

ROSE CITY AGAIN UP TO THE CHALLENGE

By DON SIKORSKI
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In 1999, the Rose City Challenge 10 Mile Road Race was born, considered by many in the local running community as the heir replacement to the former Norwich Rose Arts Festival Road Race. Now with Rose Arts just a faded memory, the Rose City Challenge continues to move forward and offer runners a quality road racing event right here in Norwich. This year's 7th annual race, which will take place on a new date and time, will deliver even more for the runners, incorporating a few new features based on runner's feedback and targeted at drawing greater numbers.

First, anyone who hasn't visited Dodd Stadium to take in a ball game is missing out on one of the cities finest resources. It's professional baseball in a great park at a great price, right here in our own back yard. The Navigators do a terrific job keeping fans of all ages entertained at the games. And again this year, Rose City Race participants will get to enjoy a complimentary Navigator ballgame after the race. The 2005 Rose City Challenge will take place on Friday evening, May 13th, with both the 10-mile and 5K races starting promptly at 6:00pm, beginning and ending from the Dodd Stadium in the Norwich Industrial Park. There will be two bands performing along the race course, and right after the race, runners will be treated to complimentary ballpark food and beer along with their complimentary Navigators game ticket. After the game, fans will also enjoy fireworks at the stadium. In terms of race value, you won't find a better deal anywhere.

John Bysiewicz of JB Sports, the state's top race director who currently oversees two of Connecticut's largest events in the New Haven 20K and the Mystic Places Marathon, will again be co-directing this year's race with Pete Volkmar of New London. Volkmar, also an experienced road race director, explains the rationale behind the date and time change of the race. "The goal was to get more people," said Volkmar simply. "Each runner gets a ticket to the ball game and a chance to enjoy the evening with food, beer and friends." Bysiewicz, who has a proven track record of producing a quality road race, echoes those same sentiments. "The date change and move to an evening race will be better," said Bysiewicz. "Runners and their families are more likely to go to the baseball game; staying around after the race and having some fun." Volkmar also feels that the 10 mile race course has improved from the original course. "There no more Canterbury Turnpike hills....I'm tempted to take the word 'challenge' out of the race altogether," joked Volkmar. But don't let Volkmar fool you; the 10 mile course, which heads out and back along Plain Hill and White Plains Road, is still plenty challenging. Then again, that's always been part of the appeal.

Proceeds from the Rose City Challenge will benefit Tater's Charities, supporting children in need in Southeastern Connecticut. Assistant General Manager Tom Hinsch is also involved in the race's planning, helping coordinate an event that will offer a great experience and raise money for a great cause. "One of our goals was to involve the runners and their families more", explained Hinsch. "We'll be utilizing the picnic area for an all-you-can-eat barbeque.....there's fireworks after the game. We've always wanted to turn it into a party and keep the families there. We also get exposure for Tater's Charities, which is the important thing," explains Hinsch.

Each registered runner will receive a complimentary t-shirt and two free tickets to that evening's Norwich Navigators 6:35pm game versus the Binghamton Mets. While most won't factor into the prize money, the offerings are generous, with the overall 10-mile race winner pocketing \$250 in cash and division winners each earning \$100. The 5K race winner will receive a \$200 gift certificate from Bob's Discount Furniture. Race day registration will be accepted; for more race information contact JB Sports at (203) 481-5933 or visit www.jbsports.com. The race is being presented by The William W. Backus Hospital and hosted by the Norwich Navigators, the Double A affiliate of the San Francisco Giants. Supporting sponsors also include Tee's Plus, Norwich Public Utilities, People's Bank, Oxford Health Plans, The Day, Bob's Discount Furniture, Prime Electric, Smith Insurance, Pepsi, and Budweiser/Levine Distributing. Runners and their families will have a great opportunity to enjoy a terrific evening of running, baseball and fireworks.

Racing Roundup

26 year-old Martin Lel of Kenya outran a very competitive field to win the Flora London Marathon in 2:07:26, enough for a 23 second margin over world champion Jaouard Gharib of Morocco. South Africa's Hendrik Ramaala was 3rd in 2:08:32, while world record holder Paul Tergat of Kenya finished a disappointing 8th overall in 2:11:38 and defending champion Evans Rutto was 10th in 2:12:49. Britain's Jon Brown posted a terrific effort to finish 6th in a personal best 2:09:31, finishing just 6 seconds behind 2004 Olympic champion Stefano Baldini of Italy. In the women's race, hometown hero Paula Radcliffe dominated the field to earn her third London win despite having to make an unscheduled pit stop just after the 22 mile mark. Radcliffe's time of 2:17:42 was the third fastest women's marathon ever run and the fastest ever in a women's-only marathon. She set the world record of 2:15:25 on this very same London course while running in the same field as the men. Romania's Constantina Dita finished in the runner-up position but was over five minutes back, while Kenya's Susan Chepkemei, who was outkicked by Radcliffe in last fall's New York City Marathon, finished 3rd in 2:24:00. Defending London champion Margaret Okayo was 4th in 2:25:22, while Ireland's Sonia O'Sullivan ran a personal best 2:29:01 to finish 8th.

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