

Wishing all our JTC Running members
a Sweet Holiday Season!



Letter from the Editor | Bob Fernee

Feels good, doesn't it? The temperature, I mean. Well, what were you thinking? This is the sort of weather that we runners live for. Let's make sure we take full advantage of it for we know it won't last. Quite something isn't it, the way that people all over the country are dreading and bracing for another harsh, long winter and we can't wait. Well, maybe they should all move to Florida. Oh, no, they are all moving to Florida!

Be that as it may, all is going well and looking up. Judging by the race results I have seen online lately it looks like the local race scene is coming back a pace. Most of the attendances are up where they were before, meaning pre-pandemic. Smart people have been vaccinated and are now moving around in public without much fear. Life is returning to "normal."

Our track club is as active and normal as it has ever been. By the time you read this, our latest edition of the Guana Trail Races will be in the archives. I am sure that it went as well and smooth as always thanks to race director Mark Ryan and his crew. After ten continuous years as race director Mark has now stepped down and board member Franz Lerch is taking over. A seamless transition of power, as they say. Thank you, Mark, for all your hard work and dedication. And thank you Franz for agreeing to keep this wonderful, unique event going. A track club without volunteers is sunk, you can quote me on that.

We are still off to the races. On Saturday, December 26 our cross-country classic, The Last Gasp, will be run for the 45th time. The race has quite a history and I have attempted to tell some of it in my story titled A Clean Pair of Heels, inside this issue. The Last Gasp is bound to be your most enjoyable and least expensive event of the year. How does all this sound? A one-of-a-kind 5k cross-country race, a custom-made sweatshirt, a chance to win high-tech running socks, a post-race party that includes free food, soft drinks, beer and wine. All for an entry fee of \$9. Yes, that is what I said – nine dollars! Oh, I forgot, there is also a free kids' one-mile fun run. The 5k main event starts at 2 PM, the kids' run at 1:30. Register now at jtcrunning.com.

In January we will stage our venerable race, the Winter Beach Run, now known as the Go Green Winter Beach Run. For decades the race was a 10-miler on the beach sand. Later a 5-mile race was added to accommodate those people who felt ten miles on the beach was a bit too much.

This time around we are offering the traditional 10-miler and a 5k – but no 5-miler.

The races will begin together at 1 PM on January 30th. The races start on the sand in Jacksonville Beach near the Lifeguard Tower. It is a Jacksonville Grand Prix event, and a good way to grab some vital points. On offer: Long-sleeve t-shirts, medallions, and when you finish, hot chocolate. Runners and walkers are, as always, encouraged to attend, and all can register at jtcrunning.com.

Letter from the Editor | Bob Fernee

On a personal note, I shall tell you that this will be my final edition as editor of The Starting Line. I have served as editor, whether you liked it or not, for eleven continuous years. I feel that it is time for me to go and it is the right time for some new blood, if you know what I mean. A renovation, I suppose, or a face lift. Hmm, I could use both. I have hung on long enough, and it is time to be unhung. A new person and a new outlook could do wonders for the newsletter, I am sure.

In any case, my leaving will give the Board of Directors a moment to decide what to do with The Starting Line. For years now there have been rumblings that the newsletter should go modern and be issued only as an online publication. Many people, me included, objected to such a plan. Of course, I am old and old-fashioned, and I like to stick to traditional things. I like proper telephones with 'party lines' so I can listen in, and I like to use the word groovy. Yeah, that's bad, I know. The newsletter has been in print and on paper ever since our club began in 1975. Pretty hard to throw away old habits.

Still, all things must pass, I suppose.

Being the editor of such an esteemed, historical newsletter has been (mostly) a fun experience. Will I miss it? I don't know, right now I'm kind of tired, and willing to edit myself out of the mix. Eleven years is a pretty good span of time, I'm surprised I lasted this long.

Whatever form The Starting Line takes in the future I wish my successor all the best.

I am sure that our newsletter will be just fine, and as we all know, everyone is expendable and replaceable. Anyway, at least I won't be going around claiming this newsletter was "stolen" from me.

Merry Christmas; Happy New Year; Don't worry, be happy; and good luck with your lives and your running!



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Maggie	Black	Ashlyn	Kutik
Steve	Bruce	James	Long
Annie	Bruckman	Mandy	McCune
Michelle	Bruney	Kate	McHale
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Tim	Buckley	Stephanie	Modola
Steve	Burton	Shannen	Murray
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Scott	Davey	Alex	Riggins
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Aristeed	Harrison	Joe	Verduzco Jr
Bruce	Holmes	Chavonne	Wilkinson Davis
Carl	Holmes	Kara	Williams
Luis	Isaza	Mark	Woods
		Michael	Young

President's Letter | Larry Roberts

The Second Annual VyStar Emerald Trail 5k was a great race and a successful fundraiser for the Trail. The weather was perfection! The course through Klutho Park was pretty, and pretty fast! The start and finish at Andrew A Robinson Elementary worked very well- lots of room! The turnout included Jacksonville City Council Member Ron Salem who addressed the crowd and ran the race. We anticipate that next year's event will also be in October, and hopefully on the new LaVilla Link section of the Emerald Trail. Construction on that new section has begun! As the work progresses, photos will be posted on the JTC Running.com and Facebook.

Registration has been strong for the Guana Trail Races on December 5. I hope you have already signed up!

The Last Gasp Cross Country race will be back at Jacksonville University this year, on the day after Christmas, December 26. And the awards ceremony and social will be back afterwards! **Registration is open now at JTCRunning.com.** Those signed up by December 20 are guaranteed the coveted Last Gasp sweatshirt, so don't wait!

The Club's Track Series returns in 2022 with a winter meet on Saturday, January 29, at Bartram Trail High School. Timing is perfect as the high school track season starts the following Monday. The meet is free for all pre-registered and registration is open at **JTCRunning.com.**

The next day, on January 30, the Club's Go Green Winter Beach Run will be held at Jacksonville Beach. The distances will be 10 miles or 5k and medals will be awarded to all finishers. Club members receive a \$2 discount on the race entry with code JTCMember at <https://1stplacesports.com/races/wbr/>.

