

# FITNESS IS CONSTANT WORK

By DON SIKORSKI  
*Special to the Bulletin*

Jerry Seinfeld once joked about it. The bit goes something like Jerry watching all of these people working out at the local gym; working hard and getting themselves in shape. And for what reason? So that they can physically complete the next workout. The “punch line” is Seinfeld’s advice to these people that they wouldn’t have to work so hard and sweat so much if they just quit working out. Catch 22 logic that can be probably be applied to any number of situations.

For runners, we consider our activity to be athletically unique in that the daily toil of putting one foot in front of the other for dozens of miles day in and day out will eventually bring us to a greater fitness level, thus making the task easier. Of course, we realize that it will never get easier. In reality the truth of the matter is that the pace will increase while the effort remains unchanged. And without a specific set of goals and a seasonal timetable established to accomplish these goals, a never-ending cycle of base mileage with no sense of purpose exists. Now we understand what Jerry is telling us.

Of course, most runners are acutely aware of the numerous physical benefits that our daily task brings along with it. Weight loss, toned bodies, stress relief, better circulation, reduced health problems, greater aerobic strength, etc. all are plusses associated with running. Those of us who tend to overdo it from time to time have also recognized the downside to these benefits as a direct result from tangling with “too much of a good thing”. Over-training can lead to injury, burnout, general fatigue, and a general state of irritability. When searching for peak performance, the trick is to find the point where the volume and intensity are maximized to the point where the athlete can handle the workload without breaking down. In other words, walk near the fine line between optimum performance and injury without crossing over it. Easier said than done.

As a runner for over 20 years now, I’ve come to realize that the bad stretches and sluggish training runs from time to time are only temporary setbacks. Just like completing one or two good workouts won’t guarantee racing success the next time out, feeling lousy for a few days doesn’t mean that it’s necessarily time to quit. The more we come to expect of ourselves, the more difficult the setbacks become. But most are temporary, especially if we have the frame of mind to work through them. I remember talking to my friend and teammate Sean Delaney, who told me of his daily routine of a 5-mile run scattered in between bouts of high dosage chemotherapy treatments. Sean, who years early had been one of Connecticut’s top distance runners, was almost apologetically explaining that his recent training pace on these runs had deteriorated to slower than the pace he used to warm-up for races at. I listened in admiration to someone who could be so strong and so positive in a time of such pain and suffering. Sean subsequently passed away from cancer in May 2000. He was only 42 years old. In a column last May, I had dedicated the 2001 season to Sean’s memory, and gave my own running and racing career one more push forward after nearly two years of struggling with injuries. This year, the setbacks have already occurred and the challenge of going at it one more year already exists. After some soul searching, my decision, barring any more serious or re-occurring injury, is to try and tough it out for one more season. Sean would want it that way.

## Racing Roundup

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Delaney Dash 5 Mile Road Race takes place at 12:00 Noon on Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup> (Memorial Day) in Old Saybrook. The event, honoring the late Mohegan Striders Racing Team Captain Sean Delaney, also features a 5 kilometer (3.1 mile) walk. Start and finish are at Saybrook Point, with all registration and parking at the Kathleen Goodwin School on Old Post Road. For additional information and directions, check out [www.jbsports.com](http://www.jbsports.com), [www.hitekracing.com](http://www.hitekracing.com), or contact Race Director Pete Volkmar at (860) 437-7247 ([pvolkmar@snet.net](mailto:pvolkmar@snet.net)). The annual Memorial Day parade is scheduled to take place one hour prior to the race start, so plan to arrive early.
- George Luke of Clinton, the state’s top finisher in this year’s Boston Marathon (38<sup>th</sup> in 2:26:37) won the Guilford Savings bank 5 Mile Road Race on May 19<sup>th</sup>. Uncasville’s Todd Bennett finished 3<sup>rd</sup> overall in 28:15.
- At the Home Depot Mid-May Classic in Fairfield that same day, Mystic’s Martha Merz claimed top female honors, finishing the 4-mile race in 23:26 (25<sup>th</sup> overall). Toby Tanser of New York City won the race overall in 20:29.
- Ridgefield’s John Dugdale has consistently been one of the most impressive age-group performers in the country over the past 10+ years. Dugdale recently ran an incredible time of 3:23:25 at the City of Pittsburgh Marathon on May 5<sup>th</sup>. That’s clicking off 7:45 per mile for 26.2 miles. What makes his performance so incredible is that fact that Dugdale is 67 years old.

## This month in history

May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001 – The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Delaney Dash takes place on Memorial Day in Old Saybrook, CT. Auburn University’s Tyler Johnson, a former Xavier High School standout, claims top honors in 25:50 over the flat, 5-mile course, shaking his nearest challenger Chadwick Brown (2<sup>nd</sup>; 26:27) in the late miles. Johnson’s former Xavier teammate Tyler Cardinal is 3<sup>rd</sup> in 27:54, fending off Eric Woronick of Washington, D.C. (4<sup>th</sup> in 27:55). On the women’s side, Ellen Fitzgerald runs 29:02 for the win, over a minute up on Allie Kassens (2<sup>nd</sup> female in 30:28) and good enough for 13<sup>th</sup> place overall. 227 runners complete the inaugural race, with proceeds benefiting the Sean Delaney Scholarship Fund for Old Saybrook High School track and field athletes.

**Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His “Coach’s Corner” column can be accessed at [www.moheganstriders.org](http://www.moheganstriders.org). He can also be reached by e-mail at [kdcsikorski@netzero.net](mailto:kdcsikorski@netzero.net).**