

**ISSUE 402 | GATE RIVER RUN SPECIAL EDITION**

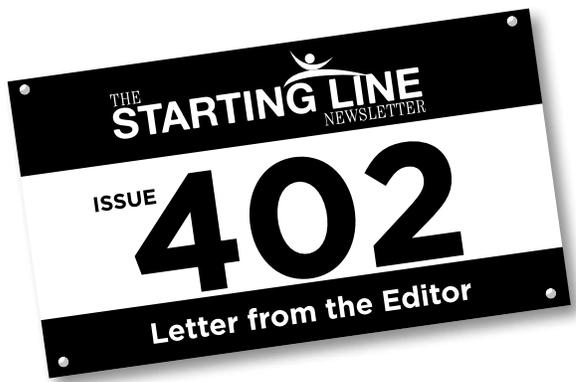
THE  
**STARTING LINE**  
NEWSLETTER

ISSUE

**402**

Guana Trail Run - December 2013





Well, club members, 2014 is already upon us so it seems a bit lame and late to say “Happy New Year!” Nevertheless, I will say so anyway and in addition to that I will wish you all the very best for the positive looking upcoming months. According to what I have seen on TV, read, and heard on the radio, the “authorities” say that this is going to be a great turnaround year and that by the time it is over all of our troubles will be behind us and there will be nothing but blue skies and safe sailing ahead. Sure hope they are right.

Regardless, this is going to be a great year for JTC Running. On our horizon we see our most glorious event of the year, the Gate River Run. I cannot predict the economy, world affairs or even what Miley Cyrus might do next, but I can unequivocally say that this year’s GRR will be the greatest one yet. (How do I know? I cheat; because I’ve been around for all of them and I have seen that it is better every year.) Race Director, Doug Alred, tweaks and fine-tunes the event a little every time. Amazingly, he finds ways to improve it. Most would say, “It can’t get any better than this!” But Doug finds a way to make it so, time and again.

We can be sure that, unlike many so-called “major races”, our race will remain a race and that every elite runner in America will be invited to attend. Board Member, Richard Fannin, is working hard to bring every possible, available speedster to our fair city. He will be bringing in teams also. In fact, Fannin’s baby, the very successful team race, the TenBroeck Cup, has started to be imitated by other races across the country.

We believe in competition here; be it individual, team, age group, or otherwise. The River Run was conceived as a world-class athletic competition, it still is and, I believe, it always will be.

In these times, when people who have no previous interest or experience in our sport organize “races” or “events” only to make money, it is wonderful to know and work with someone who is the genuine article. I cannot speak highly enough of club member, Mark Ryan. Together we organized the Guana Back to Nature Trail Races, held on December 1.

I cannot think of anyone with any more love of our sport than Mark. His dedication and enthusiasm are unparalleled. I jokingly referred to him as “The World’s Most Hyper Race Director”, and he could well be. But as he once said to me: “I know I’m hyper, but

it’s good, it means I get things done.”

He got them done all right, and last December we enjoyed the most successful “Guana” of all time. Whether you did the 12k, the 2x25k Relay, the 50k Ultra or just showed up to watch, I think you will agree that a fine time was had by all. I know that I loved it and I was proud to be a part of it. The kudos though go to Mark, what a splendid job he did.

You can read his thoughts on the event inside this issue.

Also inside, you will find a nice piece written by the legendary Jay Birmingham. Jay is a JTC Running “pioneer”, one of the originals who started the club in 1975. He also helped organize the first River Run. His story, The Measure of a Course, is as always, a fine one. I’m sure that you will enjoy it.

We had a great club Christmas party on December 7th. Hosted by Jane Alred at the swanky new 1st Place Sports store in San Marco, it was a wonderful occasion. Thanks to Jane for all her work in putting it together. Also there to help out were Board Members, Colleen Clarson, Todd O’Donnell and Larry Roberts, our newly reelected president.

Our John TenBroeck Memorial Winter Beach Run went off very well; even the weather cooperated. Doug Tillett was on hand to unfold the swelling scene and he will do so in his report that will be posted on the club’s website. We had hoped to publish it in this newsletter but we couldn’t get him to stop running long enough to finish the article. Check the website instead.

Speaking of beach runs, our Summer Beach Run lays claim to being Florida’s oldest. Is it? This issue’s edition of From The Archives, takes on this controversy.

Once again this year, Richard Fannin has been working his tailbone off trying to bring the best American runners to our premier event, the Gate River Run. What does it take to get all those people to turn up? How does he do it? Richard has promised to reveal his secret athlete attracting techniques in an article in the future but for now, look on our website for a rundown on some of the talented runners who will be at the race this year.

Ah, the Gate River Run, we all have our memories when it comes to our most popular, biggest and most prestigious event. The thing has grown and gone from strength to strength over the years. I had a few thoughts on the old boy and maybe you’ll enjoy reading them.

And I hope that you will enjoy this issue. The Gate River Run and all the upcoming races that JTC Running has in store for you, as well as our numerous social events.

All the best to you in 2014.



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Greetings!

The following comments highlight Club accomplishments in 2013 and some of the things we are planning for 2014.

We are proud to report that the Club contributed over \$54,000 to various charities last year in line with our mission as a non-profit dedicated to supporting fitness through running and track activities. The Club is now planning to raise the contribution level this year by as much as 50%.

The Club had some great races in 2013: John TenBroeck Winter Beach Run, Gate River Run, Summer Beach Run, Guana Trail Race, and the Last Gasp. The Guana Trail Race in December drew a record number of participants who enjoyed the awards ceremony at the Reef as much as running in the park.

