

The Empire Runner

KENWOOD FOOTRACE 2011



Well, here it is, the end of July and it all seems like a blur that this year's race is already over. Months of planning and preparation for an event that is over within just a few hours.

This year was no different than most with new ideas floating in my head many months in advance. It is my goal to improve on the race each year until someone steps up with newer and better ideas, wanting to take it over. With the recent addition of Dri-tech shirts and Chip Timing the race had stepped up into the 21st century. This year's race however marked a special goal, it's 40th Anniversary. I wanted to do something commemorative for the event without snowballing the workload. I started thinking about all of the things that make the Kenwood Footrace a special tradition for so many of us. The Pancake breakfast, the Parade, the Pillow fights (or lack of), the knarly 10k course, the narrow 3k course, the pint glasses, "God Bless the USA" over the PA system, the National

Anthem, the hometown feeling that takes us back in time, the great course monitors and all of the folks cheering us on to the finish line. One of the many memories I have is of **Bob Shor** raising his pistol to the sky and guiding us to a timely start. I have known Bob for many years and appreciate all of the time he puts in to this sport. After last years race I started thinking about ways to celebrate this year and it suddenly came to me. What could be more iconic? More 4th of July? Uncle Sam, of course! However, not just any Uncle Sam, I envisioned a caricature of Bob replicating the original Uncle Sam poster. Something like "I Want You Kenwood Footrace". So there it was, the concept was born. After some searching I found a San Francisco based caricature artist who created a design of incredible likeness.



One benefit of being a race director is that you get a good lesson in delegating. Of course my family would tell you that delegating is not exactly one of my short comings but it is difficult at times to let people take on the responsibility, having faith that they will come through at the end. Thankfully we have an amazing group of dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers that come back year after year.

For many years Doug Courtemarche and the Santa Rosa High School XC team has been working the finish line and aid stations. Now that we have the Chip Timing crew at the line, Doug and his group can focus on the aid tables and course monitoring. **Bob Finlay** was finally able to take a much needed break on the 4th and turn over the job of traffic to **John Harmon, Luis Rosales** and the Piner XC team. With Bob's guidance on the 3rd for setup and John's work on the new bestseller "Traffic Control for Dummies" everyone felt comfortable and ready for the task. I decided to bring on Piner XC for the traffic duty for a donation much like what we do for Santa Rosa XC. This way I wouldn't have to search for volunteers and the team could earn some much needed \$.



Traffic control: Luis Rosales and the Piner Cross Country Team

Probably the biggest change this year was the switch to on-line only registration. I really had no idea how it would go over. Runners have been registering last minute at Fleet Feet for many years and were used to that routine. I felt after talking to other race directors that this was the next step for this race so I took the plunge. In 2010 we had 600 on-line registrations and this year I was hoping to double. We also set a tiered registration price that gave folks the opportunity to save money while testing the price increase waters. It worked perfectly. About half of the folks signed up early and the other half put more money in the bank. Thanks to **Chris Mason** and to **Jerry Lyman** for guiding me through this process.

I felt that I had a lofty goal this year. Save money, make more money. Give more money away. In 2010 the Club made roughly \$10,500 after all expenses. Anything more than that I would be happy. But secretly I had a number. \$15,000 was my goal.

The last two weeks before registration closed my nerves were beginning to fry. The downside of on-line registration is that you can check the status often to track how things are going. This is not a good thing. I often found myself leaving the house just to get away from the computer. It wasn't until the first track meet on June 14th that we had made enough money on registrations to break even. I was somewhat relieved at this point that we wouldn't lose money although we needed over 400 registrations to hit my goal with only 14 days left.

I am not sure why I don't trust that the trend that I have been watching every year. I shouldn't be surprised, especially in this economy, why people wait until the very last minute. In the 2nd to last week we had 119 folks sign up which got us a bit closer to our goal and a staggering 400 sign up in the last five days. So, I went from thinking we wouldn't make money to thinking we may run out of everything. I was ready for a vacation from the madness.

In-store packet pickup went off without a hitch. Thank you to our volunteers who gave up their valuable time to help out. **Dave, Kathy and Brian Goodwin, Karen Frindell, Shirley Fee, Renee Garvin, Pam Horton, Jen and Will Ortlinghaus, Vernon Stafford, Nate Koch, Brad Zanetti, Steve Cryer, Andrea**

Guzman, Ty Strange, Tanya Narath, Bill Rogers, Nuvit Foster, Alyce Parks, Tori Meredith and Shelly Lydon.



