

Running Commentary

JULY 1990 - ISSUE 178

"The top 10 runners, male and female, probably should be announced—especially if there has been considerable cash outlay to attract some of the biggies. Mostly, however, I agree with Al Maguire."

The basketball celebrity who hosts Al's Run in Milwaukee once told Sheehan, "There are always a handful of 'real runners' who want to break up a perfectly good party to have an awards ceremony."

GIVE HER A BREAK. Commenting on the "Post-Mary and Joan" and "Lucky Breaks" pieces (June RC), RunCal editor Mark Winitz writes from Los Altos, California, "All the women you mention certainly deserve much credit. I was surprised, though, that you failed to mention one woman who has been undercredited for her service and excellence: Nancy Ditz.

"Nancy has been out of the limelight during her pregnancy and post-natal return to form. But before that she won major marathons (Los Angeles twice, plus California International), was the top-ranked U.S. woman at that distance in 1987 and '88, finished a respectable seventh (as top American) at the '87 World Championships, was twice a member of the U.S. World 15-K team, placed second and barely missed making the sub-2:30 club at the '88 Olympic Trials, and was the leading American finisher at Seoul.

"So along with Nan Davis, this other ND hasn't fared too badly from 1985-89. Maybe Nancy, too, having taken some surely voluntary time off, will rise to even better things. At 36, she is hardly over the hill."

Notes and Quotes

TWO RUNNERS, ages 60 and 47, died at the Pittsburgh Marathon and another at the London Marathon—all apparently from heart ailments—prompt Dr. George Sheehan to write, "I think it's time to review the salient characteristics of fatalities or near-fatalities so we can reduce the toll." On the other hand, Dr. Sheehan wonders if the toll exceeds the probabilities for non-running circumstances. Referring to the first fatality in London's history, he says, "I'm not sure that one death in 26,000 multiplied by 10 years goes against the usual odds."

A FARM ACCIDENT mangled one of Dick Beardsley's knees last fall, and post-surgical infections threatened future use of that leg. But he's running again. In May, he ran a five-mile race (not 10-K as reported elsewhere) at Grantsburg, Wisconsin, in about 33 minutes. "I'm not disappointed at all," he told Maury Hobbs of the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. "To be able to run at all was a thrill. Before, two races [1981 Grandma's Marathon where first broke 2:10, and his sub-2:09 race at Boston the next year] stood out in my mind. At the finish in Grantsburg, I got that same chill up and down my spine."

SIX YEARS AGO, before breaking her back in an auto accident, Jane Welzel set a marathon PR of 2:35:53. It finally fell, to 2:33:25, in the best possible setting: at the National Championship race, which she won and which qualified her for

next year's World Cup. Deborah Raunig, 2:34:34; Gordon Bloch, 2:35:48; Janis Klecker, 2:40:08, and Janice Ertle, 2:40:21, also made the Cup team. Two of these five probably will be selected for the 1991 Pan-American Games. The TAC race was part of Grandma's Marathon (Duluth, June 23rd) in which Soviet Braslavskiy, 2:18:12, and Doug Kurtis, 2:18:37, led the men.

U.S. TEAMS for the Goodwill Games Marathons in Seattle this month: Budd Coates, Jerry Marsh and Mike Keohane for the men; Linda Somers, Rosa Gutierrez and Leslie Lewis for the women. For the first time ever in an international event of this type, the marathons (separate ones for each sex) aren't limited to national team members but welcome all runners.

WHEN DOES THE FASTEST time ever run qualify as nothing more than a course record? When the course goes downhill too quickly. Judi St. Hilaire ran more than 20 seconds under the world road best for 5-K (Fall River, Massachusetts, May 20th), but her time of 14:57 had the aid of an eight-meters-per-kilometer downslope. The course also negated John Gregorek's 13:30 as an American record. St. Hilaire won the L'eggs 10-K the next week with 32:26 (New York City, May 26th).