The Club made digital progress last year too...Last Gasp was the first event to offer sign-up on the Club's website. Members found their application auto-filled and no fee for paying with a credit card. We plan to extend this functionality to the Summer Track Series and to sign-up volunteers for various efforts. In general, we are working to make the Club's website more current and relevant to members. The Club's Facebook page is also improving in order to communicate not only with members, but the

running and fitness community as a whole. Social Media guru Stan Lambert promises more to come this year.

The new year has started off well with the just completed Winter Beach Run. Five hundred and twenty runners doing the five and ten miles had excellent weather and beach conditions for a fast pace. Runners included over one hundred teens from Marathon High who ran in training for their half marathon program. The Club is proud to sponsor Marathon High in their important effort to encourage fitness and personal accomplishment. John TenBroeck's son, Scott, was on hand to start the runners off and give the awards to the winners afterwards. Finishers warmed up with hot chocolate and steaming soup.

This year's Gate River Run promises to be another record total attendance setter. Not only that, but with the best collection of USA elite runners in one race in the country this year all competing for the 15k National Championship. If you haven't entered yet, sign up before the end of the month to ensure your spot in Jacksonville's premier running event. We look forward to seeing you at the Runner's Expo Thursday and Friday, March 13 and 14, and at the Club's hospitality tent before and after the race on March 15. There will be refreshments, bag check, and exclusive port-a-lets available only for active Club members.



Larry Roberts, President



THE **STARTING LINE**  
NEWSLETTER

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Mark your Calendar!



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**The Gate River Run**

USATF 15k National Championship

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**\$2 Discount for all club members**

Go to **www.gate-riverrun.com**



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Letters to the Editor

Thank you so much for providing what may be my best race experience of 2013!!!! I've only done a couple of 5k trail races since taking up races in February 2012; I've done the Hog Jog and The Last Gasp, and a 6k Race to Sustainability in North Carolina Forest. I wasn't certain I could handle a 12k trail race.

The day of race I arrived early enough to cheer on some of the Ultra racers including Charlie Hunsberger, who was running his first Ultra. I spoke to some who had already finished to learn about the trail conditions. I was anxious as you walked all the 12k runners to our start line, especially seeing the hickory nuts on the trail (made a mental note NOT to fall down).

It only took a few moments for most all of my fellow runners to pass me. Before I knew it, I was nearly alone in a beautiful environment. The well-placed direction arrows kept me assured that I was on the right path. I carried plenty of water with me and had a blast running all the turns (though I was careful to walk in the muddy areas). It took me back to being a kid running through the woods, enjoying all the fresh air and fragrances of nature.

Though most others had left for the after party at The Reef restaurant, Karie Ewing stayed and witnessed my kick at the finish line. I was so happy to have finished in just under 2 hours. And what a surprise, as I enjoyed a beverage in my new Back To Nature glass, to learn I had placed first in my age group!

I am eager to learn the date for the 2014 Back To Nature 12 Trail Race, so I can put it on my calendar and in my budget. Everyone who participated, as a runner, worker or volunteer, were all so wonderful to be with and a testament to the greatness of the Northeast Florida competitive running community.

Regards,  
Jean Schubert

Mr. Ryan,

Thank you for putting together the Guana Trail Race. It was my first time running more than 20 miles, and I had a great time (and didn't get injured!). It was an incredible challenge. I hope to do it again next year.

PJ Jones

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Here is a letter concerning our Winter Beach Run that took place on Saturday, January 18.

Hi Larry and Doug,

Thank you SO much for inviting Marathon High to participate in today's race! We are so grateful.

Our students had such a wonderful, positive experience, thanks to you. As you know, for many of them, this was their first race ever. And for many of our kids, they rarely, if ever, get an opportunity to go to the beach.

Today they really felt the support and encouragement of our running community, and they were just beaming at the end. You are helping to give them the valuable gifts of confidence, self-esteem, self-respect and accomplishment.

Thank you again for everything. We truly appreciate JTC Running and 1st Place Sports!!

In gratitude,  
Deborah Dunham



The Last Gasp took place for the 37th time on Saturday, December 21st. It was only the second time in the race's history that it was run before Christmas, the other time being 2005. It felt kind of funny, I must say. Traditionally, the event has been a Sunday afternoon race although it has been called into action on Saturday a few times before. I think most people expect the race to be run late in the month and to be on Sunday and when this doesn't happen it tends to upset the applecart a bit.

Perhaps that is why the attendance was off somewhat this time. Despite a beautiful day, with the temperature hovering at about 80 degrees, the day-of-race signups were paltry-less than 30. As it was the final Saturday for Christmas shopping people may have been too preoccupied.

The Kids' Gasp took place for the third time. This free one-mile fun run was attended by nearly 50 kids in 2012 but drifted back to its 2011 attendance of about 30. Still, I feel that there is a good future for the kids' race and it is a valuable way to create a new following for The Last Gasp.

Once the kids finished their 1-mile fun run on the open field, the 5k began. The course was largely the same as in 2012, with only a couple of very slight changes. Alterations in the course are not unusual to this race; this is due to the ever-changing JU campus. Yet, despite all the building and changes the Gasp's course hasn't been compromised much and most people would agree that it is still a fine, challenging, unique venue.

Those who attend the race always love it, and it is for our club a most historic, traditional, December event. Tradition is what cross-country running is all about and

The Last Gasp has a lot to be proud of, just like JTC Running.

Wesley Norton must be proud of himself. The 18-year-old won the race in 17 minutes and 54 seconds. He beat Aza Riley, another 18-year-old, by nine seconds. Both are standouts on the Stanton High School cross-country team.

