

Running commentary

By Charlie Kanzig
Correspondent

Imagine choosing one out of every two people who currently reside in Bend, Oregon, outfitting them in running gear and sending them out on a 7.4-mile course around the city. Do this, and you have an idea of just how many people take part in the Bloomsday Run, which has taken place every year in Spokane, Washington, since 1977.

At its peak the race, originally known as the Lilac Bloomsday, attracted 62,000 runners, while the 2019 edition included an estimated 41,000 finishers, including a handful with ties to Sisters.

The numbers have grown steadily since the inaugural race in 1977 of about 1,000 runners, which was directed by Spokane native and Olympic marathoner Don Kardong, who finished fourth in the 1976 Summer Games, just three seconds behind the bronze medalist.

Forty-three Bloomsdays later, Kardong has announced that the 2019 event would be his last as director.

I watched the race from the sidelines, hoping to catch a glimpse of my wife, Deirdre, and her sister Holly among the throngs of runners. The race starts in waves, so runners are passing by constantly for about two hours. Elite women are the first off the line, providing them a chance to be showcased on

the course before the rest of the racers. Elite in this case means “world class” as exemplified by the first woman to finish, Rosemary Wanjiru of Kenya, who maintained a pace of 5:17 per mile to cross the line in 39:07, while the men’s winner Gabriel Geay of Tanzania held a pace of 4:42 per mile for a finish time of 34:50.

For perspective, those paces are more than twice the speed of the average runner at Bloomsday.

To be clear, it wasn’t just the superfast runners who intrigued me, but rather the sheer volume of humanity moving past on their feet and in their wheelchairs. Think of the total caloric output, the gallons of sweat, the total amount of money spent on shoes!

At one point my eyes wearied from watching the constant motion, so I looked up in the sky for a moment and experienced an optical illusion of the clouds racing across the sky in the opposite direction.

People as old as 90 and as young as five or six passed by in every shape and size. Costumes included a T-Rex, a mermaid and a cowboy. Some people wore big smiles while other faces showed doubt or seemed to be asking, “Why didn’t I train a bit more?”

Eighty-nine people in the race have run in every single Bloomsday since its inception. That’s loyalty and dedication.

The spirit of this race is one of community. Local musical bands of many varieties lined the course every few hundred meters: jazz on one street corner, gospel on the next. Even a teen garage band got into the act. Onlookers gave high fives, cheered wildly for loved ones and offered words of encouragement for the stragglers.

After the race people gathered near a fountain and swapped stories of their struggle up “Doomsday Hill,” of losing track of a friend among the throng, and of the satisfaction of doing something hard before brunch.

Did Kardong ever imagine this race would grow to such proportions that it would take 5,000 volunteers to make Bloomsday happen? Most race directors would be happy to have one-tenth of that number actually running the race.

I appreciate that at least one aspect of the race has remained like the “old days.” In an era where entry fees have become exorbitant, reaching into triple figures, Bloomsday charges just \$22 — which includes a T-shirt! Corporate sponsors and the sheer volume of entrants help keep the costs down, but I sincerely appreciate that greed has not crept into this event as it has in so many others. Proceeds from the race go to local charities, not to line the director’s pockets.

I was in the absolute peak of my running when



PHOTO BY CHARLIE KANZIG

Bloomsday: Running among thousands.

Bloomsday was in its infancy and always wanted to compete in it. After being there in person for the first time, as a spectator no less, I felt that pull again and will consider giving it a go myself

regardless of age and race-readiness. Kardong clearly made this a “race for the people” while also allowing for the elites.

He ought to feel quite satisfied about that legacy.

Golfers compete at District Tourney

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

Sisters boys golf squad competed at the District Tournament held at the Tokatee Golf Course on Monday and Tuesday, May 6 and 7. Marist was the tournament champ with a team score of 617, almost 100 strokes better than runner-up Woodburn, who finished at 716. Stayton was third at 722.

The Tokatee Golf Course was in perfect condition for the two-day event, and the temperature was 80 degrees and the best weather the golfers have seen all year.

Coach Bill Mitchell said,

See GOLF on page 22