ROSA MOTA and Priscilla Welch both doubled at L'eggs on a Saturday and Bolder Boulder two days later (May 28th). Both placed higher and ran just as fast, with adjustments for Boulder's altitude, the second time. Mota improved from fourth to first with times of 32:48 and 33:14. Welch, the top master at both races, climbed from 19th to 14th overall with times of 34:48 and 35:41.

CATHY O'BRIEN backed up her fast 10-mile at Trevira (see June RC) with notable victory at the Midland 15-K (Far Hills, New Jersey, May 20th). She ran 49:22 while beating American record-holder Lisa Weidenbach by 93 seconds. However, in a venture onto the track, O'Brien lost the TAC title to Colette Murphy, 32:20.92 to 32:25.93 (Norwalk, California, June 14th). Weidenbach rebounded from Midland with a 49:06 15-K at the Cascade Run Off (Portland, Oregon, June 17th) while placing second to Aurora Cunha, 48:20.

A MUCH-NEEDED youth movement was evident at TAC, as collegians and recent graduates placed well at all distances. O'Brien, who bypassed her college career, is 22. Women's 1500 winner Suzy Favor just completed her track eligibility at Wisconsin. Joe Falcon, the men's 1500 champ, is a year out of Arkansas. Men's 5000 runner-up Robert Kennedy is an Indiana undergraduate. Second-place steeplechaser Mark Croghan ran for Ohio State a year ago.

OLD NEWS from the masters mile: Larry Almberg set an American outdoor record of 4:12.24 at the Penn Relays (Philadelphia, April NATIONAL MASTERS NEWS reports that

Rod Dixon's plans have changed. The New Zealander won't try to break four minutes for the mile at Oslo on his 40th birthday in mid-July. Instead, he'll attempt to run that time later this month at an historic site: the track at Oxford, England, where Roger Bannister ran the first sub-four. "The pace at Oslo will be too fast," said Dixon, "and I'd be running virtually alone. I need to come by the half in around 2:00 with runners around me. Hopefully, the Oxford race will supply that."

YOU COME to this country, you play by our rules. Soviet women marathoners learned twice about strict enforcement practices this spring. First, Sirje Eichelman tested positive for steroids at the Los Angeles (see June RC). Then Revco-Cleveland (May 20th) disqualified first finisher Irena Scljarenko for receiving pacing and other help during the race from a male Soviet runner, a practice forbidden under TAC rules.

WHILE AMERICAN publications bemoan the shortage of Americans (men, anyway) upfront at our marathons, a major British source applauded the international look of the London finish. "The victory of a Scot, Allister Hutton, should be acknowledged," read a Times of London editorial. "But an Italian came second, a Spaniard third, and the first three women were Polish and American. There is pride in this internationalism."

OOPS! I may or may not have given Lisa Weidenbach the wrong London Marathon time (May RC). Most sources listed her at 2:28:15, tying her PR. I had her one second slower, the time favored by the sticklers for accuracy at Track & Field News. Wen-Shi Yu ran four spring marathons in a period of just 20 days, not 27 as noted in the June issue.

THANKS to Rich Saxton for planning my talk at the Butte-to-Butte clinic in Eugene. Added to my July schedule is a visit to Mike Manley's Eugene Experience camp from the 18th to 20th. August travels: Portland Marathon clinic on the 7th; Mountain View, California, Restoration Run on the 11th, and Crim Race in Flint, Michigan, on the 25th.

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Running Commentary

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Big, Bigger, Biggest

AMONG ITS MANY good works, TACSTATS acts as a census-taker for U.S. road racing. The numbers from last year's largest races are in, and once again they're up.

Linda Honikman writes in the record-keeping office's journal Tactimes, "You can sleep at night, knowing that running is still as popular as ever." Based on one set of figures, her conclusion might have read "...never more popular."

TACSTATS' most accurate findings come from the country's 100 biggest events. These numbers are easiest to collect and to compare for year-to-year trends.

First fact: These 100 races alone drew almost three-quarters of a million runners in 1989.