James Cardozo, who has been winning this race over the past few years, had to settle for finishing fifth overall but won the men's Masters division. The 43-year-old posted the time of 19 minutes and 12 seconds.

Kaley Delay, only 14 years old, won the women's title in 19 minutes and 59 seconds. JTC Running member and coach, JC Pinto, who clocked a time of 20:59, followed her in.

Mercedes Smith (47) won the women's Masters race in 24 minutes and 28 seconds.

In the team race, the Blue Devils won easily with 13 points. The team was comprised of runners from Stanton who turned out in force for this event. The Strider Trail Buffs came in second with a combined score of 63 points.

Race Director, Herb Taskett, has sworn, once again, that this is (was) his final year as The Last Gasp's leader. That means it is up to me to fulfill a seamless transition of power. Herb has done a great job for the past 26 years. Hope I can live up to it and do as well. Thank you so much, Race Director Taskett.

Regardless of who is the next race director, we have every intention of bringing this classic back in 2014.

*Welcome New Board Members!*

**Erica Bjork**  
**Michael DelCharco**  
**Connie Smith**



## THE GUANA 50K AND 12K BACK TO NATURE TRAIL RACES 2013

JTC Running, the largest running club in northeast Florida, resurrected the Guana Trail races last year after a two year hiatus. This year's event, run on Sunday, December 1st, 2013 was bigger and better than last year's event. It is run on the Guana Research Reserve, a Florida State park and a spectacular venue. Located between the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Tolomato River (aka- the Intracoastal Waterway) to the west, it provides spectacular views of nature along the way. You can't see the ocean from the trails, but you can hear it, especially if it is angry, which it was on race day due to a classic Nor'easter storm. The weather cooperated, however, and it was overcast to partly cloudy all day with temperatures in the low 60's.

The 50k individual and relay races started at 8am. Jay Birmingham, a globally famous ultra runner and Jacksonville resident, was our official starter and he got the event off with a ringing of a bell as a reminder to preserve nature. Being in Florida the Guana trails are relatively flat with virtually no elevation change. Most of the race course is hard pack, but like any good trail there are several tree roots runners need to navigate and many runners did take a spill or two, but that's trail running.

The course for this event is a 7.8 mile loop run four times for a total of 31.2 miles. Every loop starts and ends at the start/finish line. There were 94 starters when the bell sounded and 74 of them finished the race. Ryan Sloan, a local runner with a strong resume in shorter distances and running in only his second ultra, was the overall race winner, with a time of 3:43:45. Ryan took the lead in the first 100 yards and increased it on every loop; he ended up winning by over 11 minutes over our second place finisher, Grady Jackson.

The women's open winner was Maria Gerstenberger, with a time of 5:03:18. Maria, a Jacksonville resident, is also relatively new to ultra running as this was only her second ultra. She beat the second place woman by a half hour. The second place woman was the woman's master's winner; Donna Lopardo, from Winter Springs, Florida, with a time of 5:33:43. The master's men's champion was Andy Woods, another local ultra runner, who completed the course in 4:15:48. Andy is also relatively new to ultra running and burst onto the scene this summer by winning the 100 mile Beast of Burden in Lockport, New York; in only his second 100 mile race.

The relay division was won by the team of Jason Toney and Sam Costanzo, with a total time of 3:42:21.



Guana 50K & 12K Back to Nature Trail Race



Guana 50K & 12K Back to Nature Trail Race





**Guana 50K & 12K Back to Nature Trail Race**

The 12k event went off at 1pm with 79 runners at the starting line; all of them finished. The overall 12k winner was Cody Pontius, who finished in 47:37, a pace of 6:23 per mile. The open woman's winner was Marry Kummerfield, with an impressive time of 52:40. James Bradley was the men's masters winner at 1:02:49 and Katherine McCombs, from St. Augustine, won the women's masters with a time of 1:03:59.

A brief mention and thank you to our sponsors of this year's event is in order. Because of them it allows us to keep the entry fee low for these Guana events. Beaver Toyota and Scion, Prospect Mortgage, 1st Place Sports,



**Guana 50K & 12K Back to Nature Trail Race**

GU energy and hydration produces and, of course, Mizuno shoes and apparel, who donated new Mizuno shoes to our race winners.

I also want to offer a special thank you to The Reef, who hosted our post race celebration and awards ceremony. They provided a beautiful oceanfront venue for us and provided refreshments and a wonderful selection of hors d'oeuvres.

If you can arrange your race calendar to take in this event I promise you won't regret it. The course is a spectacular and unique venue and I guarantee you will remember the event and maybe even see an alligator or wild pig during the race. Don't worry; they won't get near the race course.

We will finalize a date for the 2014 races by the end of 1st quarter, so check the JTC Running or 1st Place Sports websites. We will have on-line registration next year to make it easier for you to sign up. Remember to do so early as I think we will fill our limit very quickly.

Thank you to our sponsors:



**The Reef Post Party**



## THE MEASURE OF A COURSE

Thirty-five years ago in Northeast Florida, there were no certified courses. What we take for granted in the 21st Century, a 5 kilometer course that is 5,000 meters long, was yet to come. Courses were measured in cars, jeeps, or dead reckoning. In the pre-GPS era, we learned to accept crude measurements.

The Summer Beaches Run, a 5-miler from Hanna Park to the Lifeguard Station in Jacksonville Beach, was representative. Lamar Strother had sunk a cement block high in the dunes just south of a rickety wooden staircase at the park. The lifeguard station didn't move. So the SBR was at least standardized. We ran the same course, year after year.

But when Buck Fannin introduced the idea of a long race through various neighborhoods and across some of Jacksonville bridges, we knew it was a good idea. The resulting event, of course, was the River Run. We thought first of a 10 kilometer event, then a 10-miler. The less frequently run 15 km distance was agreed on. But how to measure it?

