

# MYSTIC PLACES SOPHOMORE EFFORT WON'T DISSAPPOINT

By DON SIKORSKI  
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The Mystic Places Marathon is still run in the town of East Lyme and still supported by the East Lyme Marathon Association Board members. But the Mystic Places event and Race Director John Bysiewicz are building on the 22 year history of the East Lyme race and developing their own running tradition. Bysiewicz, the race sponsors, and his support staff have developed the Mystic Places Marathon into the fourth largest marathon in New England (possibly rivaling Hartford for 3<sup>rd</sup> this year in terms of overall participation), and looks to fine tune the event from its debut effort last fall.

On Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Mystic Places Marathon will take place beginning and ending in East Lyme's Rocky Neck State Park. The Mystic Places concept was created as a replacement to the East Lyme race, which was founded in 1980. When the idea of making the marathon into a full-scale regional tourist attraction, East Lyme Race Director Way Hedding and Pete Volkmar recommended New Haven's John Bysiewicz as the man to coordinate their new event. Bysiewicz, formerly one of Connecticut's top road racers, is now one of New England's premier Road Race Directors. His directing resume includes turning the prestigious New Haven 20K into a nationally recognized, U.S. Championship race event. A former 2:22 marathoner now turned full-time Race Director, Bysiewicz knows what it takes to make the Mystic Places Marathon a successful event.

Although the marathon is the highlight of the weekend, there's a whole lot more going on that just a 26.2-mile footrace. A full family-orientated weekend will take place on Saturday, featuring children's races and free activities, a Health and Fitness expo, live music, the traditional pre-race pasta dinner, and a fireworks display at 6:00pm. Sunday's marathon race will also feature a five-person marathon relay, post-race refreshments, more live music, and an awards ceremony. 4-time Boston and New York City Marathon winner Bill Rodgers will also be on hand to meet runners and sign autographs. The elite field is also stronger than ever. Luiz Ramos, last year's runner-up at both Mystic Places and Hartford with a 2:14 marathon best, will return. Ramos finished 5<sup>th</sup> in 2:22:13 at the Hartford Marathon and will again attempt the same double. He should be challenged by Simon Cherokony of Kenya (2:16 PB), Hartford Marathon runner-up Kasshwa Kawiso of Ethiopia, James Kuria of Kenya (5<sup>th</sup> in 2002 Los Angeles Marathon), Shingirai Badza of Zimbabwe (2:17 PB), and top American Michael Dudley of Boulder, Colorado, a 2:14 marathoner and 2-time Cal International Marathon winner. The women's field is led by Russia's Tatyana Maslova, a 2:33 marathon runner who was 4<sup>th</sup> at Pittsburgh this spring, and Leteyesus Berhe of Ethiopia, the runner-up at Hartford. Branford's Kerry Arsenault, 5<sup>th</sup> female at Mystic Places a year ago, is the top local entrant. "The elite field is even better than last year," said Bysiewicz. "There are 5 or 6 men that have run under 2:20. The course record (Rueben Chesang's 2:23:47 from last year) is likely to be broken." Norwich's Tim Smith owned the previous course record at East Lyme, with his 2:23:56 effort in 1982.

The Mystic Places concept was developed as a vehicle to promote tourism in the region. The response for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year event has been impressive. Over 800 runners have entered the marathon to date, with over 105 marathon relay teams expected to compete over one of the country's flattest and most scenic marathon routes. The race has runners entered from 30 states and 8 countries, with half of the race field traveling from out-of-state; all of which support the race's vision of becoming a tourism event. "The focus of the event is to give back to the community", Bysiewicz explains. Many of the weekend's events, including the expo, the live music (the Cartells and the Convertibles will play a free concert on Saturday; Eight to the Bar and Bluzberry Pi will perform on Sunday), and the fireworks, are free event for the public. The race is also a collaborated event, with Bysiewicz, Hedding and the past board of Directors of the East Lyme Marathon, volunteers, and race sponsors all contributing to the success of the event. Both Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mohegan Sun return as sponsors, along with Backus and Lawrence and Memorial Hospitals, the Waterford Hotel Group, Pfizer Corporation, Tee's Plus, and a number of local vendors. "The volunteer support is what keeps the race alive," Hedding explains. "The support from the local community for the race has been terrific. The race will truly be a hometown event".