Registration has been open for the **2022 Gate River Run**, the Club's premier event, since early October. If you missed the early bird discount, you could still get \$2 off as a JTC Running member. The Gate River Run Training Class is also open for registration. The nine-week class costs members only \$45, and if you have completed a previous class, just \$40! **Signup at JTCRunning.com.**

The kickoff is Tuesday, January 4, so get the new year off on the right foot!!

JTC Running has owned and hosted the Gate River Run from the very first race in 1978, but many people are unaware of that, or that the race proceeds stay here in Jacksonville. JTC Running is a non-profit and invests only in local projects promoting running and physical fitness. In coming months Club Vice-President Larry Sassa will be leading an effort to increase public awareness of this important role that JTC Running plays in Jacksonville.

How do you like our website makeover? Club Secretary Errol Daniels has led our effort to update **JTCRunning.com** and it looks great! Check it out and take the opportunity to register for all our upcoming races! And don't forget to "like" **JTC Running on Facebook** and comment and share our posts- it all helps to get the word out about the Club!



We all know that beer is a runner's best friend. They go together like hand and glove, oxygen debt and the 800-meters. As another hard training run is coming to its end thoughts of a cold beer in a frosted mug are like an oasis in a desert. After a tough race there is nothing quite like hanging out with fellow runners, telling lies and drinking beer. But what is all this news about whiskey being great for health? I know what you're thinking: "Jeez, Bob, in the last issue you told us to throw away our running shoes and just take a hot bath, the fitness benefits would be the same. Now you're telling us to drink the hard stuff, Scotch whiskey. Will we ever get back to proper training, like, you know, running 100 miles a week?"

Whoa, you really want to do something a radical as that? You must be caught in a 1970's time warp. All I am saying, is give whiskey a chance. Hmm, sounds like a song. Let's get to the facts.

Did you know that whiskey is called the "water of life?" Well neither did I but I have learned a lot from this thing on the internet called The Flavier Times. As I have told you many times before, the internet does not lie. Is Scotch Good For You? is the name of the article and they say that Scotch has been praised by health experts for its ability to lower the risk of dementia, heart attacks, blood clots, strokes, and even fight cancer.

How can it be? Well, much is down to the ellagic acid in whiskey, said to be a potent antioxidant. I know you have all been concerned about your ellagic acid reserves, so have I (?!). On top of that, for centuries whiskey has been drunk as a digestif. Ah ha, down a bottle of Scotch and you can say goodbye to heartburn. And maybe even more than that.

Scotch is 50% alcohol and only 80 calories per 35 ml. That's 1.18 ounces, of course. I knew that one right off the top of my head. It contains no fat, and barely any salt, sugar or carbohydrates,

making it one of the lowest calorie alcoholic drinks. Scotch is a better choice for those with diabetes as it hardly alters blood glucose levels. Naturally, all this changes if you add sugary sweet mixers to it. A lot like eating a salad with heavy calorie laden dressing.

Scotch is nearly gluten-free. Though made from barley, a gluten grain, the distillation process removes most of the gluten proteins.

Is Scotch good for a cold? It has been known in Scotland for a long time, but Scotch does help fight colds. Hot Toddies – whiskey mixed with hot water, lemon and honey can be quite good for you. Scientifically, they say that alcohol dilates blood vessels, making it easier for mucus membranes to deal with infection. An age-old remedy for congestion is a hot toddy at night.

Can whiskey affect longevity? Yes, according to 106-year-old, Mary Nicholson, who has even survived Coronavirus twice. She says: "A tipple of whiskey at night is a secret to long life." And Mary was sober when she said that.

Don't get me wrong and don't be offended (like everyone else these days). I am just having a little fun here, I am not suggesting you start hitting the whiskey. I was just thinking that with Hogmanay, the Scottish word for the last day of the old year and the celebration of the new year (but you knew that), you might like to know that the little "tipple" you will enjoy won't hurt you. Could even do you some good, provided you don't over-do it, of course. Just more helpful information from your favorite runner's newsletter. Happy holidays!

Starting Line Interview | Doug Barrows, Jay Birmingham Recognized for Ultramarathon Longevity

TSL: Doug Barrows, tell us about this honor.

Barrows: Nick Marshall, an accomplished statistician and ultra-marathon runner, produces a semi-annual compilation of runners who have had long careers. To my great surprise, I discovered that I was on his most recent list, September 2021.

TSL: Go on, tell us more.

Barrows: I ran my first ultra, the Strolling Jim 40 in 1983 and my most recent Strolling Jim in 2021, a span of 37 years 359 days. That puts me 119th on the USA list. It's quite an honor.

TSL: Any other notable ultras you can tell us about?

Barrows: I ran the Groundhog 50-miler in Pennsylvania in 1993, but "Jim" is my favorite. I've run it many times in that 38-year span.

TSL: Now, Jay Birmingham, we understand that a runner in Pennsylvania reached out to you last month and asked you to update your ultra-marathon record.

Birmingham: Yes, Bob McCubbin said Nick Marshall was about to release a new list and it appeared that I might move up in the rankings considerably.

TSL: What was the result of that update?

Birmingham: Amazingly, I moved into the top five in two categories. My 52.27 miles at the Azalea Ultras in Palatka in 2019 places me 4th on the USA 50+ mile category. My first 50 miler was in 1973, the JFK 50 miler in Maryland, America's oldest regularly-held ultra. The span between those two races was 46 years, 223 days. The three guys ahead of me all ran JFK when they were quite young (12-16 years old), and are still running it today.

TSL: Do you appear in any other categories?

Birmingham: Yes, I'm tied for 4th American in the All-Ultras category with a guy named Keith Blom in California. We have 46 years 293 days between our first and most recent ultras of any length. My most recent was the Hellcat 50 km in Green Cove Springs in January 2020.

Most surprising was learning that I was also on the World List. I stand in 27th place with that span between the JFK in 1973 and Hellcat in 2020.

TSL: Congratulations to you both!