Happily, I had moved south from the Dayton, Ohio area where virtually all our courses were accurately measured and certified. My good friend, Steve Price, was cutting edge in the sport of road racing. His metric road race series in Monroe attracted runners from a 200 mile radius. But how did he do it?

Contact Ted Corbitt in New York, he told me. So I did. Corbitt, the premier ultramarathoner in the country at the time, was also head of RRCA's standards committee. For a few bucks, he sent me a Clain-Jones counter for my bicycle and instructions on how to certify a road race course.

Some fundamentals: Using a steel tape, measure an absolutely straight road for ½ mile, 1 kilometer, or 1 mile. Re-measure the course with the steel tape, marking each 100 foot section with nails for accuracy. Repeat until two measurements are within a couple of inches. That becomes your calibration course. Attach the counter to the front wheel of the bicycle. The tires must

be fully inflated on a moderate day. If the temperature or tire pressure changes substantially, one must start over. Ride the course four times, recording the number of clicks. Repeat until validity is established. Now your bike is certified.

The River Run 15,000 (the original name) started and finished one block east of the Main Street bridge. I measured the course from the start to the base of the Hart Bridge several times, one foot from every curb (per Corbitt's instructions), coming to within ten meters each time.

But how does one measure the Hart Bridge? Instead of measuring the course on the sly (it would have been difficult with the toll booths on the south side), we asked the city permission to measure the bridge. No soap. We were stymied.

At the time I worked for Tompkins-Beckwith, a mechanical contracting firm. Through connections at work, we secured copies of the blueprints of the Hart Bridge. With the assistance of experts at T-B, we measured the bridge with engineer's precision. The rest, past the Gator Bowl and back to the start, was completed with the calibrated bike. The course was done and we sent our paperwork to TAC. A few weeks later—hooray! The River Run course was certified. The running boom continued, races proliferated like rabbits, but most of them continued to be measured by cars.

Our acid test was in the race's second year. Kim Merritt won the women's division and (Gasp!) set a new American Record. The paperwork was submitted and we got word that a team from TAC would come to Jacksonville to check the accuracy of our course. We were apprehensive, to say the least.

Long story short, they biked the course (with police escort across the Hart) and pronounced the course accurate, in fact, a respectable 27 meters long. Whew! Years pass and most of the races in the area are certified. No more running a five kilometer PR that will never be approached because the course is less than 3 miles long.



Should you wear your GPS and record your mileage to the hundredths and your times to the tenths of seconds? Go ahead if you are compulsive, obsessive, or just nuts. I'm all for accuracy but equally happy to run without a watch on a course of unknown length.

But if I pay the entry fee and fill out the form, give me an accurate course every time. Our hard training deserves not just a fair race, but an accurate one.

Jay Birmingham has mis-measured some courses in his life but all of them using a calibrated bicycle are accurate.

### From The Archives

Talk about controversy! This business about people who can't believe that JTC Running's Summer Beach Run is the oldest beach race in Florida has been going on for ages. This article appeared in The Starting Line in March 1990.

The Oldest Question by Herb Wills  
(From the Fleet Foot, Gulf Winds Track Club Newsletter)

Editor's note: The opinions given in this article do not necessarily reflect those of The Starting Line, or the Jacksonville Track Club. By including this article in the newsletter we certainly do not want to encourage those naysayers who dare to question that the JTC Summer Beach Run is the oldest race in Florida. But Herb makes some interesting points that are presented in an entertaining manner. If you would like to comment, please send us a letter.

A few years back, not one but two races in Florida started billing themselves as the oldest in the state – the Bay-to-Bay Road Race in St. Petersburg and the

Summer Beach Run in Jacksonville Beach. Since the Jacksonville race has been around since 1965, it clearly has a few years on the Bay-to-Bay, which was first run in 1973. In fact, the Easter Beach Run in Daytona is also older (1969). But neither Jacksonville nor Daytona can claim to be a road race; both courses are flat and firm enough to be parking lots, but both are nevertheless beaches rather than roads. St. Pete's claim is invalid anyway because at least the Space Coast Marathon in Melbourne is older (1972). Jacksonville still boasts of "Florida's oldest foot race," but I wouldn't want to stand by that claim either. The woods may not be full of them, but I imagine there are a few high school and college events out there, track or cross-country, that are even more venerable than the five mile Beach Run. (More venerable than the Beach Run? Come on now, Herb. Ed) And you certainly can't deny that those qualify as "foot races." Daytona has stayed aloof from claims of greatest antiquity, preferring to bill the four-mile Easter Beach Run as being held on the "world's most famous beach." Until someone comes up with an objective measure for fame, you can't really argue with that. At least not constructively.

Welcome New Board Members!

**Erica Bjork**  
**Michael DelCharco**  
**Connie Smith**



Any of this sound familiar?

“I can’t stay motivated, or even get motivated.”

“I’d like to run and do some local 5k’s but I don’t know how to begin.”

“ I can’t seem to improve and I don’t know what to do about it.”

If so, then you need a coach and some organized, progressive training.

David Martinson, manager of the 1st Place Sports store in San Marco, has just begun his “Runnovation” coaching classes. The system is designed for intermediate runners, those with about a year’s experience under their feet.

“We don’t really want rank beginners for this one,” Martinson said. “This is for runners who are now ready to move to the next level.”

It is a one-to-one type of structure, not the herd approach. Each runner will get a personalized monthly schedule, professional, individualized advice and can participate in organized group runs. You can reach Dave at 388-9990 or David@1stplacesports.com.

