

LT. J.C.STONE | 50KM | PITTSBURGH, PA | MARCH 19

AMAZING STORIES

by Lou D'Angelo, RD

The day was perfect, starting out clear and cold with pre-race temperatures in the mid 30s. And there it stayed. It actually seemed to get colder as the sun came out. Maybe it was just the wind. But there was sunshine, and so with the sunshine to their backs and the wind to their faces, the largest field of runners in the four-year history of the event were about to start on the 50-km trek that would take them six times around North Park Lake.

Sixty ultrarunners toed the starting line, ranging in age from 21 to 69, from as far away as California and as close as just over the hill from North Park. They represented five states and a wide range of expectations for the day.

A lead was established by Andrew Bartle, and the discussion became focused on whether the winner from last year could hold his pace and keep the lead. Chaz Connolly, Doug Basinski (winner of 2009 event) and Benjamin English were running strong and fast, ready to seize any opportunity that Andrew might offer. But Andrew was having a good day and staying very strong, opening up a larger and larger lead through four laps. He then went on to a repeat victory and took seven minutes off of his 2010 winning time. In the process he set a new course record of 3:21:56. Connolly secured second, running an outstanding time of 3:32. Basinski took third. Bob Pokorny, who just turned 50, celebrated his new age group with the masters win.

Meanwhile, the ladies were busy getting this race going and at the 6.1-mile mark it looked like three-time winner Connie Gardner had her sights set on victory number four. Stacy Kopchak (who ran 4:16:25 in 2010) was running very strong and putting in consistent laps. If Connie gave her an opening, Stacy was in good position to take advantage of it. Stacy began to close the gap on her fifth lap, making up some time, but Connie had found her pace and went on to a 3:59:24 finish. Sabine Kane was our masters winner in 4:17:56.

The ultramarathon is not just about winning. It's about the opportunity to face a physical challenge that few attempt. Each of our 59 finishers represents their own unique and individual story, every one of them testimony to the dedication and hard work that it takes to set a goal and to run across that finish line. This year we had a visit from Jim Simpson, 69, who finished his 786th marathon/ultra with us; he has



How a few Penn State students spent the weekend

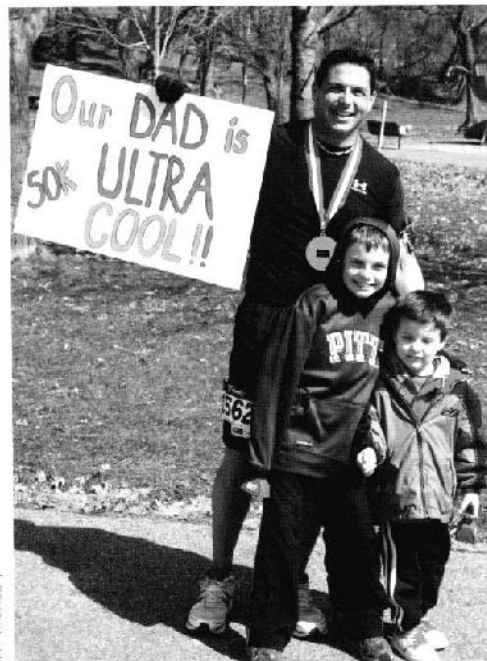
done a marathon in all 50 states, 11 times. We had an ex-military runner who is planning a run-across-America as a fundraiser for The Wounded Warrior Project, a couple of 21-year-old Penn State students who picked one heck of a way to spend a Saturday, brother and sister runners - LuAnn and Chris, father and daughter

runners - Terry and Laura, a former Miss Pennsylvania, a nervous husband whose wife was due with their baby in two weeks. Yes, there were a lot of interesting and amazing stories out there on the course. ■

60 starters/59 finishers



Andrew Bartle, two-time winner and course record holder



Who's inspiring whom?

JEFF GLEASON

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