Running Out | Kinga Evert

You need an outlet to live in this chaotic and crazy world. Much to my surprise, or just outright shock, that, for me, turned out to be running. I have been “running” for over ten years now. When I say running, I really mean jogging, because my stride rarely extends beyond my normal walking form. It is the month of November in Florida, and finally “winter” has arrived. For Florida runners, this is a highly anticipated time of year. It is a magnificent time to run, in cool and sometimes even cold, temperatures, when your body can fully invest the energy to propel you forward instead of working mainly to keep from overheating. Unfortunately for me, this seems to be turning into yet another Florida winter where I cannot run due to health issues.

“You can’t take it away from me!” I am yelling in my head to the universe. I feel running is the only thing that is truly mine. I have these moments, snippets of memory, while running that are so vivid and transcendent. There is the time I finished nine miles around Mackinac Island (Michigan) or a sunrise run over the Main Street bridge in Jacksonville, or a nighttime run in the rain. I can recall the exact thoughts and the specific feeling of these moments that are like beautiful snapshots of my inner life. Running is like meditation for me. It is the only time that I have to be in my own head. Half-jokingly, I like to say that I started running just so I could pretend I was running away from my family. Namely my husband and two small children, but most of all, the laundry.

I started off listening to Lady Gaga at high volume to help me make it back home, but eventually I could run without music. I could listen to podcasts or books and have the voice of my intense discomfort fade into the background. For a long time, I settled on Imagine Dragons as my favorite running companion, whose music had become like a soothing blanket I could wrap myself up in for the mileage of the day.

I set an intention when I began my relationship with running: my goal was to be reasonable and cautious so that I can continue running through old age. Of course, I do have my running idols like Shalane and the Jurker, who make me daydream about running the Boston marathon or the Pacific Crest Trail. I am a realist, however, and recognize that my vision may not get me that far. Still, I have not let go of those images altogether. There was a very elderly man in my neighborhood that used to run almost daily, even in the extremes of summer. He jogged in the same old t-shirt and shorts, shuffling along on Hendricks Avenue. Seeing him made me smile every time; he was such an inspiration to me. I would think to myself, “If he can be out there running in this heat, then so can I.” There are also the Gate Streakers. Running in the same race, alongside these amazing people, fills me with deep admiration and the motivation to reach within myself and pour it out onto the road ahead of me.

Yesterday, I walked the bridges around downtown Jacksonville. It was my favorite kind of running day: overcast and cold. I was not able to run, and so I cried. I cried each time a runner passed me or a memory of running my favorite route surfaced. I realized I was grieving. I was grieving for my capable body, and the freedom I felt when I ran, but most of all for the loss of myself. Running gave me time to just be with myself, and even though it took me about forty years, I realized I like spending time with me. That part was wholly unexpected, I started running to avoid laundry, not to find myself. Losing running is in a way like losing my inner self, and I’m not sure how, or if, I can cope with that yet. So again, I am set for battle with doctors and PTs, appointments, and procedures, for the sake of my body and my spirit. I want to shut my eyes tight and pray, and then shake my fist at the sky and shout, “I’m not done!”

Coaches Corner: Giving is Living | Sean McCormack

Many years ago, when I was competing at a high level, I was dealing with some very serious life challenges with my parents. I was an only child and was very close with them. My Dad coached me when I was young in hockey and baseball. He volunteered his time and I remember how much he was loved by my teammates. I was scheduled to run the 1982 Chicago Marathon and my Dad was not doing well. Because he was unselfish and being stubborn, I never knew the seriousness of his illness....He didn't want me to know he was dying. He urged me to go and run a sub 2:30 marathon which was my goal at the time. I was prepared to reach that goal. My training was superb. Unfortunately, my mind was not focused on the race. It was elsewhere...specifically with my Dad. I went through the half marathon in 1:14...on pace but I just could not go on. I quit. I managed to find my way back to the start area and called him from a pay phone....(This was not the information age). I will never forget his words..."Next time son you will do it...I know you will"...a few hours later he passed away before I could return home. I guess in the big scheme of things I went on to greatly exceed those initial goals. And that is great...but what means more to me is watching so many achieve their goals and get better.

Recently, I got involved with helping coach with the Distance Project through JTC Running. Thank you, Jenny and Jeff, for letting me contribute. I have

been helping on Wednesday nights at Bolles High School. Although I miss the personal competition due to numerous injuries, the joy I get from helping others is truly awesome. The core group that comes out makes my week. I love to be involved and see each get better. It's such a humbling experience to help design workouts and watch individuals continue to improve. What could be better than that? I don't know after this life what awaits me. That's not my decision. But what I do know is that the work I am doing now is very fulfilling. What could be better? Using your knowledge to help others get better is a very humbling experience.

Many years ago, I worked with a colleague whose son was autistic. He was 8 years old. His dream and his passion was to be a pilot. Obviously, autism disqualified him from that dream. As a naval flight officer of 20 years, I was very fortunate. I gathered many of my old flight patches and squadron memorabilia into a box and sent it off to this young boy. A few weeks later he sent me a note which I still have on my desk to this day. It says: "Dear Mr. McCormack...thank you for all the flying patches...I am a good pilot". Now all my running awards are somewhere in a closet...but that note greets me every day in my office. Who could have a bad day looking at that?

Bottom line...I am so grateful to be able to give back. What an amazing and humbling gift I have been given.

Upcoming Events

Back To The Ancestral Home!

JTC Running's THE LAST GASP 5k

Returns to Jacksonville University

Cross-Country at Its Finest

Sunday, December 26, 2:00 PM

FREE Kids' 1-Mile Fun Run, 1:30

JTC Running presents

The Go Green Winter Beach Run

Historic 10-Mile & New 5k

January 30th, 2022, 1PM

Enter at JTCRunning.com

The Conundrum of Running While Aging | Hubert Keen, Ph. D.

Every runner who has been engaged on a competitive level for more than a decade knows the challenges of sustaining—and actually improving— one’s personal performance. One of the most credible and extensive analyses finds that performance for men runners over 40 declines by about one percent a year (the researchers write that they couldn’t acquire a sufficient sample size for women).

I never ran a timed race before the age of 60, and yet surprisingly my performance improved for several years. That outcome was obviously due to training and learning, and I found that coaches and trainers are quite familiar with this phenomenon for new runners, at any age.