Paul McRae began his Personal Running Solutions in 2009. Since that time he says he has coached over 500 runners. He takes on runners of all abilities, experienced or not. His runners get one-on-one coaching and individualized schedules.

McRae’s coaching even spawned a new running club, also known as PRS. Members of the club get together to train nearly every day of the week. You can reach him at 904-316-8122.

Running guru, Jeff Galloway, created his famous run-walk training principal some 15 years ago. His lieutenant, Fernandina Beach resident, Chris Twiggs, brought it to the First Coast about the same time. Originally Twiggs designed it to train for the Jacksonville Marathon and later, the Breast Cancer Marathon (26.2 with Donna). Of course, it still exists for those purposes, but recently it has also bred a new, continuous group, the Jax Rogue Runners. Directed by Dennis Holler and Connie Smith, this

group of some 50 to 75 runners never stops.

“A lot of people didn’t like to just train for a marathon and then stop, so we decided to provide an all year alternative, “ Holler said. “We provide coaching and motivation according to the Galloway Method, we also take our service to corporations with our Desk To 10k program.”

It sounds a lot like the famous Couch to 5k beginner’s program we have all heard about. But Holler’s idea centers on businesses and corporations and targets their employees at their laptops. And they don’t just read about it on their computer screens; Holler attacks the problem head on.

After getting official approval, Holler and his pals go into businesses and preach the gospel of health, fitness and exercise. The motivated employees then get out of their desks and with Holler’s help, put their feet to the pavement while learning about the Galloway Method as they go.

“People have told me what a big difference it has made to their lives, this is my greatest reward,” Holler said.

Jax Rogue Runners move the location of their training runs all over the place. This is not just to stave off boredom or to make it fair to all the members so that no one has to drive more than others to get to the venues. There is more to it than that.

“We try to help out smaller businesses by meeting at their location,” Holler said. “It could be a gym, a health food store or a place like 1st Place Sports, but we try to make our runners notice the business and support it. We like to try and have an economic impact on local small businesses.”

What? Giving a shout out for small business, trying to have a positive economic impact and encouraging unfit workers to turn their lives around? Why isn’t this guy the President of the United States??!!

You, or your workplace, can contact him at 904-881-3909.



Want to get faster? Then you're going to need some "track work" and JTC Running has been providing it for more than 30 years. Under the careful, encouraging eye of Coach Danny Weaver, a crowd gathers every Wednesday evening at 5:30 on the Bolles High School track. The crowd is split into abilities so everyone has a good workout with their peers rather than trying to gut it out with runners who are a lot faster. These sessions are a wonderful freebie for our members. You can learn more by logging onto our website at [JTRunning.com](http://JTRunning.com).

For the past ten years, track club member, JC Pinto, has been coaching JTC Running's morning track training. At 5:30 AM every Wednesday JC leads a group that can vary from 5 to 20 runners. By 7 o'clock it is all over and the runners are on their way to work.

Although she does not do personal training per se at this session, she does alter the workouts according to the season or what races people have coming up.

"If they are pointing towards the Gate River Run, I'll

schedule certain intervals but if it is 5k season we will do different ones. Or if a Half-Marathon is coming up then it will be different again. I have always done it that way," she said.

Like Danny Weaver, she doesn't get paid and the runners don't pay (only through their club memberships).

JC continued: "I am not interested in doing this for business purposes, like some people, I do it to help people."

She added: "It is a good group of people, I like them. And I like what I am doing and I'll do it for as long as they want me to."

You can call JC at 803-8758.

There are several options available to you if you want the help of a coach and if you are a JTC Running member, even better, a couple of these choices are absolutely free; another good reason to be a part of our club.

## Meet Hal Higdon

4:09:43: Boston and The Gate.

Hal Higdon is a contributing editor for Runner's World Magazine and a winter resident of Northeast Florida. The title of Hal's latest book, 4:09:43, reflects the time over the finish-line clock when the first bomb exploded in the 2013 Boston Marathon.

Meet Hal Higdon twice in March:

**Tuesday, March 4th at 1st Place Sports San Marco Store, 4 - 6pm, AND  
Thursday, March 6th at 1st Place Sports Orange Park Store, 7pm**

Hal will discuss 4:09:43 as well as offer tips and answer questions about his favorite race, the Gate River Run.



This shouldn't take long.

During my first comeback from an injury layoff, I started to wonder if I'd ever regain my speed, such as it was, and pondered a lifetime of running races at training pace (oh, but for that training pace now).

So I proposed to a few friends that if I had to run in the middle of the pack, I'd strive to crack up the pack. I'd become the running comedian.

They pulverized that proposal with a double-barreled putdown:

- Middle-of-the-pack runners are expending too much energy to have any to spare to laugh at your jokes.
- Your jokes aren't that funny, Gary.

So when your own material's not that good, what do you do? Borrow. Here are few stories I've been told and a few of my own.

This one is so old, Phidippides may have originated it. If not, then surely vaudeville's answer to John Parker or Bart Yasso.

A couple sought counseling for their marital woes. The doctor listened to each of them and turned first to the man, a fitness fanatic of sorts, to suggest a course of action.

"Why don't you run 10 miles a day for two weeks and call me?"

Fourteen days later, the doctor picked up the man's follow-up call.

"How are you doing?"

"Fine, doc, but I'm 140 miles from home."

Every once in a while, following orders of the doctor, or a police officer, is bad advice.

The closest I ever came to breaking 40 minutes in the 10K was a 40:40 at the Sarasota Herald-Tribune Classic

in 1979. As the miles went by, we stayed close to the 6:27 pace necessary but it would be close and I wasn't sure I could keep it up.

