

Featured Runner of the Month – September, 2008

Gene Black

Editor's note: Gene Black is a five-time WCC Age Group winner and appears to be on his way to an unprecedented sixth WCC Age Group title in 2008.

Our featured runner this month is the ever popular Gene Black. Gene is a long-time farmer in the Camden, Ohio area and is also a long-time runner. He runs as though he's much younger than his age. Gene graciously took a few minutes out of his busy schedule to share his thoughts on running and how he has managed to remain an active runner over the years.

You've been a runner for many years. When did you first begin running? Did anyone in particular inspire you as a runner?

GB: I began running in 1984. No one really inspired me. To be honest, I didn't know anything about running at that time. We saw the Cincinnati Mini Heart advertised on TV. At the time, I weighed 178 lbs. and couldn't tie my shoes without holding my breath. We (Sandy & I) said ... "If we start today, we could do that next year." That was the beginning of it all.

What type of training do you do (roads or trails)? How many miles do you try to run each week (approximate)? Do you have a favorite place (or time) to train?

GB: I do most of my training on the trails at Hueston Woods State Park. I normally run about 25 miles each week. I try to run 2-3 races each week and fill in the rest with runs at the park. My favorite training runs are the evening runs at Hueston Woods on the trails.

It is well known that much of your training is simply running in the races. Approximately how many races do you run each year? Do you have one in particular that's a favorite? Of the WCC races, do you have a favorite (or non-favorite) event and why?

GB: I try to run 65-70 races each year.....sometimes more, sometimes less. My overall favorite is the Brunner Farm 5K run near Troy, Ohio, in the spring. It's a great event that is well-managed and always a good experience.

Really.....any trail run is a favorite for me. I really don't have a favorite WCC race. They're all quality events with great people involved in each one.

Do you remember the first race that you ran in? Over the years, what has been your most memorable race from a positive aspect?

GB: The first race that I ran was the Liberty Freedom Run in 1984. My first 50 miler was the most memorable. That's a race where you ask yourself, "Can I really do this?"

If you were to give advice to a beginning runner, what might that advice be?

GB: Have fun!!!!!! Don't make it seem like a job! Enjoy the friendship of all of your fellow runners. They are great people!!!!!!

As a runner, in general, how has this activity benefited you in your everyday life? Have you seen any setbacks (injuries) as a result? Farming is a very physical occupation.....has your running been a benefit or a liability?

GB: You just feel better about everything. You can be having a bad day.....just pull on the shoes, run a few miles and you'll be amazed at how much better you feel both physically & mentally. I've managed to stay injury free for as long as I've been running (good fortune, I guess). Running has been a great benefit to me as I've been able to stay in good physical condition and I've met some wonderful people along the way.

The WCC thanks you, Gene, for graciously taking the time to share your running insights with us. Your success is an inspiration to all of us runners (and non-runners alike). Continue to stay healthy and inspiring to all of us for many years to come.

This interview was conducted by Dale Bolser for the WCC.
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