Aging, however, is of course inevitable, and my performance peaked and began gradually declining before reaching 70. There are two elements involved in this process. One is the life span in time, that is, the passage of years. And the other is the process of senescence, or the progression of the decline in physical condition and functioning. There are differences through time among individuals in senescence, but not chronological age. Time waits for no one.

As I started running timed races I became friends with a man of my age who had been a state champion runner in high school, and he ran competitively in college and throughout his adult years. His times were so much better than mine that I assumed it would be the norm forever. Surprising to me at the time, his peak performance declined and mine improved, and in less than ten years I was winning that competition. It’s commonly known that individuals age differently; actually, that they “senescence” differently.

How does this affect runners over time? Research has shown conclusively that, on average, the span of a healthy life is extended by being physically active. In fact, extreme physical activity, such as

engaging in high intensity interval workouts or running long distances, is temporarily damaging to the body. One result is that tiny tears in skeletal muscle are evident in microscopic views after extreme exercise. This damage induces inflammation, that dreaded but inevitable result also of aging, and we sense it in the form of soreness. My personal observation is that this soreness increases with age and remains longer.

But the good news is that the biological repair process, over a period of hours or days, results in a net increase in various aspects of physical condition. These include, among others, increased muscle strength and size, stronger bones, greater ability to convert food molecules to energy (in the mitochondria), more mitochondria, increased cardiovascular capacity, and, some research even indicates, improved immune functioning. This net positive after-effect of training is why the coaches and trainers say, as Sean McCormack and Jay Birmingham wrote in the Sept/Oct 2021 issue of “The Starting Line,” that volume and intensity of training are the keys to better performance. Without undergoing the cycle of training and recovery, there is no added positive after-effect of training. What do they say? No pain, no gain.

The recovery time after training—as well as racing—is a critical issue for all runners, but is increasingly longer for aging individuals. I recently joined a group of mostly young runners in the Distance Project, and they run almost every day, compared with my three times per week. Yes, youth has its advantages.

There is a fine line between sustained effective training and excessive training that leads to injuries. Every serious runner seeks to find that sweet spot when the result of training leads to peak performance, but not so extensive as to cause injuries. Obviously, aging runners are at a disadvantage on sustained training and recovery

The Conundrum of Running While Aging | Hubert Keen, Ph. D.

times, with injuries more likely and recovery times longer with excessive training. The other side of this issue is that a lack of sufficient training leads to disappointment on race day.

The psychological burden of accepting the effects of decline in performance leads some individuals—and not just the elderly—to seek solutions in the form of nutritional supplements or other non-proven methods of slowing the process of senescence. There are numerous manifestations of this pursuit, some clearly proven to be ineffective.

The body, of course, has a normal requirement for nutrients, and most knowledgeable experts recommend healthy foods in proper amounts as the

best solution to meeting the need. Some dietary supplements are likely effective if diet is insufficient to meet the need.

In general, the positive effects of running to sustain a healthy life span into later years is unquestionable. It's verified in both experience and research. This is all good news for runners, both young and old. Yet, appropriate accommodation of the inevitable connotes a healthy attitude.

What Ever Happened to...The Ravines Run? | Bob Fernee



Remember that old TV show hosted by Leonard Nimoy (he was Mr. Spock of Star Trek fame, but you already knew that), called 'What Ever Happened To?' Well, I'm bringing it back in print form, at least for this newsletter issue anyway. Nimoy is no longer with us, and neither is the show, that means I get to run amok. Considering how the rest of my running is going these days my amok running is without a doubt my best method. No stopwatch, just chaos, I love it.

But let's get serious, because the Ravines Run was a serious race – a real leg bone snapper. Next story, 'What Ever Happened To ... Craig Harms?' (Inside joke.)

Located in the Black Creek area of southern Middleburg, The Ravines was a golf course in a gated community named, you guessed it, The Ravines. The place was fantastic, you would not think you were in Florida. The hills were unbelievable, the course could put you on your knees. It was what we cross-country lovers always dreamed of, but what became of it all? Oh boy, looks like it is time for another episode of Bob's History Lesson.

In the very early 1980s the Jacksonville Track Club hosted a 5-mile cross-country race in The Ravines golf community. It was directed by Jane Ryan who later became Jane Alred (yes, she married the famous race director and owner of 1st Place Sports, Doug Alred). The race was organized twice, then fell by the wayside. Some years later it was restarted by 1st Place Sports as a 10k. Once again, it came to an untimely end. Then, in the year 2000, I thought it would be great if our club could bring back the Ravines Run, I even volunteered to be the race director. Oh, yeah, now I remember, year 2000 was when my brain started to go bad. I was aided

What Ever Happened to...The Ravines Run? | Bob Fernee

by Doug Tillett as assistant race director.

It was really cool, not only did the new owners, a Japanese company, I don't recall its name, let us run all over the golf course but also gave us use of the amenities room and the swimming pool. Yes, a post-race swimming pool party! The course was a grueling all-grass 5-miler. The event was a big hit, and we did it six times.

This too-good-to-be-true situation came crashing down, leaving golfers, and more importantly, runners, adrift. (Gee, sounds like I don't care about golfers. Well, okay, I don't.)

A story in the Clay Today Publication, Leader, of August 18, 2021, written by Don Coble, provided information of the Ravines ultimate demise.

“Designed by Ron Garl and 1988 Players Championship winner Mark McCumber, The Ravines was opened in 1979. The championship-caliber course was closed in 2006 after residents first refused to agree to social memberships and then fought to keep two holes along Black Creek to be redesigned to accommodate new home construction. It was sold in 2008 for \$1.2 million in a foreclosure sale. Tennessee-based Ravines Holding Co. won approval from the county council to redevelop 102 of 223 acres along Black Creek to build 154 new homes.

For nearly 35 years, the course was the focus of numerous public hearing and zoning requests as developers wanted to take advantage of its subtle elevation changes and natural beauty to build exclusive high-end neighborhoods. Resident outrage played well with county officials, so owners Kenneth and DeBusk ‘threw the keys at the bank and walked away,’ according to former members.

Once rated as one of Florida's top-20 courses, The Ravines quickly fell in disarray. And it never recovered.