We approached the final turn to the Sarasota High School track. A block ahead, an officer pointed the way.

"The turn is here, not up there," said my friend, who -- he was quick to point out -- had helped to plot the course.

"But the cop is up there," I said and kept going, reluctant to defy a man in blue. Why my course-plotting friend followed me, I have no idea.

The added time didn't add up to 40 seconds, I was assured repeatedly, but I'll never know. For sure, this was one time listening to a cop did not pay.

Sometime during that same previous lifetime, I felt fit enough to post a sub-20-minute 5K. In fact, I was sure of it; how far under 20 was the only question.

I chose the Gasparilla Distance Classic's 5K. Race morning was chilly but calm. I covered the 15K for my afternoon newspaper, dictated a short story over the phone, threw off my sweats and jogged over to the start.

Almost all of the serious runners ran the 15K in those days so I got a place too near the front and overreacted when the starting gun fired. As soon as we reached the mile mark -- in 5:48! -- I knew for sure that I'd gone out far too fast and I'd be lucky to hold on for two more miles.

Then came the alleged two-mile mark: 9:12, the clock read. The mind doesn't work all that well during that level of exertion, but the illusion that we'd shattered the world record in the mile (3:24) didn't last long. I just hoped an extra-long third mile would even things out and that I'd still have a shot at 20 minutes.

Around the final turn we came. A friend recognized me and his encouragement supplied one last boost of energy. I still thought I'd approach the finish line with the clock ticking in the 19s.

Alas, we were 4 minutes early. I hit the finish line in



15:46, and although we clearly hadn't run 5K, I had no energy left to find out what happened.

Later we learned that the 5K was such an afterthought that the turnaround barricade had been entrusted to city maintenance workers who were told to go to Bayshore and South Brevard to set it down. They got to Bayshore and South Boulevard, figured this must be the place and turned the 5K into a 2.6-miler.

A co-worker finished her first Gate River Run and decided it went well enough that she needed a bigger challenge to mark her impending 30th birthday. So "Maggie" entered the Marine Corps Marathon and trained for the first six months of her 30s.

At the race expo on the day before the race, she and her training partner realized they were going to be out on the course a long time without real food. So they stocked up on gel energy packets and headed out on race morning carrying as many as they could cram into the pockets of their shorts.

The gel kept them going all the way to the finish, and giddy with delight at finishing, returned to their hotel. Maggie hit the shower first, and there she found a shampoo packet. She grabbed it, ripped it open with her teeth and was seconds from the world's worst-tasting postrace meal when she realized that she was about to ingest a packet of Pantene.

It was her first and only marathon.

One for the road: an original.

Just about every year when I reach the 5K point of the Gate River Run, I recall my favorite entry from a series of lists of the Top 10 Reasons to Run the River Run:

It's the closest you'll ever get to a house on River Road.

---

## *Congratulations!*

**JTC Running's Richard Fannin** was presented the **Allan Steinfeld Award** during the USA Track & Field Awards Breakfast at the USATF Annual Meeting in Indianapolis. Richard was photographed with Allan Steinfeld before the ceremony. Congratulations to Richard on being recognized for his outstanding work with our TenBroeck Team competition.



They say there's nothing like the first time. That could be true and it made me think about the Gate River Run and which editions of the race meant the most to me.

Certainly, the very first one in 1978 was the most exciting. Despite all of the races that I had run previously there was something about this new one that generated electricity. Jacksonville's fledgling running community, spearheaded by the new club, the Jacksonville Track Club, which was also the owner and organizer of the River Run 15,000 (as it was known then), was all a buzz with eager anticipation. It was impossible not to be drawn in.

But why would you not want to be? The energy and excitement were contagious and no one wanted to be left out. It grew and grew right up to race day.

"Is Bill Rodgers really going to be in our town, running in our race?" We all said to ourselves about a hundred times. Rodgers was indomitable at the time. It was practically a given that if Bill Rodgers laced up his Onitsuka Tiger racing flats that he was going to win.

I arrived at the starting area, along Coast Line Drive, in front of the Daniel Building, which is now the Hyatt Hotel, I think. The crowd seemed huge, gigantic, and easily the biggest that I had ever seen assembled before a road race. In fact, there were only some 2,400 runners that day and a few hundred more spectators. These days, we would consider 2,400 to be a just slightly more than average race. But this was 1978, and women probably made up only about five percent of the field. There were no "joggers" or walkers and the Galloway Method was more than 25 years away; the race was strictly for "racers."

What a hardcore bunch they were; all dressed in their short-shorts, many of them the hottest thing of the time: Dolfin shorts (decades before the Hooters Girls took to them! By the way, what ever happened to nylon tricot? How many of you can remember that clingy, see-through material that most shorts were made of? Sweat in those things and the embarrassment was immediate.)

For me, that first one was the greatest one. I finished in the Top 50 overall, and I think only one woman, the first female, beat me. Boy, those were the days. I would never see the Top 50 or even the Top 100 again, and a lot more women would put me in my place as well.

I look back very affectionately on all those years when I ran personal records at the River Run or just had the ability to do so, even if it didn't happen. It was intoxicating to imagine how hard you would run, who you might beat and how good the finish time was going to be. That is a great feeling and when it goes, racing is just never the same again. The days of the Potential PR, ah, how wonderful.

There was the second one, 1979, another personal favorite. My pal from England, Jerry Odlin, had come to town and was staying with me. He came to win the race, not just to run it. In 1978, Jerry was recruited by Murray State University to run for its cross-country and track teams. He was in the best shape of his life, running sub-29 minutes for 10k and sub-14 minutes for 5k.

