

# YOUTH AT HEART HAS JOLLEY IN WINNER'S CIRCLE

By DON SIKORSKI  
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Wayne Jolley learned very early on in his running career the value of executing a well-paced race plan. "I was pretty fast in high school," recalls Jolley, who competed for Killingly High School in the late 60's. "I remember my first cross-country race running against St. Bernard and Coach (Doug) Sharples. My Science Teacher was our coach. I started out behind St. Bernard's top 5 runners, and in the first quarter mile, he told me to go by them. I did what he told me to do and took the lead, and when I came around the first turn, Coach Sharples motioned to his runners not to worry about me. I guess he knew that I would die," laughed Jolley. "And I did. At 2 miles, all of them went past me. I'll never forget that."

Those high school memories competing in Uncasville all came back to Jolley when his son Tom, now 32, later competed for Coach Sharples at St. Bernard. His youngest son Christopher, 28, also ran on the Saints cross-country team. Watching his sons compete refueled the competitive fire that Jolley had possessed as a teenager. Still, he was under the impression that running and racing as an adult was only for the fleet of foot. "I thought it was a young man's sport," said Jolley. But after jogging through an 8 mile March of Dimes Walkathon event at Norwich Free Academy, Jolley was approached by three local runners who competed for the Mohegan Striders, a Norwich-based club that featured many of the state's top runners. Jim Martinson, Rich Friedrich, and Todd Guertin asked Jolley to join their club. "I thought I wasn't fast enough," recalls Jolley of that initial invitation. "I remember watching the Danielson Springtime Road Race in town, and the Mohegan Striders were always there. They'd win everything". Convinced to tag along with the group on their Wednesday evening ritual of a 10 ½ mile training run over the Rose Arts course, Jolley's initial goal was strictly to survive and find his way back to NFA. "I got lost," remembers Jolley of his first run with the group. "They would come back and get me. I was so sore and so tired after those runs. But by race day, I was prepared. And I beat all of them, although they didn't let me get past them without a fight."

Fast forward 15 years, and Jolley is now a seasoned veteran of the sport, logging consistent training mileage and racing fast and often. The Brooklyn resident has also enjoyed the health benefits that running delivers. At 57, the owner/operator of Jolley Concrete (a company that has been a long-time generous sponsor of the Mohegan Striders club) looks younger than most 40 year olds (present company included), and running has kept him in far better condition than his peers. "I go to the doctor, and when he measures my blood pressure, heart rate, etc., he tells me I have the body of a 28 year-old," Jolley joked. "It makes you feel pretty good".

Running has also provided Jolley with the opportunity to push himself physically, yet over the years, he has learned to adjust his training habits for the better. He has battled asthma since childhood and often struggles training during the winter months, and recent bouts of plantar fasciitis in past years had also temporarily curbed Jolley's racing opportunities. But he has since returned strong and learned from these setbacks. "I've always enjoyed the challenge," explained Jolley of his competitive nature. He routinely trains six days per week, mixing in longer runs with a busy race schedule that includes group training runs and recreation races that offer opportunities to run fast and socialize with fellow runners, two things that Jolley is quite good at. With a total of 12 Boston Marathon finishes to his credit, Jolley has also become an accomplished runner at the longer distances. He and his wife Leslie, who accompanies him to almost all of his races, both enjoy traveling to new races and meeting new people. Jolley's personal best marathon time, a very brisk 3:15:07, came at the 1995 Disney World Marathon, an event that became a fixture on the family race calendar for years. However, because he enjoys competing often, Jolley has found that moving away from the marathon distance gives his more flexibility to do so. "I think I'm done," said Jolley of his marathon racing days. "I like the half marathon distance a lot better now."

Norwich's Tim Smith has long been one of the area's top runners. Although Smith turned 60 this past April, he has competed against Jolley as an age group competitor for years. "All of the elements are there," explained Smith of his relationship with Jolley. "There's all the love, and then there's the fierce competition as well. I would say that the local Grand Prix competition (50+ age group) has always been hotly contested." As Mohegan Strider teammates, Jolley and Smith also bond in an effort to compete for the team on the USATF state racing circuit. "Wayne is very faithful," said Smith of Jolley's commitment to the team. "I think Leslie is his (running) Manager. And as a couple, they've been so gracious to the club." Jolley echoes those same sentiments of respect about Smith. "We've become pretty good friends," said Jolley of his teammate and division rival. "We key off of each other in long races. A lot of the time, we'll run together early on and help each other out. And you couldn't meet a nicer guy. He's a wonderful person".

Both runners agree that Jolley's advantage may be fresh legs. While Smith has competed seriously since his high school days at NFA, Jolley's 20+ year hiatus from the sport may have provided the necessary rest and an edge over his age group competitors. And because of Jolley's youthful exuberance, there is another social bond present. "He calls me "Dad" and I call him "Son", laughed Smith of the friendly reference amount the road racing crowd. Even at 57, Jolley still enjoying lacing up the racing shoes often and testing his body. Memorial Day weekend was a perfect example. Jolley finished 11<sup>th</sup> overall and earned top divisional honors at the Delaney Dash 5 Miler (31:58) in Old Saybrook on Saturday, scored for his Mohegan Striders team in the USATF 10K Championship at Lake Compounce in Bristol on Sunday (40:02), and then tackled the hilly Woodstock 10K on Monday, finishing 7<sup>th</sup> overall (41:11) and another age group win. He recovered just fine from this triple effort. As well as he's running, Jolley can't help but to look ahead to 60 and a new age group, a renewed rivalry with Smith, and a division he can excel at on a regional level if he can stay healthy. He has certainly enjoyed the ride to date. "I like going to different places," says Jolley of his running experiences. "And Leslie is always supportive of my going to races. I just tell her, 'let's pack the beer and go'".

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