That count includes only the people who finished these races. It ignores the sometimes-inflated entry figures from race directors, ignores runners who can't or won't go the distance, and ignores bandits who don't pay their way.

First conclusion: No one can say with certainty what's happening to the nation's total running population, or for sure how many of these runners race at all. But we can say without a doubt that the Big 100 races have never been bigger.

Six events topped 20,000 finishers last year, one more than in 1988 as Honolulu's Great Aloha Run joined this club. The number of 10,000-plus fields jumped from 13 to 18 in that period. The 100th-place race, Dallas' White Rock Marathon, had the highest minimum qualifying number ever at 2852.

Second conclusion: Races of seven to 8-1/4 miles drew the best. As usual, two 12-K's—Bay to Breakers and Bloomsday—outdrew all others. The 8-1/4-mile Aloha Run climbed from seventh-place size to fourth in a year, and the seven-mile Bix race first cracked the top 10 last year.

The lineup for that 10 ("+" or "-" after the count indicates growth or shrinkage from 1988):

1. Bay to Breakers 12-K (San Francisco), 65,687+
2. Bloomsday 12-K (Spokane), 52,962-
3. Crescent City 10-K (New Orleans), 30,317+
4. Aloha 8-1/4-mile (Honolulu), 26,097+
5. New York City Marathon, 24,996+
6. Peachtree 10-K (Atlanta), 24,702-
7. Bolder Boulder 10-K, 22,962+
8. Bix 7-mile (Davenport), 14,224+
9. Capitol 10-K (Austin), 14,050-
10. Los Angeles Marathon, 13,398+

The Aloha Run grew fastest, with a 53-percent spurt in one year. Bay to Breakers suffered the largest loss, 11 percent. Note in the June RC that the San Francisco race shrunk again this year, and probably will lose its lead to Bloomsday in the next census.

Peachtree's minus is misleading because of the

25,000-runner entry limit in force both years. When the Atlanta race expands to 40,000 this year, it should become the nation's third-largest event and biggest 10-K.

No marathon will threaten New York City's lead anytime soon. Los Angeles still lagged far behind New York in percentage of finishers, 97 to 71, last year.

The other largest races by type: 5-K or thereabouts, Manufacturer's Hanover (New York City), 11,137... 8-K and 5-mile, Al's Run (Milwaukee), 12,107... 15-K and 10-mile, Cascade Run Off (Portland), 6145... 20-K and half-marathon, 500 Festival (Indianapolis), 6273... 15-mile and 25-K, Old Kent (Grand Rapids), 3152... women-only, L'eggs 10-K (New York City), 5686.

The fact that L'eggs dropped in size by eight percent and in overall standing by eight places between 1988 and '89 leads to the concluding conclusion: Any race that doesn't grow from year to year will go backward on this list.

Falcon's Five

I HAVE SEEN the future of U.S. men's 5000-meter racing. It suddenly looks brighter than at any time in 25 years.

No American has won an Olympic 5000 medal since Bob Schul and Bill Dellinger ran 1-3 at Tokyo in 1964. None has medaled yet at the World Championships. None except Sydney Maree has been world ranked since 1985, and he's really a South African.

Of the seven active Americans who have broken 13:20 at this distance, all are over 30. Many are pushing retirement age.

All lack one or the other of a would-be medalist's essential traits: the speed and sprint of a world-class miler, or the strength of a top 10,000 man who can weather the qualifying rounds and then hang onto the final's pace until the high-gear kick.

In the few seconds that it took young Joe Falcon to sprint away into the lead at the Prefontaine Classic (Eugene, June 1st), sunshine started to peek through the cloud that has hung over this event for a quarter-century. Falcon ran 13:20.49, the world's fastest time this year.

That time, soon to be eclipsed in Europe, was the least of his accomplishments. The fact that he ran the Pre 5000 at all, and the way he ran it, bode well for his and the country's future.

Joe Falcon had his 24th birthday in June. Though he has run only this one 5000 under 13:45, he blends well the speed and endur-

ance needed at this distance.