Today, the clubhouse is hidden behind overgrown trees and a rickety chain-linked fence. The no trespassing signs are rusted and hung haphazardly. Windows are either missing or covered with boards. The clubhouse now looks more like a set from television's The Walking Dead. The swimming pool area is overgrown, too. In fact, the only evidence of the pool is portions of ladders sticking through the thicket. A padlock and shoulder-high weeds keep players away from the tennis courts.”

Residents at The Ravines rejected plans to create and sell social memberships that would have provided enough cash flow to keep the course and clubhouse operational.

The National Golf Foundation reported that more than 400 courses went under in 2016 and 2017. At one time there were as many as 15,000 courses nationwide, now there are about 1,250. The reason? Lack of cash and the desire of developers to construct homes and commercial buildings.

RIP, the finest cross-country course in North Florida. Let's just hope our newest find, the New World Sports Complex, doesn't experience a similar fate.

Socks! Socks! Socks! | Bob Fernee



Here's the scenario: The most historic cross-country race in North Florida has come to another exciting conclusion. The race is, of course, JTC Running's The Last Gasp. The runners have battled it out over the grass and hills on the campus of Jacksonville University. Undoubtedly, it is the most challenging course in the area. Traditionally, the event features a wonderful post-race party that also acts as the awards presentation. It is the gala of all galas. The post-race is as memorable as the race itself.

Bellies full, and drinks in hand, the anxious crowd is awaiting the big moment when the awards, quite likely the most popular awards in the history of running, are handed out. The chant is yelled by the boisterous throng: "Socks! Socks! Socks!"

Yes, this is what they really came for, the custom made DeFeet high tech running socks that are only offered once a year. And this is that moment. The man who is the second-longest-running race director in Jacksonville history, Herb Taskett, holds a pair in the air for all to admire. The crowd goes wild. Now they are ravenous for the coveted socks.

"Socks! Socks! Socks!"

If this goes on any longer there could be a riot. If you thought the attack of January 6 on the Capitol building was bad you ain't seen nothing yet. Hang

Mike Pence? If Taskett doesn't dispense some socks, then he's in for it and hanging would be his kindest option.

"The champion of this year's race is Joe Schmurd." (True identity not revealed in order to protect the innocent.) Schmurd grabs his trophy and, with a huge gloating smile, holds aloft the biggest prize of all ... socks!

"Socks! Socks! Socks!"

The crowd is acting like a pack of wild, mad, rabid dogs. Their sock lust is insatiable. You know what they say, "never get between a crazed runner and his socks." Really, they say that?

They all want socks, but they know that running, like life, is not fair and they cannot all win socks. Yet, many will, as the socks are given three-deep as the age group awards.

"Socks! Socks! Socks!"

By now the hungry horde cannot turn off their continuous chant. Race director Taskett must act fast, or he will be thrown into the mighty St. Johns River to die a most ignominious death. That is how it is for race directors when custom-made, high-tech socks, are up for grabs. He is feeling the heat, and it shows – sweat is pouring from his brow, his voice is breaking, his other bodily functions are starting to give way, and he is a long way from the nearest Port-O-Let.

He must relinquish his hold on what the expected age group winners cherish most – The Last Gasp socks. The drama makes the Academy Awards pale by comparison. He goes down the list, yelling each name through the hallowed megaphone owned by the legendary Lamar Strother. Is this the biggest days of these peoples' lives? It sure seems like it.

Soon it is all over. The hungry horde leaves with its booty. Nothing Santa left them will mean as much. How could it? But how did it all get started?

Socks! Socks! Socks! | Bob Fernee

This is where I get to take a bow. (Sorry, folks, it's not like it is all about me but this time it is. Besides, I'm the writer of the piece and the editor of this newsletter, so I'm hard to stop.)

It was the year 2000. Remember it? They said the world would come to an end because switching from 1999 to 2000 was impossible, completely impossible. Wrong again, Doomsday Donnie, we changed millenniums without so much as a toilet overflowing. Well, mine did, but that's just because my kid kept cramming too much stuff down it.

It was the spring of 2000 when I agreed to race direct an event that had fallen by the wayside, The Ravines Run. The race was one of the most popular cross-country races of all time. It began in the early 1980s and was hosted by The Jacksonville Track Club, now JTC Running. Jane Ryan, who later became Jane Alred, was the race director and if I am not mistaken, she did it twice. It was a 5-miler and after two years it came to an untimely end. Why? I don't know.

The race was later picked up by 1st Place Sports and was converted to a 10k. In the 1970s, 80s and 90s, 10k races were all the rage, not so much anymore. The event carried on for several more years until, once again, it dropped out of the scene.

In 2000 I had the idiotic idea to bring the race back and stage it myself. The track club went along with it and longtime member, Doug Tillett acted as assistant race director. It was a lot of work, but the race was a triumphant success. People loved the challenging, hilly course and I directed it a total of six times. Then, the axe fell on the course and the entire enterprise.

For more about the history of The Ravines Run and the Ravines Golf Community read my other Pulitzer Prize winning story inside this issue. Kind of repetitive, I know. Bore you once, shame on me, bore you twice, shame on you.

So, what does all this have to do with The Last Gasp socks?

People complained to me that they were fed up with awards that they could do nothing with, they wanted useful awards, items they could use.

"Like what, guys, cash?"

"Oh, yeah, we like cash."

"Wait a minute," I mused, "I am supposed to be collecting cash, not handing it out."

Besides, this was another era, and student athletes couldn't accept cash or valuable prizes. (Mark my words, schools will regret the day they ended this rule.)

I thought: "What can I award that is useful but doesn't cost more than I can afford? I know, socks!"

So it was, that runners began winning socks as awards. The Ravines Run socks were so successful and popular that it wasn't long before The Last Gasp latched onto the custom-made sock craze.

History was written, and history is made every December. Be there this December 26. You could win socks, and even if you don't you will have a great fun time.

Member Profile: Jeff Tomaszewski | Bob Fernee

After a long stint in the US Navy avid runner/triathlete, Jeff Tomaszewski has returned to Jacksonville. He is a little different now, he is a married man and he and his wife, Jenny, are burning it up when it comes to racing both in and out of town. Now, Jeff brings us up to speed in this interview.

Bob Fernee: The beginning is always a good place to start, how and when did you get into running?

