

Featured Runner – October, 2010

Richard (Dick) Smith

Our next featured runner is Dick Smith.

When did you become a runner? What motivates you to run?

In the early 70s, teaching at Marietta College, I played handball MWF with a former Marine colonel who ran on the other days. At some point, I started running with him in tennis shoes. We probably did about 2 or 3 miles. Then I started running more. When he left for another job, my running picked up. In 1974, my first race was a 10-miler in Williamstown WV (next to last with an 8:00 pace), then the 15-mile Charleston Distance Run two months later. I've almost always had running buddies -- Bob Bardee, Dave Boyer and George Banziger in Marietta; Jack McJunkin when I first came to Richmond, Steve Heiny ... it makes running so much easier and much more likely to happen.

How many miles do you typically log each week?

I try to run most mornings, plus the RWC Saturday morning run. I average 20-30 miles per week. About half the mileage is on Saturday morning.

You also swim on a regular basis. How does that enhance your running efforts? How much swimming do you log each week?

Well, there is the obvious cardio-pulmonary carry-over but probably not much more. Swimming -- especially for me -- is 95% upper body. In the ideal world, I'd like to have Gary and Johan beat up on me four noons per week, but it tends to be 3 days (at most). We do about 2,000 meters each noon. I age up this swim season and hope to get in more mileage, work permitting. I'm really much better in the water than on the road. There are some unbelievable swimmers in the US and in Europe in my events. Sometimes they don't swim those events in the year in which I have a good swim, then I get some US and FINA top tens in my age group. I once (2006) had a #1 world ranking in the 1500 meter freestyle when the good swimmers swam the 800 at the world championships and didn't swim any 1500s.

What's the best & worst thing about running for you?

Give me a cool morning and it's great. As I said earlier, the best thing and the real motivator is having a good running buddy and running group like RWC.

Do you have an especially memorable moments as a runner (. . . good, bad, funny, etc.)?

Several things come to mind. One of my Marietta buddies went vegetarian. Inevitably at about 6 miles, he'd head to the bushes. One snowy day, he did and his bright red stocking cap got snagged on a branch and was waving in the breeze like a flag when three cars went by while he was in a crouch.

The best decision that I ever made in a race was in the Columbus Marathon. I developed a blister in the first mile doing the dodge and weave. By 18, it was really bad and I stepped onto the curb. My pace group (trying to hold 6:30s) all fell apart in the final 8 miles and failed to break 3:00. I've never regretted that DNF.

You often participate in triathalons. Any thoughts on cycling and how it fits your fitness program?

I think that there is a strong carryover from biking to running. Not so much the other way. One year in Seattle, I raced against a cyclist who was in my age group. I was doing about 50-60 a week, he did 15 and biked a few hundred. In 1986, I did a real wipe-out in the Earlham tri on the bike which has made me a little leery ever since. I did a lot of tris in the late 80s but didn't hit them hard again until this past summer when I aged up. I need to get on the bike next year and join the evening CFW group rides. Time is the problem but I'm working on solving that.

Do you have a favorite or memorable race and why?

Probably my best race was the old Columbus 15K in 1977 (the ancestor to the current marathon). There was a half-way turnaround and I realized that I was in the top five. I didn't stay there but I did hold a sub-6 pace.

The Bourbon Chase last year in Hoosier Daddies Van #2 was an obvious highlight.

The Memorial Day Bolder Boulder 10K is just an incredible race -- 55,000+ runners/joggers/walkers. The waves start at 7 a.m. and the last wave leaves at 9:30 a.m.

What advice would you offer to a beginning runner?

First, the old Plato advice, "Moderation in all things." Never increase the long run by more than a mile or two every two weeks. Second, "Listen to your body." Especially as I've aged, keeping the workload reasonable means that you seem to avoid injuries and enjoy it more. Finally, find a running partner and also do the RWC thing on Saturday mornings. When I moved to Richmond in 1985, the Saturday morning group was already going -- George Sowers, Russ Peterson, Bruce Sanger, Jay Butler and others. We met at the Glen Miller playground at 8 and decided what to do. It is just great that Bob has expanded it and gives us the variety of courses. There was also a Wednesday night summer fun run in the park, sponsored by Athletic Annex (the Dunings). Again, it is great that Pat Thomas has kept that going and improved it. With Bob, Pat and the CFW, Richmond is just a great place to train.

What are your goals as a runner?

Staying healthy and enjoying it as long as I can. I would really love to do the Pikes Peak Ascent (half-marathon distance). It's fun being the oldest person in the race (my last two triathlons) and still finish fairly high overall. One tri guy keeps talking up new bikes and nationals ... we'll see.

This interview was conducted by Dale Bolser for the WCC.

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