At the University of Arkansas, Falcon was fast enough to win NCAA championships in the 1500. He was strong enough to take titles in the 10,000.

Though his seven NCAA victories say otherwise, the knock against him is that he folds in big races. His detractors remember one bad race, the Olympic Trials 1500 where he finished a distant last.

But this meet had ended an exhausting year at school when he'd won at national cross-country, indoor and outdoor meets. He's out of school now, training more and racing less.

Last summer, Falcon ran a 3:51.07 mile. Very few milers have ever run faster, younger (Joe had just turned 23).

He still thinks of himself as a miler. Before the Pre meet, he told Neil Cawood of the Eugene Register-Guard, "I want to find out what a good 5000 is like. I'd like to move up to the 5000 in three or four years. Also, I may find out that I don't WANT to run it."

Doug Padilla and Steve Plasencia, both 33-year-old Olympians, wish Falcon a world of success—as a miler. Padilla joked, "From a selfish point of view, I'd like to see Steve and I gang up on him to make sure he has such an unpleasant experience that he'll go back to the 1500."

The race didn't go that way. With a lap left, Padilla was in no position to use his renowned kick.

Plasencia led, with Falcon at his shoulder. Falcon attacked with 300 meters left, and sprinted open a six-second gap in the next 40 seconds.

"To be honest," said Falcon, "I didn't feel that good"—but not in the way that American's best 5000 men might have hoped. "The pace was too slow for me."

If Joe Falcon represents a future of faster times and better finishes for U.S. 5000 men, those will have to wait. "This may be my best event," he said. "But I need to exhaust my potential in the mile first."

One Tough Mama

IT'S HARD for anyone to get to the top in this sport, harder to stay there and hardest to return there. The higher anyone has climbed, the more difficult it is to climb back—or to settle for anything less.

America's three most successful runners of the 1980s all are trying to reclaim old peaks. Alberto Salazar, Mary Slaney and Joan Samuelson all struggle against chronic injuries, growing families and the need to match old successes.

Salazar's multiple troubles began, coincidentally or not, with the birth of his two sons less than two years apart in the early 1980s. Alberto is

racing again but said in the June RC that he'll probably retire if he doesn't run a 28:30 or faster 10,000 this summer.

He won the Prefontaine Classic 10,000 in June. But his time of 29:09 still leaves him well off the target.

Slaney had daughter Ashley in 1986. Mary then missed both '87 and '89 with achilles injuries, and wasn't herself in the Olympic year.

She started racing again this June. As last qualifier for the TAC 1500 final with 4:18, she chose not to run it.

"People just think that I'm finished," Slaney tells Ron Bellamy of the Eugene Register-Guard, "If I felt I couldn't improve, it would be easy to stop. But I don't feel that way."

She added that "the only two things I want are to be a good mother and a good wife, and to get back to the level of competition that I want to be at."

Samuelson, who turned 33 in May, appeared to face the toughest climb of all. A back problem, linked to her first pregnancy in 1986, had limited her running efficiency ever since.

Last year, she endured a second pregnancy. Son Anders is now about six months old, and daughter Abigail hasn't yet reached her third birthday. Any mother will tell you that caring for two young children is more than twice as tough as having one.

"With two little ones," she says, "my priorities have changed. I feel like I'm running five marathons a day."

Yet here Samuelson is, flying to races with Anders in tow. She isn't just making token appearances but racing better than she has in five years.

Ridge Shannon, a writer for the magazine Masterpieces, interviewed Samuelson early in her return to the roads. Shannon reports that Joan won a Kansas City-area 10-K in 34:11, then "disappeared for a breast-feeding date with Anders at a nearby Holiday Inn."

She said in that May interview, "I knew I was pregnant about a year ago, when I toed the line in a local race and couldn't get any air. All of a sudden, I was gasping for breath, and I thought, 'Hmm, somebody else wants my oxygen today.'"

She ran throughout the pregnancy. Up to the fifth month, her long run was 15 miles. It then dropped to between six and 12 miles.

