bang for the buck. “You get tech shirts, lots of on-course support, and finishers’ medals,” she says. “I also like five-year age groups, which you might not find in smaller events.”

Put the after-race party with plenty of food for everyone in the bonus category as well, says Sherman. “I love the excitement and vibe of a big race,” she adds.

There’s also this: for Sherman, who often places at smaller, local races, the large crowds at a big event removes some pressure. “I’m really hard on myself,” she admits, “and in a bigger race, I assume there are plenty of faster runners in my age group. If I do place, it’s a pleasant surprise.”

Pizzani says that another plus for big races is the option to train with groups leading up to the event if you live in the area. On race day, she says, “There’s nothing like that big-city crowd cheering you to keep going, especially during the tough parts.”

This encouragement can come from a fellow runner or pace group, too, something in greater quantities in a big event. “Most large races have pacers and they can be extremely motivating,” says Craig, “as can your fellow competitors.”

Craig points to one of her recent half marathons, during a point where she was struggling on a big hill. “A pacemaker passed me and I thought to myself, ‘oh no he doesn’t,’” she says. “That was the push I needed and I caught up and passed him, while he gave me encouragement to finish strong.”

On the Other Hand

Small races have their share in the plus category as well. Eric London, a 53-year old communications and policy consultant in D.C., has certainly given large races a try. His resume includes the Marine Corps, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Baltimore marathons. “It’s definitely nice to have crowd support,” he admits. “But the start line really throws me off. I don’t like the pushing and shoving, the time you must allocate to get there, and the over-the-top adrenaline that surrounds you.”

London says the crowded, slow first mile that comes along with a big race is also a downside to the bigger events. Plus, he says, he doesn’t care about the shirts or medals. “They’re generally too expensive for the value,” he says. “So what’s the point?”

With that view on the big races, London tends toward the smaller, low-key events in his area. “I love that these often support local running clubs, which are the backbone of running,” he says. “Smaller races are low stress, easy, and you can often run faster because the course is wide open.”

Craig says that smaller events allow you to focus and hit goal pace much earlier than their larger counterparts. “It’s easier to pay attention to time and form, rather than spending time weaving around slower runners,” she says. “There’s also the fact that you get easier access to hotels, smaller lines, and parking.”

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Big, Small, or Something in Between...

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Collard likes the fact that at most small races, you can sign up at the last minute, too. “They generally have less hassle and more charm,” he says of his preference, “and a smaller price tag.”

No matter which you prefer—big or small—every race has something to offer. You don’t have to commit to one or the other, but it does help if you know what size will deliver your race-day goals. For his part, Collard plans to keep things relatively low key with one big exception: “I did get into the Chicago Marathon lottery, so I guess I’m training for that,” he says.

Pizzani’s final piece of advice is to follow your heart: “Unless you are a professional runner making your living out there, you should find joy and fun in the races you choose.”

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