

BURELLE TO RACE FOR AWARENESS

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

It was cold and dark, and Billie Sue Burrelle was a runner looking for inspiration. Leading up to her training for the Boston Marathon this past April, Burrelle was surfing the internet looking for a potential future marathon to run. The thought of a long-term training goal to focus on would help the 49 year old Lisbon resident get through the doldrums of winter training in New England. A long time athlete who had begun running long distances a few years earlier, Burrelle soon stumbled upon a web site advertising the "26.2 Miles with Donna". It was the 1st Annual National Marathon to Fight Breast Cancer, and the race's slogan, "Run with Donna", immediately struck a chord with Burrelle, since her sister-in law, Donna Couture, and had passed away from breast cancer years earlier. "It was actually before the Boston Marathon that I had made the decision to run in this race," recalled Burrelle of her plan. "I was feeling sluggish and just looking for a different idea. The race sounded like a great cause, and when I saw the "Run With Donna" slogan, it just hit me (the same first name). My sister-in-law was a runner herself, and they said that her running helped her in her fight against cancer. The marathon sounded like a great idea."

The 1st Annual "26.2 Miles with Donna - The National Marathon To Fight Breast Cancer" event takes place on February 17th, 2008 in Jacksonville Beach, Florida. Donna Hicken, the race's founder and event chairwoman, is an avid marathon runner and two-time breast cancer survivor. Former world class marathoners Jeff Galloway and Keith Brantley will be participating in organizing the event, which will also include a Half Marathon and Health & Fitness Expo. Over 5,000 runners are expected to compete in the inaugural event. With October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, there's no better time to make people aware of how important it is to fight for a cure to this disease. Not only does Burrelle hope to raise money for this very worthwhile cause, she also hopes to run well in Jacksonville. "I would like to do as much fundraising as I can," said Burrelle of her effort, "and I would also like to do the best I can (in the race)." With a total of four marathons under her belt, simply finishing the race won't be a problem for Burrelle. In Jacksonville, she will look to improve on her marathon best if all goes well. Burrelle ran a very impressive 3:47:41 in Boston this past April in less than ideal conditions. She has continued to train consistently since that effort, logging long runs early Saturday morning with a group of local runners in Lisbon. Burrelle has also incorporated some hill running into her workout schedule and may consider some treadmill running to acclimate herself to the warmer weather that Florida in February may deliver for this marathon.

"To do something like this (run a marathon) to raise money is very important," said Burrelle. "I would like to help the Donna Hicken Foundation with their research goals. The odds are that 1 in 8 women will get breast cancer. It would be nice if it were 1 in 8 million." Burrelle also feels honored to have the opportunity to combine an activity like running with a worthwhile cause. "Especially in the running community, you can meet a lot of great people," said Burrelle.

100% of all race registration fees and raised funds will be donated for breast cancer research. For anyone wishing to support Burrelle in her cause, donations can be mailed to Burrelle at 127 Ross Hill Road in Lisbon, CT 06351. Checks should be made payable to "The Donna Hicken Foundation". E-mail Billie Sue Burrelle at bsue58@yahoo.com or check out the race's web site at www.breastcancermarathon.com for more information.

Race Roundup

Let's hope Burrelle faces more favorable weather conditions in Jacksonville than the folks in Chicago did last week. Kenya's Patrick Ivuti prevailed by a half step with a 0.5 second lean-at-the-tape win over Jaouab Gharib of Morocco in the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon on October 6th. With record high 88-degree temperatures challenging the runners, Ivuti's photo finish win in 2 hours, 11 minutes, and 11 seconds was the closest in race history. Ivuti became the fifth consecutive Kenyan runner to win the Chicago Marathon. Berhane Adere of Ethiopia was the women's winner in 2:33:49. An outstanding performance was turned in by New Britain's Eric Blake, who finished 10th overall in 2:26:55. Blake was the 1996 Connecticut XC State Open Champion while competing for Lyman Memorial and is currently coaches at Central Connecticut State University. He was the third American finisher. And the Cubs weren't the only thing wilting down the home stretch in Chicago. A reported 36,000 of the registered 45,000 runners started the race, and marathon officials closed the course near the four hour mark due to safety concerns and a lack of water.....One runner that didn't have to face such marathon conditions was Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie, who recorded a new world marathon best of 2:04:26 (an amazing sub 4:45 per mile average) at the Berlin Marathon on September 30th, bettering the previous mark of 2:04:55 set by Kenya's Paul Tergat on the same Berlin course in 2003.

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@sbcglobal.net.