Four months after Anders' birth, Joan flew with him to Norway. She won a half-marathon in 1:12:38 (nearly matching her Kansas City 10-K pace for more than twice the distance).

Then they visited Green Bay, Wisconsin. Joan ran a 33:04 10-K there.

Then they traveled from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, for the Cascade Run Off 15-K. Joan placed sixth in 50:13 (that's 33-1/2 minute 10-K pace).

She'd earlier told Ridge Shannon, "Given my current status with my lower back and faulty mechanics, I really want those things ironed out before I start a dedicated training effort toward the 1992 Olympics."

Abigail's and Anders' mama must be getting her ironing done.

First Lady of Running

DORIS HERITAGE LIVES out the adage that what you once did counts less than what you keep doing. Heritage once won a wider variety of races than any woman of her era. She still serves running in more ways than almost anyone of either sex.

Thirty years ago, Doris was a distance runner caught in a sport that wouldn't yet let women run far. "Things were much different then," she says with considerable understatement.

"One reason I became a runner was that there weren't really any organized sports for women in the late 1950s. It's easier to run by yourself than to play soccer by yourself."

When she began racing, the distances didn't suit her. "In the Olympics, 200 meters was the longest race, and I was training five or 10 miles."

As Doris Brown, she qualified for the longest Olympic races then available: 800 meters in 1968 (she placed fifth at Mexico City) and the first 1500 for women in '72 (an injury kept her from competing at Munich). Her best track racing would have come between 3000 and 10,000 meters, but women wouldn't run this far at world meets until the 1980s.

Cross-country, even at distances much shorter than the current 6-K, suited Doris best. Between 1967 and '71, she won five straight World Championships—a feat unmatched by any woman or man.

Heritage, now 47, still runs. "I still enjoy it," she says, "and always want to run for the same reasons I started."

One of those reasons is the chance to race. "Things happen to you in a race that never happen anyplace else. When you put yourself on the line and expose yourself to the unknown, you learn things about yourself that are very exciting. There's no better way to learn them than by racing."

Injuries and other commitments now limit her to sporadic racing. But the talent is still there.

Doris holds the world masters mile record of 4:54.69, set in 1983. Two years ago, she won her age-group race at the National Masters Cross-Country meet.

Yet her own running now stands low on her priority ladder. She said near the end of her international racing career, "I definitely feel that those of us who've had the opportunities and experiences should pass this on, not only through coaching but by working within the governing structure.

"We shouldn't just stand around and gripe. We should get in there and contribute from what we've learned. Though it might be easier to remove myself from the sport, I really feel that if there's something I can do I should do it."

Heritage went to work coaching the women's track and cross-country teams at Seattle Pacific University, and remains there where she also teaches beginning-running classes. She worked within the AAU structure and continues working inside TAC. She became the first woman member of the IAAF cross-country and road running committee.

She campaigned for longer women's races internationally. As an assistant Olympic coach in 1984, she took charge of the first U.S. marathon team.

She says that her mission as a coach and official is "to give women more choices than I had at the start. I want them to have the opportunity to pursue goals that were not available to me at first."

For all that Doris Heritage did as a runner and keeps doing for running, TAC just voted her into its Hall of Fame. She's the first woman distance runner chosen, and the best possible first choice.

Golden Oldie

ACROSS THE DECADES flash images from the event that brought Ralph Hill here today. The videotape has rewound him back to 1932.

The scene: Los Angeles' first Olympics. The event: 5000 meters. The stars: Lauri Lehtinen of Finland and Hill from the United States.

Two ghost-like figures in grainy black-and-white race for the gold medal. Lehtinen leads as they enter the last straightaway.

But Hill looks stronger. The 24-year-old Oregonian tries to pass Lehtinen. The Finn won't allow it and veers into lane three to prevent it.

Hill breaks stride. He tries to pass again, on the inside this time.

Lehtinen cuts him off. Hill drops back, then makes a final charge that goes unimpeded.

Too late. He loses by centimeters as both men share a time of 14:30.0, an Olympic record.

