

CROTHERS A FRIEND TO THE RUNNING COMMUNITY

By DON O'SIKORSKI

Special to the Bulletin

I did not know Ray Crothers personally, but I had been introduced to him in the past by mutual friends and had heard great stories about Ray as a friend and fellow runner. On February 28th, Ray Crothers passed away from cancer at the age of 65. He was an outstanding distance runner at Fitch High School in Groton (Class of 1961) training under the guidance of John J. Kelley before competing at Central Connecticut State University, where he earned All-American honors in Cross Country and won the 1965 New England Championships. Crothers was inducted into Central's Athletic Hall of Fame in 1983.

He would continue to excel on the roads after his collegiate days were over, winning the prestigious Manchester Road Race in 1965 (running 23:50 to outrun his former CCSU teammate Jim Keefe). Crothers also won Manchester twice as a high schooler and would later go on to win the Masters title in 1984. He would post a total of 14 top 25 finishes at Manchester with a personal best of 23:07 for the 4.748 mile race. Yet despite his impressive running credentials, he is best known for his friendliness towards his fellow runners. Crothers and business partner John Vitale, like Crothers a national class distance runner in his prime, co-owned the Run In athletic footwear store in Rocky Hill (Vitale would follow in Crothers' footsteps in winning the Manchester Road Race 5 years later). The friendly, personalized service that stores like the Run In and John Kelley's store (Kelley's Pace in Mystic Village) provide continue to be valued by true runners.

The Manchester Road Race officials had recently announced that this year's Thanksgiving Day road race will be dedicated to the memory of Ray Crothers, a friend to many in the running community. He will be greatly missed.

Racing Roundup

The 36th Annual IAAF World Cross Country Championships take place today in Edinburgh, Scotland. Although the U.S. team will be hard pressed to challenge the world's best, there is still plenty of talent headed overseas to race. The Senior Men's USA Team that will compete over the challenging 12 kilometer course is led by Jorge Torres of Boulder, CO, the runner-up at the U.S. National XC race in San Diego. Jorge's twin brother Ed is also part of the U.S. team. Joining the Torres brothers are 2006 NCAA Cross Country champion Josh Rohatinsky and former Suffield HS and Trinity College standout Ryan Bak, both currently living and training in Oregon. The women's team features six-time U.S. team member Katie McGregor of Minnesota and former Notre Dame All-American Mary Huddle of Providence, RI. The world championship event will feature teams from a record 76 nations.....2004 Olympic silver medalist Meb Keflezighi of California has scratched from next month's Flora London Marathon, citing a lack of fitness.....World marathon record holder Haile Gebreselassie has stated that he does not intend to compete in the Beijing Olympics marathon, stating that the conditions, including high heat, humidity, and pollution, are not conducive to his health. Gebreselassie will instead focus on the 10,000 meter distance in Beijing. He will still be required to earn a spot on the very strong Ethiopian team this summer.....Stephen Herrera and Chadwick Brown, both of Waterford, continue to dominate the local road racing scene, picking up where they left off last season by finishing 1-2 at the Niantic 5K on March 15th. Herrera' time of 16:14 was good enough for a 21 second victory, while Mystic's Heather Bessette claimed top female honors in 20:22, good enough for 19th place overall. There were 276 finishers in the Niantic race. The 37 year-old Herrera also won the Kelley's Pace Hare Hop 5K two weeks earlier.....Former Griswold High standout Chris Croff, now competing for Southern Connecticut State University, won the WPLR Shamrock & Roll 5K in New Haven the same day (16:08).....The 2008 USATF Road Racing Grand Prix Series will kick off with a race of unique distance, the 2nd Annual Greater Hartford 1/4 Marathon. The 6.55 mile event takes place on Saturday, April 5th at the West Hartford Reservoir at 10:00am. Check out www.hartfordtrackclub.org for more race details. Look at the Hartford race as an opportunity to compete in a state championship event while earning a personal best for a new distance.....Reports are that Alan Webb plans to compete at the Carlsbad 5K on April 6th. The historically flat and fast Carlsbad course and competitive race field might offer Webb, one of America's top milers, the opportunity to erase Marc Davis' long standing American record of 13:24.

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