Volunteers Brad, Will, Vernon and Steve at packet pickup

Race day is my favorite part and once setup is done I get to stand back and enjoy the morning. I was even able to run the 3k for the first time. I wasn't confident enough to run the 10k but felt I could sneak away for a few minutes. With Pete Sweeney doing his announcing gig and our very own **Sara Downing** singing a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem the day was officially beginning. **Carl Jackson** arranged for the very first Kenwood 10k winner from 1972 to come out and be interviewed from Pete. Doug Rustad finished in 34:14 that year and seemed thrilled to be a part of such a great tradition 40 years later.



I was very excited for the 10K race this year. Jeff Jackson was returning after running a 66-minute half marathon just two weeks prior. There was a lot of talk of the course record possibly being broken. **Kevin Jones**, currently living in Oklahoma, set the current record of 31:06 in 1986. Kevin was all too ready to see his record go down and was cheering Jeff on through the Kenwood Facebook page. Reese Byers, a Sophomore at Sac State would be pushing the pace looking for a best time while Jaimie Silva, a Junior from Piner HS XC was expected to set a big PR after a successful track season. Julia Stamps (3k record holder and SRHS standout) would be racing her first Kenwood 10k just 5 months after the birth of her second baby. **Catherine Dubay** would no doubt put in the challenge for all the women while representing the Masters group.



In the 3K, the Petaluma Boys XC team would set out to prove that summer training works. Kevin Poteracke took top billing in the 3k in 9:32 with teammate Alexi Taylor hanging on to his boot strings in 9:34. **Guy Schott** (47), placed 6th overall proving that age matters while senior runner **Don Stewart**, placed an impressive 7th overall despite entering a new age group (50-54). He will be one to watch in the upcoming XC season. Victoria Tomaszewski (16) running for Windsor HS would take the honors in 11:29 ahead of yours truly in 11:42. **Dale Leyhe** (80), and **Roger Anawalt** (91) completed yet another 10k and 3k respectively and were the oldest finishers of the day.

While the last of the 3k runners were tricking in, a glimpse of the first 10k finisher could be seen in the distance. We already knew that the record would not be taken this year but a good finish is always exciting to see. Jeff Jackson made it worth the wait and edged out Reese Byers by 6 seconds at the line for a solid time of 32:45. **Gerald McCormick** held his own for 3rd leading 16-year-old Piner runner Jaime Silva to a PR of 34:31. **John Litzenburg** earned top masters honors placing 7th overall. John holds the record of 20 top 10 wins for the 10k. That is 10 more than anyone in history.



In the women's race, former SRHS standout **Julia Stamps Mallon** would run the 10k for the first time, taking the victory in 38:05. **Nicole Lane** (16) would take 2nd and best personal finish while building her confidence for the upcoming XC season. Veteran **Catherine Dubay** led the master women and took 3rd overall with a time of 41:20 for 3rd place. Catherine also holds the record for the most top ten finishes and has been the 10k champion 8 times.



As always most of us read this and are inspired to train harder, run faster and are looking toward next year with the aspirations of a faster finishing time. But the true grit of the race is in the stories of accomplishments of being a first time finisher. Maybe you were running in honor of someone, maybe you were helping to inspire a fellow runner. No matter what reason it was I witnessed it all while standing at the finish line. Nothing can compare to a huge smile on the face of a youngster who finished his first 3k. Priceless!



A big thank you to everyone who crawled out of bed at the crack of dawn to help on race day, **John Anderson, Brad Zanetti, Laurie Martin, Jim Parks, Mark and Orion James, Lori Barekamn, Dale Peterson, Cindy and Jerry Roach, Paul Berg, Brad Illings, Gil Moreno, Bob Shor, Susan Kelleher, Dave DeSelle, Pam Horton, Karen Kissick, Larry and Tori Meredith, Troy Tuscher, Alex Wolf-Root, Nate Koch, Bob Finlay and John Harmon.** You all bring such enthusiasm and genuine love for the event that it really does translate into the Empire Runners building a reputation that is second to none.



Part of the
setup crew: L to R:
Nate, GP CZAR,
Puddles, Secretary,
Coach and Mrs.
Puddles

My mind is already spinning with ideas for next year. Maybe a free breakfast for all entrants? How about a corporate division? Maybe a \$\$ incentive to bring in more competition for faster times? I welcome and encourage all ideas to make 2012 even better. Email me with your comments and suggestions.

I would like to thank our sponsors, Fleet Feet Sports of Santa Rosa, New Balance, Kathy's Camp for Kids, Wild Birds Unlimited, Starkweather Massage, KZST, Kenwood Winery, Chateau St. Jean Winery, Culligan Water and North Bay Portables.

I recently looked at the many photos that were taken by **Dave DeSelle** and **Jerry Moreno**, most intently at the award ceremony pictures. Loads of hugs and smiles that prove the quality and pure enjoyment this event brings. Look for them on the website on the photos page. Until next time, run happy.

Val Sell