The mostly American crowd showers the winner with boos. An announcer breaks in to plead, "Remember, these people are our guests." Results don't become final for two hours. Officials wait for Hill to file a protest that might have made him the gold medalist. He refuses, and later stands below Lehtinen to accept the silver.

Fast-forwarding to now, the hazy image of the young man on the screen switches to the real-life scene of an old man turning away from the screen after watching his 58-years-younger self. He stands beside the same University of Oregon track where he ran as a student.

Ralph Hill has come back to his old school today to have a track meet renamed in his honor. It used to be called the "Last Chance Meet," an ironic touch since his chances to be remembered are so few.

History doesn't treat silver medalists kindly, even those who lose by the time it takes to blink. How much different Hill's life might have been if he'd cried "foul" that day in Los Angeles.

Yet Hill appears certain that he made the right decision 58 years ago. He betrays no bitterness over his lost gold, and he displays the silver medal as proudly as if it were one better.

Today, he brought it with him to Eugene. At home in Klamath Falls, he doesn't lock the medal in a bank vault but keeps it on a coffee table for guests to see.

Now 82, Hill has retired from a lifetime of farming. His back remains straight, his gaze

steady, his mind sharp.

Another ex-Oregon runner with the same last name, unrelated Jim Hill, introduces himself to Ralph. The elder Hill says, "Oh yes, you ran..." and then recites Jim's racing highlights from the early 1980s that only a close follower of the sport would know.

Ralph attended the 1984 Olympics, his first since running in the same Los Angeles stadium. He recalls, "My son tried to talk me out of going. He said that the trip would cost too much. I told him, 'I've waited 52 years for this, and I'm not going to miss my chance.'"

Hill's own running ended early. Farm work gave him more than ample activity.

He contracted polio at age 44. The disease gnarled his hands and weakened his shoulders, but spared his legs.

"Now I get my exercise by dancing," says Hill. The friend who drove Ralph to Eugene calls this man who has outlived two wives "the most popular dance partner at the senior center."

He acts as if he would enjoy the party at Hayward Field just as much even if it weren't in his honor. He looks the way you would want one of the oldest living U.S. Olympic medalists to look.

Magic Numbers

GEORGE SHEEHAN is a better runner in his 70s than he was in his teens. He has found a way to roll back the clock which says he's slowing with age.

Last year, Sheehan returned to "the race of my youth." He ran 800 meters at World Veterans Championships, placing seventh in his age group with 2:48.

George wrote in a Runner's World column, "Later, when I was flying home, I went through the tables that grade performances by age. How did my 2:48 compare with the half-miles I ran at Brooklyn Prep? A little calculation showed that my mark in Eugene was the equivalent to breaking two minutes, something I could never do in high school."

The World Association of Veteran Athletes and National Masters News created statistical tables which revalue times according to the runner's age. Multiplying a time by an age-grading factor instantly cancels the penalties of aging.

Runners can begin earning time bonuses at age 35, and these increase with each birthday thereafter. The booklet Masters Age-Graded Tables (\$5.95 from NMN, Box 2372, Van Nuys, CA 91404) contains these magic numbers.

Sheehan's number for last year's 800 race was .7083, meaning the tables blamed about 30 percent of his time on age and forgave that much. His mark then equaled a young runner's 1:59.

Age-grading can relieve two problems in masters running: the inevitable and often depressing slowdown with age, and the confusion with age-group awards. These tables give runners a way to improve indefinitely, and they give races a way to award fewer but more meaningful prizes.

Let's look at the second problem first. When publications list masters winners, these usually mention only the leading men and women in their early 40s. Older masters get too little credit.

The opposite problem is giving some masters TOO MUCH credit. The size of age groups and the quality of their performances vary widely, yet most races give all groups the same number and type of prizes. This practice inflates a race's costs and drags out its awards program.

Age-grading can streamline the awarding. National Masters News editor Al Sheahan writes, "In a track meet, medals can be awarded for each event rather than for each five-year age division in each event. In a road race, medals and recognition can go to the best performers, regardless of age."

