

Run: Storm's high winds damaged stage, tents

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One of the last groups to leave Mount Hood, Garnett and his teammates crossed the finish line in Seaside at 1:30 p.m.

Tony Martinez, a Spanish citizen, and Joe Jamaze of Germany represented an international team. They waited at the finish in front of the Shilo Inn on the Prom with iPhones and selfie sticks, waiting for their teammates to cross the line.

Small beginnings

Runner Bob Foote conceived and founded the Hood to Coast Relay in 1982 with eight teams and has filled the team cap on the opening day of registration for the last 17 years straight. Organized by the Seaside Chamber of Commerce and Gold sponsors, which include Providence Health & Services, Nike, Widmer Brothers Brewing, Dick's Sporting Goods, Mazda, LED Lenser and GNC.

Huntington's 12-person team was largely comprised of runners from Portland, San Francisco and Seattle. His teammate Katie Woodward said she had run a previous event in 2006.

At the finish line Saturday afternoon, fans awaited runners to complete the challenge. Selfie-sticks and group shots, medals and T-shirts made it all worthwhile for the participants.

Woodward shrugged off the difficulty level. "It was more bonding than hard," she said.

While the beloved Seaside Chamber of Commerce beer garden was halted due to high winds on the beach, most racers planned to recharge after the race at one of Seaside's local watering spots with teammates and friends.

"We're looking to have a great time in scenic Seaside!" runner Garnett said.

This Portland-based team celebrated their finish on Broadway Street in Seaside.

R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian



Katherine Lacaze/EO Media Group

The scene on the beach after high winds dismantled the Hood to Coast stage and tents.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Tony Martinez traveled from Spain to participate in the Hood to Coast Relay and his teammate, Joe Jamaze, from Germany. They were at the finish line on the Prom waiting for their teammates to cross the line.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Matt Garnett, Sarah Anderson and Robin Hefner after finishing the Hood to Coast Relay.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

"Sasquatch," with teammates Travis Huntington, Katie Woodward and Mandy Meyer.



Submitted Photo

Runners made it to the finish line at the Hood to Coast Relay, but not to the beach.

Firestine: She managed the Marine Force Protection Program in Washington, D.C.

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Meanwhile, kayakers from Cathedral Park below the bridge blockaded the river.

The state and city turned to the Coast Guard, which is tasked with keeping inland marine highways open for commerce. Representatives from Portland fire and police agencies; county and state police; a representative from the U.S. State Department and the Coast Guard planned a joint response.

"You don't want to create some type of situation where you have two agencies in a tug of war," Firestine said.

Everyone operated under an incident command system, a standardized response protocol to emergencies providing a hierarchy for different agencies to be effective.

Portland and Multnomah County handled the removal of protesters hanging from the

bridge, Firestine said, while the Coast Guard and other marine patrols cleared kayakers. By law, large commercial vessels have right-of-way over recreational watercraft. The protest, Firestine said, was blocking multiple vessels from moving down the river.

The operation went off without much of a hitch. The Fennica left 12 hours after its scheduled departure, the protesters were removed, no major injuries were reported and only two arrests were made.

"It's perfectly legal to protest activity you don't believe in," Firestine said. "We were trying to give the activists a place to have their say, while keeping the transportation waterway open."

Paying bills

Firestine, from a small town called Sayre, Pa., was an eighth-grade social studies teacher in Rose, N.Y., near

Lake Huron before she joined the Coast Guard in 1991. When a recession in the early 1990s led to her position being cut, Firestine, then 23, saw an opportunity to join, keep paying her student loans and hopefully keep teaching.

Firestine has served on cutters and at stations. She came to Sector Columbia River from Coast Guard headquarters in Washington, D.C., where she managed the Marine Force Protection Program.

Firestine has helped respond to two similar shipping protests. People on surfboards, canoes and kayaks formed a blockade in Nawiliwili Harbor in Kauai, Hawaii, to prevent entry of the Hawaii Superferry, a short-lived island shuttle service. Firestine said the Coast Guard eventually cleared the way by creating a First Amendment zone in a swimming area near the harbor. She also worked during protests in the Port of Tacoma, Wash., about the

shipment of Stryker military vehicles to Iraq.

"In all these situations, we're working with the local law enforcement, except we bring that authority to keep

the waterway open," Firestine said, adding it is about safety, as well as commerce. "I'm always scared someone's going to get injured or killed."

— Edward Stratton

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