

WELL DESERVED REST ALMOST OVER

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

People who are goal orientated, a little high strung, and maybe even a bit too intense need some down time to recharge their batteries every so often. Specifically distance runners who fit this description; most of us being a bit obsessive/compulsive by nature anyway. I have concluded, during my numerous years of running and racing, that December is the perfect time to do just that, where dropping temperatures, dark nights, and holiday parties lurk around every corner of your social calendar.

I must admit that I admire people who run for the pure enjoyment of running itself. Those people who seem to look forward to winter as a time to enjoy the sights and sounds of snow under their feet. Like a peaceful Norman Rockwell painting. I admire them because I have a difficult time figuring this type of mentality out. As a distance runner born and raised in New England, I view winter as a true challenge to my willpower and intestinal fortitude. Should I "train" by running when I don't want to run, pounding out specific paces, racing up hills, speeding along slippery roads, and dragging my body out of bed on those cold winter mornings to get in a long run? For competitive runners (no matter what level), it all feels so necessary sometimes if the long-term goal is to race as fast as possible from April to November. Winter mileage builds a strong foundation; the theory I preach to runner's that I coach. But like most of the rewarding things in life, the task at hand is much easier said than done. How about retiring from competitive racing? There are probably two options: 1) quitting cold turkey (i.e. not running ever again), or 2) the "casual runner". Another group of people I admire. I envy the casual runner's lifestyle of running only when you feel like it and participating in road races strictly with the intent of enjoying the event. Although that time is probably right around the corner, I'm too competitive and a bit too stubborn to go that route just yet. After battling a herniated disc and bursitis in the hip during the past few years (I pretty much lost both battles), I concluded that competitive running just wasn't fun any more, at least not with these restrictions, and that the only people who gained from the experience were my chiropractors and physical therapists. Many years ago, I was convinced that I would either run and race at the top of my game or I would not run a step ever again when I could no longer do that anymore. Now, years later, I've reconsidered my stance. Those bouts with injuries and being on the sidelines may me realize that I would miss the benefits that running offers. I feel stronger and quicker, sleep better, keep weight off, and posses a more optimistic outlook on life when I run. Sure, I wouldn't miss the aches and pains, the sore muscles, the track workouts at 8pm in the dark, and getting out of bed when my body pleads for more sleep. But something about running makes it all worthwhile.

As December draws to a close, I realize my well-deserved time for slacking off is about over. A lot of people make New Year's Resolutions; keeping them for any length of time is another story. Mine will again be to try and become a better overall person. If that means maintaining the discipline and workload of competitive running, then you will probably again be seeing me out on the roads again this winter (if the body holds up to injury), cursing the cold and the darkness but feeling better as a result of being out there. Hope to see you on the roads again in 2002. Best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

Racing Roundup

- Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas showed no signs of slowing down after her Mystic Places Marathon this fall. Perkins-Banas finished 19th overall and 2nd female to East Hartford's Heather Gardiner at the Santa's Run in Glastonbury on December 2nd, running 20:33 for the 3.5-mile course. A week later, Perkins-Banas also claimed runner-up honors by running 18:35 at the Christopher Martin's 5K Run for Kids in New Haven on December 9th. Mike Gyuly (15:51) was the overall winner of the popular wintertime race.
- Chad Johnson won the Norfolk Pub 10 Mile Road Race in Norfolk, CT on December 8th. Johnson covered the 10 mile distance in a course record 54:40, nearly a minute up on Peter Oviatt of Lebanon, CT (2nd in 55:38).

This month in history

December 8th, 1991 – Former Killingly High School and Central Connecticut State standout Kevin Pigeon edges Poland's Zbigniew Siemaszko by one second to win the Santa's Run Road Race in Glastonbury. Pigeon, 24, toured the 3.5 mile course in 17:40, outdistancing a talented chase pack that included Siemaszko, Hartford Track Club teammate Kevin McCafferty (3rd), Jeff Sanborn (4th), and Mark Hixson (5th). Maureen Turner is the top female finisher in 20:48, finishing ahead of former Yale University cross-country standout Meredith Gordon and Preston's Michelle Keegan.

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