

DEARY RACE CONTINUES TO PROSPER

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

The Quiet Corner of Connecticut will be making some noise on the road race scene next month when the 16th Annual Day Kimball Hospital Deary Memorial 5 Mile Road Race and Fun Walk take place in Putnam on Saturday, August 13th. The event, which honors the late Cathy Deary, has become a summer tradition for a number of runners in the Northeastern Connecticut region and beyond, drawing over 270 competitors for last year's road race, including some of the best runners from Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. It was 16 years ago that Cathy Deary, the youngest of 13 children in the Deary family, passed away from cancer at the early age of 23. Race Directors Jim Gothreau and Martin Fey, both strong advocates of the distance running scene in Putnam, were already administering a race when they were approached by the Deary family in an effort to coordinate a fundraiser. The event has now blossomed into something special. "We wanted to have a certified 5 Mile Road Race in Putnam," explained Gothreau of the race's origins. "We later coordinated with the Deary family and combined our efforts into doing something for a good cause." Gothreau himself is a former Putnam High School track and cross-country runner who went on to compete at the University of Connecticut. And while a lingering knee problem has limited the 47 year-old Gothreau's training mileage as of recent, his enthusiasm for promoting the sport of distance running and well as putting on a top quality event for a good cause has been a big part of what makes the Deary race special.

Gothreau is also an active recruiter of running talent, and through his many contacts, he has continued to draw plenty of big names to the Deary race. Past division winners include Chaplin's Rebecca Stockdale-Wooley, a Putnam native and course record holder in two age categories (29:43 as a Master in 1994) who is currently ranked as one of the county's top age group runners, two-time state cross-country champion Chad Johnson of Lisbon, course record holder Keith Kelly of Ireland, 4:01 miler Geralt Owen of New York City (a former course record holder in 24:48), and Megan Owen of Providence College, a former All-American in both cross-country and track at Killingly High School. Last year race again featured a talented field, as former Woodstock Academy standout John Graham, Jr. ran away from Breton Bonnette (2nd in 27:14) and Chris Owen (3rd in 27:19) to claim a comfortable 37 second win in 26:37. Cindy Pomeroy, one of the state's top Master's runners, was the top female finisher in 30:33. More special guests are expected this year. Expected to participate is Nephi Tyler, a 24 year-old Olympic Trials qualifier out of Utah who was a Massachusetts state high school mile champion. Former Putnam high school cross-country runner Jody Weatherwax is also scheduled to visit from Michigan to run in the event for the first time. In October 1972, Weatherwax, then a freshman sensation at Putnam, remained undefeated when he outkicked Pomfret Prep senior and New England Prep School champion Chris Stockdale to claim a dramatic one-second victory and set a home course record of 15:34 that was never broken since (with a young Jim Gothreau finishing 4th overall). Weatherwax subsequently transferred to Hartford Public and would clock a 4:12.7 mile under the guidance of former Olympic gold medalist Lindy Remigino. He still owns the State Open meet record in the mile, set back in 1975. The 50 year-old Stockdale has made informal appearances at the Deary race in past years and is expected to be on the starting line for this year's event. If all goes as expected, Gothreau make be able to reenact the Weatherwax/Stockdale dual of '72.

Toe the line in Putnam and you will be treated to a professionally run event, a scenic race course, and all of the race amenities that top road racing events offer. The USAT&F certified 5 Mile Road Race is preceded by a 5-Mile Fun Walk over the same race course, beginning promptly at 8:00am. The road race follows at 9:05am, with professional road race timing again provided by SNERRO. The race starts and finishes in front of J.D. Cooper's Restaurant, just 1 mile south off Exit 95 (from I-395) on Park Road in Putnam. Cooper's will also host the post-race festivities and will feature plenty of awards, including \$250 cash to the top male and female finishers (\$150 and \$100 for place and show) and a \$200 team award (with top 5 scoring) will be distributed. There is also a free raffle, t-shirts to the first 150 registrants, bonus money for course records, and complimentary refreshments for all participants. Race highlights will be shown on the big screen in Cooper's at the awards ceremony. The race is also broadcast live on WINY AM Radio 1350. All race proceeds with benefit Day Kimball Hospital in Putnam. For the web savvy, you can download the road race application and pledge sheets by going to <http://www.daykimball.org/philanthropy/events/deary>. Call (860) 928-7141 for more race information, and make an effort to be in Putnam to run a great race for a great cause.

Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His "Coach's Corner" column can be accessed at www.moheganstriders.org. He can also be reached by e-mail at kdcsikorski@netzero.net.