Jeff Tomaszewski: I was always athletically active as a kid and primarily I played baseball, hockey and soccer. During middle and high school soccer season seemed to always coincide with cross country and each year I would choose soccer over cross country. Running ultimately started for me the moment I enlisted in the US Navy. It was October 30, 1995, when I enlisted and was expected to attend Navy boot camp in Great Lakes, Illinois, starting February 1996. I remember the Navy recruiter at the time said, "Jeff you'll be expected to pass the Navy physical fitness test" which at that time consisted of push-ups, sit-ups and a 1.5-mile run. So, for the next three months I started running more regularly to ensure I was in good shape and ready for boot camp. Those months prepared me well and it seemed my passion for running was only starting. I graduated from boot camp, attended specialty training, I continued to run and found myself at my first duty station, NAS Jacksonville. Looking for a running store close to the base I immediately found 1st Place Sports and it seemed to be the place to go. I remember walking into the store on Baymeadows and being overwhelmed with the shoe selection, clothing, and how all the employees spoke with this unexplainable appreciation and excitement for running. For months I would go back to the store to talk with the employees about running and was fascinated to hear their stories of super-fast times, distance runs, weekly mileage and who beat who in the last race. I should admit at this point I thought that running a distance of 6-10 miles, holding an 8-minute per mile pace was an

accomplishment in itself, yes, I was definitely out of my league because these guys and girls were on a whole other level of running. Honestly, what I ultimately found at 1st Place Sports was a welcoming atmosphere and a group of crazy runners of all ages and abilities who all had one thing in common: they all shared a passion for running. And so it began...

BF: I remember 2001, you were in the Navy but running a lot. We joked that you were hunting for Osama bin Laden as you ran up and down San Jose Blvd. (Turns out he wasn't there, by the way.) Tell us about your career in the Navy and your running exploits while in uniform.

JT: I enlisted February 21, 1996, was commissioned a Naval Officer in May 2005 and retired July 1, 2021, after 25 years of honorable service.

My running continued during my first few years of service and in 2004 I was selected to run for the All-Navy Marathon Team to compete in the Armed Forces National Championship. This competition is held every year during the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, DC. I continued to balance my career in the Navy with my passion for running and although it wasn't always easy, I have always felt running contributed to my many accomplishments in the Navy. Come to think of it, balancing my career and running has taught me so much from time management, perseverance, structure, and personal goal setting.

I went on to represent the Navy at many different running events all over the world and always felt a sense of pride while wearing my uniform. The memories I cherish the most are those from the spectators, participants, and race organizers who always seemed to take a moment to express their gratitude for serving this great country or sharing a story of a family member who served or the countless times I heard complete strangers shouting encouraging words to finish strong and GO NAVY!

Member Profile: Jeff Tomaszewski | Bob Fernee

BF: You were gone for quite a long time, then you reemerged in Jacksonville. What made you come back?

JT: Family, life-long friendships and 1st Place Sports.

My parents moved to Jacksonville a few years back so this was an opportunity to spend more time with them. My parents now live less than three miles away and it's great having them so close. Fortunately, my parents are still very active but over time you realize the uncertainty of life so having this time with my parents really means so much to Jenny (my wife) and I.

Amazing friendships. Although I didn't realize it in the late 90s and early 2000s, I was developing lifelong friends here in Jacksonville. When I left in 2005, I headed west to Hawaii, California, and Washington State and remained on the West Coast for over 15 years. Over the years and during my time away it seemed Jacksonville just became home for me as my friendships grew and every chance that I had I would plan a trip back to visit. No matter time away or extended deployments overseas my initial friendships I established early on remained true. I never took my friendships for granted and to this day, I feel very fortunate to be a part of such a great group of successful friends.

1st Place Sports have brought together a community of runners here in Jacksonville. If you're out there participating or supporting someone, I'm sure you see the happiness and excitement these running events bring to our community.

For me, 1st Place Sports has always been more than just a running store. Doug, Jane, and Ryann have treated me as if I was part of their family. No matter my location Jane has always found a way to expedite shipping to ensure I had everything I needed for running. But, like I mentioned above about the amazing community of runners here in Jacksonville, 1st Place Sports is mostly in the center of it all and

for that I'm very thankful for what they provide to our community.

BF: I know that you have competed in many triathlons. Are you still? Do you see yourself as more of a triathlete or a distance runner?

JT: Yes, I have competed in many triathlons from sprint to ironman distances. At some point in the future, I'm sure I'll compete again; however, at this time my focus is on marathons and a few ultras. My strength is distance running.

BF: Which are your favorite races, and what are your favorite distances?

JT: Gate River Run because I really believe it showcases our community from the volunteers to families cheering along the course to all the participants. It's a great feeling to be a part of it all.

When referring to the marathon, Boston. Currently I have completed 12 with 9 consecutive finishes since 2013. If all goes well for Boston 2022 (10th consecutive) I'll be considered a Boston streaker and have a personal goal to reach the Quarter Century Club status in the year 2037. We all have goals, right?

BF: In terms of athletics, what are your future plans?

JT: I'll continue to compete in the marathon and will start focusing on some ultras in the next few years.

More importantly, I would hope in some small way I can continue to help/coach others on the many benefits of running, walking or just staying active in some manner.

BF: You recently competed in back-to-back major marathons, how and why did that come to be, and how did you do?

JT: Accidentally, I think? Not paying attention? Jenny, my cousin Alex and I all wanted to run Chicago so when registration opened for Chicago 2021, we applied. If I remember correctly, at that time, BAA was still undecided on a date.

Member Profile: Jeff Tomaszewski | Bob Fernee

When Boston confirmed and opened registration, I immediately applied and realized after the fact, Chicago was on Sunday Oct. 10th and Boston Oct. 11th. Well, there was no way I was going to miss the 2021 Boston Marathon, so I accepted the fact I was running back-to-back marathons. I stuck to my plan which was to run Chicago as fast as I can on that given day and cruise through Boston. My strategy proved successful, it was an amazing and fun experience!

Chicago 2:43:15, Boston 2:57:52.

BF: With that sort of experience under your belt, does this mean you will be running Ultras soon?

