

## **SEVEN SISTERS TRAIL RACE**

What a beautiful day for a 12-mile run in the woods along the Mount Holyoke range in Amherst MA! It had been 4 years since the last time I had run the Seven Sisters trail race (taking care of family stuff) and was anxious to get back on a trail that I love. Unfortunately nature called before the beginning of the race. Coming out of the restroom, what do I see but a line of people headed up the hill from the starting line. I ended up being the last person on the slow train to the top of that first hill (3 other guys came later due to them mixing up the starting time). So I settled in to just enjoy the run.

If you have never run Seven Sisters, the trail is tough but certain parts provide a gorgeous view of the Pioneer Valley on good days. Today was a good day. It was sunny and clear, providing a very clear far-reaching view. There are two mountains at the start, Bare Mountain and Mt. Hitchcock. After them comes the Seven Sisters; seven hills of varying degrees of difficulty, mostly tough. After the last downhill off the sisters, it is over the one paved road at Turner's Notch and then up to the Summit house on top of Mt. Holyoke, across the house's porch and back onto the trail for the approximately one and a half to two miles to the turn around. Then you turn around (after helping yourself to the necessary water, replacement drink, bananas, orange pieces and replacement fuels that are on the tables) and head back up the hill to repeat the run in the other direction.

Today's beautiful weather made for a very enjoyable day. I saw the leaders blazing an extremely fast trail back somewhere around the  $\frac{3}{4}$  out mark (for me). I was very pleased with my

run. I hit the turn around in 1hour, 37 minutes and decided upon leaving the turnaround that I wanted to try to do a negative split. My official time was 3 hours, 15 minutes. I came very close to running even splits instead. By the way, one of my goals in running this race has been to break 3 hours. I believe that I have run it a total of eight times now and the closest I have come is 3 hours and 4 minutes. I thought that I would have a chance this year but no dice. Guess I will have to go back again next year and make sure that I am not in the restroom at the start of the race.

A disclaimer for those of you who would like to run this race (and I hope that you will); this is a very difficult trail. Injuries can and do happen. I do not include in my total races run there the year that I broke my ankle just before the Summit House and had to hobble to the turnaround so that I could get a ride back to the start. That same year another runner broke his collarbone. It does not happen every year, but it can. Please come out and experience this race next year, but just understand that it is not a road race but a very difficult trail race. Also, bring a water bottle. You will need it.

## **THE MEANDERING THOUGHTS OF A WANDERING STRIDER**

Wow, oh wow!! Spring has finally sprung and amazingly I am very happy to leave winter behind. I love wintertime, but this past winter wore on me like never before. I am not sure if it is because I am getting older (say it ain't so) or if it is because this past winter just seemed to drag on and on. Whatever the reason, I am quite glad to feel this warming trend. It was also a pleasure to see so many familiar faces at L & M on

May 3<sup>rd</sup>. By the way Ms. Short, anytime you wish to be insulted, just come on by. To think it 'only' takes one word. Anyway, the weather was good and the runners (and walkers) came. Good way to start out the season. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, I found a race where I could actually place for my age bracket. No, I am not going to tell what race it is (but if you ask Nick, I am sure that he wouldn't mind getting more people to show up). It was another beautiful day to run. I think I could get to like this race, although it is not all good news. I am going to have to work through a sore Achilles tendon that I aggravated during the race. That could put a damper on my plans for this spring and summer.

Also on May 10<sup>th</sup>, Sue McCarthy went down to Virginia to give the Massanutten Mt. Trail 100 a try. She made it to mile 49 and had to drop due to not meeting the cutoff time. She said that the course is a very difficult one (lots of rocks and hills). It is one that I have wanted to do for the last three years and have been unable to. Now I know that I have to make it down there to try the race.

On May 18<sup>th</sup> I turned 43 and went up to do the Soapstone Trail race, a 14.5-mile run through the woods. In this spring season of rain, I have been pretty lucky on race day; it was another beautiful day. The course was in good shape with only a small amount of water covering certain parts of the trail. There is about two and a half miles of road/fire roads and the rest is trails through Shinipsit Forest in Somers, CT. Another excellent race if anyone is interested in doing some trails. There are a couple Striders who have done this race in the past, but they were missing this year.

This past Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, Karen Short and Pete Volkmar

put on the 3<sup>rd</sup> **Annual Delaney Dash** in Old Saybrook. Normally my family and I go camping over this weekend but the forecast looked crappy so we decided to forego it this year (very good decision). So Saturday morning my daughter Kathleen and I headed to my first attempt at this race. Finding the race site was very easy; head into Old Saybrook and hang a left. No problem. It was actually the first time that I had ever been at that end of the town. I now know where Dock and Dine Restaurant is located. It rained the whole way there and was still raining about 20 minutes before the start of the race.

Unfortunately that did not bode well for the race drawing the undecided runners who wait to run in the 'fair' weather. I am not going to go into specifics of the race-see ShorTakes in this issue. As far as my race, it went well. I was pleased to be able to run semi-quickly over a five-mile route, especially since I rarely do speed work any more and my training is mostly geared for doing the long runs. It was a good race and Short/Volkmar and company did a great job! (By the way, cookies and chips after a race?) I will try to plan on doing this race again and hope to see better weather and more runners. I would like to congratulate the Mohegan Striders for sponsoring this race and for helping out with the logistics. Maybe next year some of you Striders who are reading this can find the time to help out also.