He won the River Run 15,000 in 46:09. He could have run faster, he later told me, but he didn't need to. He wanted the win, not a time 30 seconds faster. He was coached to break the competition and win the race, not chase a time. He did that and I was happy for him. I was also happy for me, because I got to bask in all that reflected glory. It would be as close as I would ever come to winning that trophy for myself and I knew it. I held it up close, in my own two hands and I reveled in it. What a moment! Keep in mind that there were no cash awards to athletes in those days. (At least not above the table anyway.)

Years later, when Jerry returned to England, he carefully packaged the beautiful, crystal trophy and sent it home via the post office-they pulverized it. Ah, victory, so fleeting. Ah, crystal, so delicate. No wonder they went to plexiglass.

Club member, Gary Ledman, easily remembered his favorite and most memorable River Run; the year was 1990.



“I had friends in town and we all did the race, so that was a really nice moment,” Ledman said. “It was a warm day and not quite my best time but my best effort considering the heat. I was very pleased considering how warm it was.”

Certainly running fast times and chasing after PRs (personal records) makes racing all the more enjoyable; when those days come to an end it is never the same again.

I remember the 1990 race very well myself, but not for nice reasons. It was a month after my father, “Stormin’ Norman” died of cancer. We had attended every River Run together since its debut in 1978. After each race we swapped stories. But in 1990 all that stopped. Not my favorite River Run, 1990.

My last good Gate River Run was the year when it started in front of the Gate building on the south bank. I ran 57 minutes and 10 seconds. My final GRR under an hour, it’s been all down hill since.

Speaking of hills, as I age and run worse I’ve noticed that the course gets longer and the hill, the Hart

Bridge, gets steeper. I have to consider the racing strategy of a couple of other aging, hobbling runners I know who say: “If you can’t run it in an hour anymore, then just enjoy it and run it in two.” I think I will be latching onto that philosophy soon.

For the past six years or so my biggest GRR moment comes not from the start or even the finish but the moment when I arrive at the base of the on ramp of the dreaded Hart Bridge. My wife, Nancy, and young son, Norman II, are always there to greet and encourage me. I look forward to that and I know how lucky I am to have them there.

So I guess that as time goes by, other things take the place of personal records, fast times, good races and beating the competition. What replaces them can be even better. We just have to find them. If I sound like an old man who has suddenly discovered a revelation, well ... maybe I am.

I wish you all a great Gate River Run. Find the memorable in it no matter what it might be.

*Congratulations!*

## Winter Beaches Run 1st Place Winners



Men’s WBR 10 Miler Winner-  
Robert Walker 1:02:46



Women’s WBR 10 Miler Winner-  
Mary Kummerfeld 1:08:36



## What's Old and New with New Balance

This time around we pay tribute to the running shoes of New Balance. I thought it was a good idea since New Balance is the new equipment sponsor of our Gate River Run, taking over from adidas who decided not to renew the contract after many years.

Not sure how timely this column will be, for you, the reader. But New Balance has made an offer that you can hardly refuse: Spend \$100 on New Balance products in any of race director, Doug Alred's five 1st Place Sports and you will get a free entry into the Gate River Run. The offer is extended to the first 500 takers only, so, unfortunately, by the time you read this, the promotion may be over, or maybe not. Check with 1st Place Sports to find out.

In any case, let's talk about our new friend, New Balance. In 1972, the little operation had nothing more to offer than a trail type shoe, the Trackster, and some shoe inserts (orthotics). That was when Jim Davis came along, saw a business opportunity, and for the price of \$100,000 jumped on it. I have met Jim Davis a couple of times and he told me that he didn't even have 100,000 dollars. He gave the owner 90,000 and a bunch of papers believed to be worth the other 10,000. Since then, he has turned New Balance into a company that makes hundreds of different kinds of shoes, with gross sales in the billions of dollars, and on top of all that, the unassuming, humble New Englander is himself worth billions. Not a bad turn on investment.

In the late 1970's, New Balance made its mark on the first Running Boom with a shoe known as the 320. The running community latched onto the 320 and bought it like candy. The shoe was ugly, but no one cared, it was soft and light and lovable. It was made in width sizes, everything from a 2A to a 4E. Later, they even made it in a women's model, quite unprecedented at the time.

When New Balance fan, Jacksonville Track Club member Jay Birmingham, announced his coast-to-coast, Los Angeles-to-New York City, solo,

unassisted run, Jim Davis pledged his support: Free 320's for Jay's 3,000-mile run. Jay helped put the company on the running map.

New Balance morphed the 320 into the 355, a knobby-soled "trail" version of the 320. The Super Comp, a Kermit the frog-colored, racing flat that caught on even among runners who didn't care for frogs.

In the late 1970's and early to mid 1980's, the average retail price for a pair of high tech specialty running shoes was \$29.99. New Balance was the first company to release a \$70 pair of running shoes. This, at the time, seemed like sheer madness.

"No runner will ever pay that kind of price for a pair of shoes!" I remember shrieking at the NB sales rep. (I've never been known as a visionary.) Boy, times have changed!

What hasn't?

Fast forward to the New Balance shoes of today. The company's flagship and bestseller is the 860. This is a stability shoe designed for the mild to moderate over-pronator and it's a good one. The shoe is stable, fairly light and well cushioned. At \$115, it is positioned in the competitive price zone along with most of the top sellers. It is made in a bunch of width sizes and a slew of colors, for men and women.

New Balance's hottest entry into the world of neutral shoes is the 880. The shoe is a lot like the 860 but has no medial post and so is intended for the biomechanically efficient runner and the supinator. The latest version of the 880 is the best one yet, in my opinion. It is also available in widths and sells for \$115. You could say that 115 is the new 29.99, sad as it may sound.

