

# A TRIBUTE TO SEAN DELANEY

By DON SIKORSKI  
*Special to the Bulletin*

We follow the lead police cruiser as we approach the crest of the large hill. Running shoulder to shoulder, breathing heavily, and sweating profusely in the June heat, I summons my every last bit of reserve, open my stride length, and make a move. Although we're more than a mile out from the finish, I begin to feel like this race is mine to win. Unfortunately for me, Sean Delaney has similar thoughts. I hit the two-mile split with a paper-thin lead, then suddenly he goes past me, gapping me by thirty yards in the next quarter mile and never looking back. I desperately hang on for respectability purposes, and as I cross the finish line weary and exhausted, Sean is standing there waiting at the end of the finish chute, holding a hand out for congratulations and wearing a friendly smile. It wasn't the first time that Sean Delaney had gotten the better of me in a race, and it wouldn't be the last.

Sean Delaney was my teammate and my friend. Born and raised in Old Saybrook, Sean was recruited to the Mohegan Striders in 1987, and soon became a familiar face at road races throughout the state. He also won quite a few of them. But Sean Delaney was more than just another fast guy at the front of the pack. He was the consummate competitor, a guy you would feel comfortable talking to on the starting line, would run barefoot over broken glass to beat you when the chips were down, and who you could enjoy a cold beer and warm conversation with after it was all said and done. Sean became captain of the Strider's Men's Open Racing Team in 1994 and was the key component to the teams' success on the state level. Sean led by example; his race schedule was busy almost to a fault. His range of personal bests included running 15:10 for 5K and sub 1:10 for a half-marathon; both in the same season in state championship races where his team had counted on him to score big. He did every time out. Sean enjoyed competing and seemed to thrive under the pressure of team competition, which says a lot about his heart and his desire when it counted most.

Soon, Sean began to feel worse. Although he had struggled with a number of nagging injuries not uncommon to runners at his competitive level, this was something much more. Sean was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Amazingly, he continued to run almost daily between bouts of chemotherapy treatments. Heading out the door for a five miler, even at a pedestrian pace compared to what he had been accustomed to in the past, was often a challenge, but his Doctors informed him that his running and his healthy lifestyle would be beneficial. Through it all, Sean shared news of his condition only with family and his closest friends. He later even showed promise of a miraculous comeback, returning to a level approaching where he once competed at in his prime just season's prior. In a sport where runners often prepare their excuses for sub-par performances even before crossing the finish line, Sean asked for no special treatment. Sadly, Sean's condition subsequently worsened. In May 2000, Sean Delaney passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer. He was 42 was old.

On Monday, May 28<sup>th</sup> (Memorial Day), the inaugural Delaney Dash 5 Mile Road Race will take place in Sean's honor. The race proceeds will be used to fund the Sean Delaney Scholarship Fund which has been established through the Old Saybrook Education Foundation and Old Saybrook High School in Sean's name to be granted to Old Saybrook college-bound seniors who run on the track or cross-country teams. The race begins at 12:00 Noon (following the Old Saybrook Memorial Day Parade, so plan to get there early), and provides parking and shuttle services from the Kathleen Goodwin School on Old Post Road in Old Saybrook. There is also a 5-kilometer (3.1-mile) walk, and race volunteers are always welcome. Call the Delaney Dash Race Committee at (860) 437-7247 or get more information at [www.jbsports.com](http://www.jbsports.com).

In Sean's eulogy, his brother Brian shared wonderful stories about Sean's dedication to his running regiment, how hard he had always trained, and how much his running was a part of who he was. He also asked something unique of us. Brian asked that we remember Sean by trying to be a little more competitive; to try and push ourselves a little harder towards personal improvement. This year, when faced with the challenge of not feeling well, a busy day, inclement weather conditions, or general fatigue, I often reflect on Sean's wishes as I head out the door for my run, considering myself fortunate that I am able to. This season is dedicated to him.

## Racing Roundup

- Leo Mayo, Jr. successfully defended his title at the Brooklyn-Danielson Springtime Festival 5K on May 19<sup>th</sup>. Mayo, a Senior at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, lead the race from the gun, crossed the finish line in 15:53. 47 year-old Geary Daniels of Dudley, Massachusetts finished a strong 2<sup>nd</sup> in 16:18. The women's winner was nationally ranked age group runner Rebecca Stockdale-Wooley of Chaplin, who finishes an impressive 21<sup>st</sup> place overall in 19:10. Both Daniels and Stockdale-Wooley compete for the Central Massachusetts Striders. A total of 296 runners completed the race.
- At the Naval Sub Base Memorial 10K on the same day, Stephen Bessette was the overall winner in 36:03. It was a family sweep for the Bessette's as Stephens' wife Heather captured the women's title by finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> overall in 37:37.
- Gideon Mutisya, won the Home Depot Mid-May Classic in Fairfield on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Mutisya, a 34 year-old Kenyan residing in Hartford, ran 19:03 for the 4-mile race. Waterford's Stephen Herrera was the top local finisher, 4<sup>th</sup> overall in 19:54. Uncasville's Chadwick Brown finished 11<sup>th</sup> in 20:44, while Preston's Tim Kane was 25<sup>th</sup> overall in 21:57 to claim the Master's (40-49) title. New York's Gordon Bakoulis set the women's course record, finishing 30<sup>th</sup> overall in 22:06. Mystic's Martha Merz was the 6<sup>th</sup> place female in 23:42. The Home Depot race served as the USATF State 4-Mile Championship.

## This month in history

May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1992 – The Xavier Racing Team makes their debut appearance at the Washington Trails 10K State T.A.C. Championship Race in Durham. It's members, consisting of Xavier (Middletown) High School Alumni, were easy to spot in their florescent green tank tops. But the Mohegan Striders Men's Team uses its depth to outrun Xavier 2:43:28 to 2:45:58 (top five times) over the hot and hilly 6.2-mile course. Rocky Hill's Peter Pazik (31:43) returns to form after a year of injuries to hold off the challenge of Xavier's Greg Bonaiuto (31:52), pulling away in the fourth mile for the overall win. Mike Whittlesey is third in 32:21 to lead the Striders. Bob Davenport (5<sup>th</sup>), Ed Zubritsky (6<sup>th</sup>), Kevin Pigeon (8<sup>th</sup>), and Sean Delaney (14<sup>th</sup>) round out the Striders top five. On the women's side, Cheshire's Mary DeGeorge (38:26) outruns Guilford's Kerry Arsenalault for a 3-second victory. Other notable local performances include Norwich's Tim Smith finishing 20<sup>th</sup> place overall to win the Masters division, Montville's Hal Bennett is 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Men's Grandmaster division, and Norwich's Laurie Bartnicki finishes 4<sup>th</sup> place female overall in 40:27. There were a total of 717 finishers for the popular Memorial Day race.

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