Bysiewicz has also implemented some improvements from last year's race based on feedback from the runners. The course has been slightly re-navigated in an effort to alleviate traffic congestion in town. Long sleeve T-shirts will be available to all registered runners, and official marathon finisher certificates will be mailed to every runner who completed the 26.2-mile trek. Finisher medals will also be awarded. Volunteers are always welcome at the marathon. Any individuals or groups interested in volunteering should contact Bysiewicz at (203) 4815933 or by e-mail at [jsports@snet.net](mailto:jsports@snet.net). The fee for participating in the marathon is \$50 per person and \$75 on the weekend of the event. All the specifics can also be found on the race's web site at [www.mysticplacesmarathon.org](http://www.mysticplacesmarathon.org). Be sure to get out to East Lyme for the weekend and support Connecticut's top marathon.

## Racing Roundup

- Mystic Places isn't the only marathon in Connecticut. The October 12<sup>th</sup> Hartford Marathon produced a crowd-pleasing finish, with Kenya's Joseph Nderitu outdueling 18 year-old Kassahun Kabisco of Ethiopia down the final stretch to win by a mere 6 seconds in 2:16:51, the fastest marathon run on Connecticut soil. At age 18, Kabisco must anticipate a speedy recovery, since he's registered for Mystic Places only 15 days later.
- Speaking of fast marathons, the Chicago Marathon has arguably moved past both Boston and New York City as the country's top marathon. Khalid Khannouchi, a Moroccan native, recent American citizen, and world marathon record holder, broke away from the leaders during the late miles to claim the win in a blazing 2:05:55. Khannouchi, whose 2:05:38 in London this spring broke his own world record by 5 seconds, now owns an incredible total of 3 sub 2:06 marathon performances. Even more impressive was Britain's Paula Radcliffe, who shattered Catherine Ndereba's women's world record of 2:18:47 (set in Chicago last fall) with her 2:17:18 clocking. That's an amazing 5:14 per mile pace and a world best by nearly a minute and a half. Her record run wasn't a complete surprise; her win in London in April just missed Ndereba's mark by a mere 9 seconds. To her credit, Ndereba finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in Chicago to Radcliffe in an impressive 2:19:26. Remember when most doubted that women would ever run sub 2:20 for the marathon?
- The Eastern Connecticut Conference Championships at the Norwich Golf Course has become more than just cross-country races. Taking a look at the number of spectators that show up each fall, it looks more like a who's who of Southeastern Connecticut distance running. The conference is also clearly the strongest in the state, with the meet becoming even more competitive than next week's State Class meets for most teams. Griswold junior Gavin Coombs had enough left in the tank to outkick Fitch's Mark Olivier in the boy's competition, while Killingly's Megan Owen ran away from Griswold's Abbey Sadowski to claim the girl's championship. Look for the conference to have a major impact at the state and New England level in the next few weeks.
- Stonington's Tyler McCabe, a former ECC Cross-Country champion, has been running extremely well at Providence College this season. McCabe recently finished 3<sup>rd</sup> overall at the New England Championships at Boston's Franklin Park. The Friars are one of the strongest teams in the nation, and hope to have a solid run at the NCAA National Championship on November 25<sup>th</sup> in Indiana.
- The St. Bernard High School Cross-Country Alumni are conducting a testimonial dinner for longtime coach Doug Sharples, who retired after 34 seasons coaching at the school. The event will take place at Ocean Beach Park in New London on Saturday, November 30<sup>th</sup>. Tickets to the event are \$34 (\$1 for each season of coaching) and are available by contacting Kevin Gallerani @ (860) 848-8059 ([guildrepair@ids.net](mailto:guildrepair@ids.net)), Jim Butler @ (860) 443-7437 ([jsbut@conncoll.edu](mailto:jsbut@conncoll.edu)), or the St. Bernard High School Alumni Office at (860) 848-1271 x143 ([www.saint-bernard.com](http://www.saint-bernard.com)).

## This month in history

October 31st, 1993 – In a battle of the two premiere road racers in the area, New London's Dave Raunig outduels Mystic's Wayne Jacob at the Strides for the Handicapped Road Race in Waterford. Raunig breaks away from Jacob to claim the win in 24:53, comfortably ahead of Jacob (2<sup>nd</sup> in 25:34). Kevin Grant (26:10), Dan Isleib (26:29), and Ed Zubrisky (26:50) round out the top five finishers. Carla Thompson adds another Strides race title to her running resume, finishing 21<sup>st</sup> overall in 29:12 to easily outdistance her nearest challenger Diana Donovan (2<sup>nd</sup> in 31:53). Norwich's Tim Smith (28:16) outduels New London's Jim Butler by 5 seconds for top Master's honors. In the preceding 3 Mile Fun Run, former St. Bernard High School and University of Connecticut standout Bill Gill wins in 15:35 over his nearest competitors Steve Pascoe (2<sup>nd</sup> in 15:42) and Chris Hansen (3<sup>rd</sup> in 15:46). Sue Julin is the top female finisher in 18:53.

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