The 1400 is a tremendously successful racing shoe, even in these times when racing shoes are largely overlooked. Only around for a few years, it has become the nation's number one selling racer. It is light but still quite well cushioned and even makes a fine trainer for the "minimalist" runner.



The 940 is New Balance's strongest stability trainer. Featuring a more robust medial post than the 860, it stops just a little short of being a true motion-control shoe. Naturally, it is available in widths and sells for \$130.

The 870 and 890 round out NB's offering in the lightweight category. The 890 is kind of like the 1400, in that it features the New Balance lightweight midsole material, Revlite, but has a thicker midsole making it a true training shoe. The 870 is very much like the neutral 890 but is a lightweight stability shoe with a prominent medial post. Both have Revlite, width sizes, and sell for, guess what? \$115.

Not long ago, when "minimalism" was all in vogue, New Balance was in second place with its T10, a low-to-the-ground, two-millimeter drop, trail shoe. Those participating in Cross Fit loved it. The company sold a boatload. But since then, sales of minimalism have become, well ... minimal and the category is disappearing faster than cheap race entry fees. The shoe is still around though and it is a pretty good one.

New Balance is making some very good running shoes and you should try them out, even if you don't get into the Gate River Run for free.

Mark your Calendar!



The largest 15K in the USA

### **The Gate River Run**

USATF 15k National Championship

Saturday, March 15th - Enter Now

**\$2 Discount for all club members**

Go to [www.gate-riverrun.com](http://www.gate-riverrun.com)

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Designer: Amanda Mason

Submit Articles to: The Starting Line, c/o JTC Running, PO Box 24667, Jacksonville, FL 32241 OR bobfernee@aol.com

Deadline for inclusion in March/April 2014 issue is March 10.  
No Exceptions!

Advertising Inquires: The Starting Line, PO Box 24667, Jacksonville, FL 32241 OR bobfernee@aol.com

Advertising Rates:  
Full Page \$200 B&W/\$400 FC  
Half Page \$100 B&W  
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The Starting Line is published bi-monthly  
by JTC Running, P.O. Box 24667,  
Jacksonville, Florida 32241-4667.  
JTC Running Hotline: 384-8725 (384-TRAK)



JTC Running  
P.O. Box 24667  
Jacksonville, Florida  
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## Weekly Training Runs

Sunday 7:00 am, Tapestry Park Group Run  
Contact: bobby@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Sunday 9:00 am, UNF Nature Trails every other Sunday  
Visit 'Jax Group Train Running' on Facebook for locations  
Contact: chris@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Sunday, 6:00 am, 1st Place Sports, Town Center.  
Long-distance runs. Contact: 620-9991.

Sunday, 6:30 am, Atlantic Beach: Atlantic Blvd. &  
1st Street, 5-10 miles.  
Contact: Linda White at (H) 246-2137 (C) 662-4928

Sunday, 6:30 am, Mandarin: Various locations  
and distance.  
Contact: Stef at stefgriff@aol.com or 268-1503.

Sunday, 6:30 am, Orange Park: Sun Tire, 346, Blanding Blvd.,  
6-20 miles.  
Contact: Dave at 545-4538.

Sunday, 7:00 am, Jacksonville Running Company,  
All Levels, 3+ miles  
Contact: bobby@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Monday, 6:30 pm, World of Beer group run, 2+ miles  
Contact: chris@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Monday, 5:00 pm, South Bank Downtown: River Brewing Co.,  
2-6 miles (includes bridges). Contact: Danny at 287-5496.

Tuesday, 6:30 pm, Tapestry Park Group Run, 3.14 miles  
Contact: loretta@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Tuesday, 5:45 am, San Marco: Southside Methodist Church,  
5-6 miles, 7-8:30 pace. Contact: JC at 803-8758.

Tuesday, 6:00 pm, 1st Place Sports on Baymeadows: 3 to 6  
miles, all abilities.

Tuesday, 6:30 pm, Ponte Vedra: Sawgrass Village south  
lot, 3-6 miles (very social). Contact: Craig at 424-9690.

Tuesday 6:30 pm, St. Vincent's Southside, Belfort Rd.,  
formerly St. Luke's Hospital. Good Beginners run.  
Contact: Loretta@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Wednesday, 6:30 pm, 1st Place Sports/Aardwolf  
Brewery run, 4 miles, includes bridges. Contact: 399-8880

Wednesday, 5:30 am, San Jose: The Bolles School  
(JTC Running members) track intervals (all abilities).  
Contact: JC Pinto at 803-8758.

Wednesday, 5:30 pm, San Jose: The Bolles School  
(JTC Running members) track intervals (all abilities).  
Contact: Danny at 287-5496.

Wednesday 6:30 pm, Jax Beach, 1st Place Sports,  
Various runs intended to make you improve.  
Simon@1stplacesports.com

Thursday, 6:15 pm, Orange Park: 1st Place Sports,  
2186 Park Av., 3-6 miles, runners/walkers.  
Contact: Denise Metzgar at 264-3767.

Thursday, 6:30 pm, San Marco: Park located at 1964  
Largo Rd.  
Contact: bobby@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Thursday, 6:30 pm, Bartram Park Group Run  
Contact: liz@jacksonvillerunningcompany.com

Thursday, 6:00 pm, Town Center Mall, 3-6 miles,  
1st Place Sports, 620-9991

Friday, 5:40 am, Beauclerc, Mandarin: Forest Cir., 7.5 miles.  
Contact: Stef at stefgriff@aol.com or 268-1503.

Visit JTCRunning.com for more information.