JT: Soon? Sure! Well...I have already competed in a few 50K/50 milers, and I've run my age in miles every year since I turned 28 (also known as the Jefferson Challenge). It may seem crazy but I'm actually looking forward to running some 50 and 100 milers as it requires a completely different strategy than running a marathon. Those days will come!

BF: What do you feel is your greatest athletic accomplishment?

JT: Believe it or not, I don't really have that one great accomplishment or would consider one accomplishment better than another. However, the fact that I'm still running, I'm somewhat competitive and I feel mentally and physically strong is a huge accomplishment in my opinion.

BF: Congratulations, you are now a married man. Your wife is not only a runner, but she is heading up the 1st Place Sports' Distance Project. Please, will you, or her, tell us about it?

JT: Jenny's unconditional love, support and understanding allows me every opportunity to be the best person I can be, or strive to be, on a daily basis. Our training, outlook on racing, life and personal goals probably couldn't be more different, but that's what makes Jenny so special to me and why I love her. It's never a competition, it's the combination of

our passion for life and our love that makes us both equally successful. So, yes, I would like to hand this question off to Jenny to explain in her own words about the Distance Project.

Jenny Tomaszewski: The Distance Project started as a concept to bring a group of runners of all abilities together. Ryann Alred, of 1st Place Sports, and I launched the program earlier this year with a goal to create a team that would train and race together, and support one another, no matter the pace or the distance.

To date, we have a growing team of 103 members with an age range of 14 to 80 years young. We have triathletes, obstacle course racers, seasoned marathoners and those who are training for their first 5K or half marathon. With the support of 1st Place Sports and ASICS, we have been able to provide discounts to local races, in-store discounts, and technical shirts to our team members. We have also been able to provide some pretty cool experiences such as yoga in the park, nutrition and sports psychology workshops, mile time trials with JTC Running, and Jeff's Infamous Waffle Run.

Each Distance Project membership includes a JTC Running membership (if the individual does not already belong) and we have brought 77 new members to JTC Running since July 1st. The weekly track workouts with Sean, Paul, Jack, and Jeff have proven invaluable to our team members - they work hard and are learning to become more efficient, faster, and stronger. Wednesday night has truly become my favorite night of the week—suffering through some 400s is always better with friends.

What I love most about the Distance Project is the support I see each person give to others. It's not just a team, it's a group of runners with a lot of heart. We welcome new members who are interested in working hard, having fun, and being involved in the running community.

Member Profile: Jeff Tomaszewski | Bob Fernee



Jenny & Jeff Tomaszewski



Jenny & Jeff Tomaszewski



45th ANNUAL THE LAST GASP

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2021

Entry Fees until 12/24: JTC Running members online \$9. Members paper entry fee, \$11. Non-members online, \$30; paper \$32. **Day of Race entry fee** \$35 (for members and non-members). Non-member fee includes one year membership in JTC Running, a \$20 value. Enter online at [JTC Running.com](http://JTCRunning.com) or use entry form below.

Name _____ Age (on race day) _____ Sex: M _____ F _____

Address _____ City _____ St. _____ Zip _____

Sweatshirt size _____ Email address _____

Phone _____

Checks to: JTC Running, send to PO Box 24667, Jacksonville, Fl. 32241

WAIVER OF LIABILITY

ACKNOWLEDEMENT: I am voluntarily entering or agreeing to be a volunteer at JTC Running's Last Gasp Race. I understand that my participation in the event is a physically demanding and can be a potentially hazardous activity, which could cause injury or death. I agree to not enter and participate unless I am medically able and properly trained, and by my signature, I certify that I am medically able to perform Event, am in good health, and am properly trained. I assume all risks associated with my participation in Event, including but not limited to: falls, contact with other participants, the effects of the weather, including high heat and /or humidity, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. I also understand that if a meet is canceled, rescheduled or details are changed for any reason beyond the control of race management that I hereby waive and release any claims against Event and it's organizers that I may have as a result of any such changes and that my entry fee will not be refunded. I understand that if I cannot participate in Event, i.e. injury, family emergency, etc., that I will not receive a refund.

AUTHORIZATION: I agree to abide by any decision of Event's officials relative to any aspect of my participation in Event, including the right of any Event official to deny or suspend my participation for any reason whatsoever I grant permission for Event's organizers to take pictures of me during Event and agree for Event to use any photos of me that may be taken during my participation. I grant permission to publish my name in the results of Event. I also grant permission for Event's organizers to use my email address to communicate with me concerning other upcoming events and specifically, instructions for Event. I will abide by these guidelines.

GUARDIAN'S PERMISSION AND RELEASE FOR MINOR: If I am or will be applying for my child to participate in, or be a volunteer at, the Event, I represent and warrant that I am the parent or legal guardian of the child and, as such, consent to my child's participation in Event and I agree that the terms of this Waiver Releases, and Authorizations apply equally to my child and me and any claims I or my child may have in connection with Event. I also waive any derivative claims that relate to or arise out of my child's participation in Event.

AGREEMENT: Having read the waiver including the acknowledgement, authorization and permission and knowing these facts and in consideration of your accepting my entry, I, for myself and anyone entitled to act on my behalf, waive and release JTC Running, Inc., Jacksonville University, any other Organizers of Event, all charitable beneficiaries of Event, all sponsors of Event, and their licensees, sponsors, employees, official, volunteers, including medical volunteers, and other representatives, agents, and successors of each of the foregoing, from present and future claims or liabilities of any kind arising out of my participation in this event, even though that liability may arise out of negligence or carelessness on the part of the persons or organizations named in this waiver.

Participant or Parent's signature (if under age 18) _____ date _____

A Clean Pair of Heels | Bob Fernee

The Last Gasp has meant many things over the years. This time it means a return to normalcy. We are back to our ancestral home. The hills will be alive with the sound of feet (pain and suffering are quiet most of the time). At long last, we are showing Covid-19 a clean pair of heels.

Our club has taken in quite a few new members lately and so in order to convince them that our next great running event, The Last Gasp, is a “must do” race I thought I would tell them why. But first, more history (yes, this edition is jammed with it).