Statistics exist for scoring open runners with masters and women with men in a single set of results. That pushes handicapping too far. We still need to reward overall leaders of each sex separately.

Races still can profit, both logistically and competitively, by reducing the masters groupings to two: men and women. A computer can factor in each person's age and spew out converted times in place order.

Top masters times become incredible under this system: Evy Palm's 2:31:05 marathon at age 47 converts to a world women's record of 2:16:35... John Campbell's 2:11:04 at 41 drops to a world best of 2:05:04... Marion Irvine 40-minute 10-K at 59 is worth 31:43, a time few young American women have bettered... Norm Green's 33-minute time at 57 carries a value of 27:22, matching the world road mark.

But you don't have to be world-class, or even stand to win a local masters prize, to put the age-graded scoring tables to work. If you can read a chart and punch a calculator, you can roll back the penalties of the years.

Room to Roam

TRY TO PULL the ground out from under a runner, and you'll hear howls of protest. I voiced mine 12 years ago in the hill country south of San Francisco, and the alarm is sounding there again.

I once helped conduct weekly fun-runs in Los Altos Hills, California. A group ran there every Sunday morning, and by 1978 it had grown large enough to interfere with traffic.

Runners three and four abreast on the narrow, winding roads forced drivers to slow, swerve or stop to avoid accidents. Complaints prompted town leaders to consider limiting running there.

A news item at the time read, "Los Altos Hills could be the first community in the nation to run joggers out of town. An ordinance to be considered by the city council could ban jogging altogether for two or more people running together on any improved roadway."

When the council met to act on this proposal, runners packed the hall. Network TV recorded the debate.

But the matter never came to a vote. Instead, the politicians agreed to let the runners go

unregulated if we would agree to use the roads in a more orderly and mannerly fashion.

This unwritten agreement let the Sunday fun-runs continue unmolested. They've now lasted 17 years at the same site.

A few miles away, though, echoes of the old problem can be heard. Heavily used trails snake through these hills, and runners aren't their only users.

While visiting there last summer (see August 1989 RC), I heard that a new conflict pits hikers against runners. The walkers complain that the thundering herd monopolizes the trails.

Like the drivers before them, hikers overreact to run-ins with a few thoughtless runners and seek restrictions on us all. Like the road runners before them, trail runners interpret any limit as a threat to ban all running.

As before, public officials tend to view runners as intruders into space intended for other purposes. These trails pass through a regional open-space district, whose members have been heard to comment:

"Runners are lower-priority users because they are not on the trails to enjoy and observe nature like hikers are."

"Runners don't have to run on trails. They can run on roads and tracks."

"Runners get into oxygen debt and get out of control [on the trails]. Runners work too hard and drop dead of heart attacks."

One board member noted that "runners had never been involved in or concerned with trail issues." The threat of having this ground pulled out from under them involved them in a hurry.

"If runners as a group don't protect their rights," says Marc Lund in the West Valley Track Club newsletter, "trail running may become severely restricted in the future."

Last June, runners in that area formed a committee to fight the action. Lund reports that a petition drive "at least convinced the open-space district to delay implementing its guidelines." None are yet written.

Despite claims of non-involvement by runners, Mark Winitz has served as an advisor on trail-use policies for several years and run these trails even longer. Winitz, who edits the magazine RunCal, thinks the problem can be solved peacefully.

"An outright ban on runners is highly unlikely," he says. "There are 30,000 acres in this district, and very few hotspots where overcrowding is a problem. What it really comes down to is education and etiquette."

As this area's road runners did earlier, the trail runners must learn to share space in an orderly and mannerly fashion—or risk losing the right to use it at all.

Issues and Answers

PARTY TIME. On the continuing saga of awards programs (May RC article, with responses in June), George Sheehan writes from Red Bank, New Jersey: "I have come to think the distribution of awards, and especially age-group awards is unnecessary. Posting times is much more important, since it involves everyone. At a recent race, there was a table where I picked up my award—but no ceremony.