My late father, Norman, and I founded the race in 1977. He was a club runner in his native England while growing up. Before he reached the age of 20 a little thing known as World War II broke out and his running career came to an abrupt end. When the war finally ended, he married my mother and they immigrated to America. I think the year was 1947. He could not find a way to restart his running until 1975 when a club was formed in the city where he was living. It was the Jacksonville Track Club (known today as JTC Running).

I had been living in England and discovered running while there. I was a member of North London Athletic Club. Thanks to that experience I developed a love of running, especially cross-country. Not sure why I took to cross-country so much. It was never easy; all those swampy fields, hellacious hills and runners who could out pace me without breaking a sweat. They ‘showed me a clean pair of heels,’ as they say in cross-country when some guy is pulling so far ahead that the heels of his spikes look so clean that they must have just been pulled out of the shoe box. For me, that was a common occurrence.

My father joined that new club, and he became obsessed with running once again. He was every bit as into running as everyone was during the ‘Running Boom’ of the 1970s. He lost a lot of weight and became competitive in the new racing scene that was rapidly exploding.

I returned from England very late in 1977. My father introduced me to his favorite training course, the campus of Jacksonville University. I missed cross-country, and the JU campus, with its sharp, steep hills, was the best replacement I could find to the ordeals and delights of the English countryside.

One of my NLAC clubmates, Jerry Odlin, accepted a scholarship to run for Murray State University in Paducah, Kentucky. During the Christmas holidays the school closed

the dorm rooms and students were left to their own devices. So, we put him up. I told Jerry there would be loads of local races in which he could maintain his racing edge. Wouldn't you know it, there were none. Quite unimaginable today, a December with no races.

Knowing that the JU campus was perfect for a cross-country race, we planned one and my father named it -- The Last Gasp. So called because it would be the final race of the calendar year and the year's last gasp, as it were. (No, not because we were hoping we could design a race that would kill people and make them breathe their last gasps.)

The Last Gasp debuted in late December 1977. About 50 hard core racers, all very fit and fast. I believe there were no women in the race, and that was not uncommon in those days. Jerry showed them all a clean pair of heels and won the race easily. When he returned in 1978 he won the race again. In 1979, he would go on to win the second River Run 15,000, now the Gate River Run 15k, of course.

The Last Gasp's original course was 5 ¼-miles. Soon I trimmed it to the more standardized distance of five miles. Much later it would be reduced to a 5-kilometer race. Yet, despite the shorter course the hills are still there, as is the grass, the sand and all the other challenges.

My father and I continued to organize the race for the next ten years until we handed it over to the Jacksonville Track Club. I worried over its continued existence, but club member Herb Taskett stepped forward and became the race director. He has been doing it non-stop ever since and his 34-year tenure makes him the second-longest serving race director in our area.

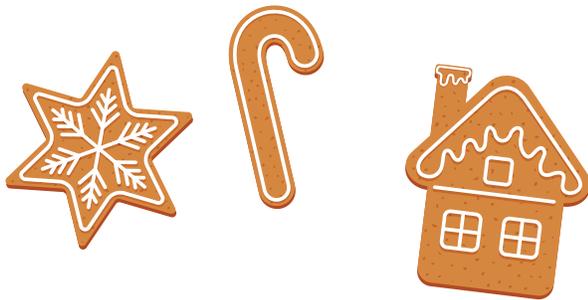
But why should you, new member, attend this race? Simple answers: It is completely different to every race in the year, it is challenging, yes, but great, great fun. The post-race party/awards presentation is held conveniently in a building on the campus just strides from the finish line – and it is free – included in your race entry fee. Entry fee? Hardly worth mentioning. Club members can sign up online for a scant nine dollars. Nine dollars?!! Yes, nine simoleons.

The awards are custom made, high-tech running socks – an award you can actually use! Better than the all-too-common t-shirt, sweatshirts (without advertising!) go to all registrants.

Bring the entire family, there is a free (under 13) kids' Gasp at 1:30. The 5k starts at 2 PM on Saturday, December 26. Don't wait! Sign up now at JTCRunning.com.

Sweet JTC Running Moments

VyStar Emerald Trail 5K



Sweet JTC Running Moments

Wine and Chocolate Run



Pumpkin Run



Sweet JTC Running Moments

Mandarin Run



Thanksgiving Day Run



Editor: Bob Fernee
Designer: Amanda Mason

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Weekly Training Runs

Sunday 6:30 am, Mandarin: Various locations and distance. See Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pg/JaxSundayRun/posts/ NO Facebook account necessary

Sunday 6:30 am, Atlantic Beach: Atlantic Bl. & 1st Street. 5-10 miles.
Contact: Linda White; (C) 662-4928
whitelindab@bellsouth.net

Sunday 8:00 am, Jax Trails Group Run:
visit Jax Group Trail Running on Facebook

Tuesday 5:35 am, San Marco: Southside United Methodist Church 5-6 miles. Different pace groups from 7 to 9 minutes. Contact: Kelli Howard; 904-333-9208 text or cell

Tuesday 6:30 pm, Baymeadows: Wicked Barley on Baymeadows. Close to 1st Place Sports, 3.5 and 5 mile routes. Enjoy great food and beer afterwards. (The Wicked Road Warriors).
Contact: Steve Sassa; (904) 860-0053

Wednesday 5:30 am, Bolles School: Track Interval Training, (JTC Running Members)
Contact: Paul Smith; smithfccj@hotmail.com, 982-3730

Wednesday 5:30 pm, Bolles School: Track Interval Training (JTC Running Members)
Contact: Paul Smith; smithfccj@hotmail.com, 982-3730

Thursday 6:30 pm, Springfield: Hyperion Brewery, 3-4 miles. Good beer at Hyperion after each run. Historic neighborhood. Worth the trip!
Contact: Bill Dunn; wmdunn222@gmail.com

Friday 5:40 am, Mandarin: Beauclerc, Forest Circle, 7.5 miles.
Contact: Paul Smith; smithfccj@hotmail.com, 982-3730



Disclaimer on Weekly Workout Sessions:
The Wednesday morning and afternoon sessions at the Bolles School are sanctioned by JTC Running and open only to registered members. Information on all other sessions is provided as a courtesy only. JTC Running does not sanction, manage, or insure these workouts.