



The Long and Short of It – DM Peterson

Brave New World

Not many years ago a club race was a club race. Everybody in attendance pretty much knew everyone else except for the occasional newbie or out of towners. Now, that is not to say that everyone was best friends with all of the other runners but everyone seemed to at least recognize the faces if not the names of most everyone else. Everyone seemed to be *acquainted*.

I'm not talking about Kenwood which for as long as I remember was pretty good sized and seemed to attract a large cross-section of runners. Ilsanjo too has always been a pretty "large" race. But the other club races some of which are now extinct seemed to be just that, primarily *club* races. I don't pretend to have any numbers to back this up, but it sure seems like our club races used to be fairly small affairs full of runners who were acquainted with each other.

Whether my memory serves me or not, I think it is safe to say that our race numbers are way up these past few years. There seems to be a legitimate running-boom going on across the nation in general and in Sonoma County in particular. This local boom has been fueled in no small part by the various running stores and their associated training programs.

It used to be that if you saw a large number of folks out on a training run they would either be Empire Runners or maybe members of the local triathlon club IE the Tri-Dogs. At any rate, these were either people you knew or had seen around. Now you may find that the large group bearing down on you contains not a single familiar face.

Another phenomenon is the "unknown" Empire Runner. It is no longer unusual to see someone in an Empire Runner singlet or t-shirt at a race, running down the road or at the mall who you do not recognize. What's more, they do not recognize *YOU*.

It is now possible to purchase an Empire Runner's singlet, hat or other gear without even being a member. You may think this is why you did not recognize the dude who passed you on the trail last week without even saying "hello". However, you may be completely off base. The Empire Runner's membership is far higher now than it was five or ten years ago and that "dude" may be a member in good standing. At least he was wearing his ER Runner's gear while you were in your old smelly Hit The Road Jack t-shirt from 1994!

Now when you go to an Empire Runner's Club race you may find that it is so crowded that not only do you not recognize many faces, you can't even find the people you do recognize. I have been to races and seen people I wanted to say hello to but I never got the chance as I was swept along in the mass of humanity. Okay, that is a slight exaggeration, but you get the point!

These hordes of new people are a blessing to the club coffers but they present challenges. Not only do these folks look different but they may think differently as well. They may not find our ways to be

The Empire Runner

cute, quaint or endearing. They may expect to see race results posted online after they drive home if not sooner! They may get upset if the course is not perfectly marked or monitored. They may expect to get some kind of award or recognition in age divisions divided up not by decade but by year or month... again an exaggeration, but not by much. They may not care that our races are dirt cheap. They have grown to expect a certain degree of pampering having been to many a “destination” race. They have had their complimentary wine-glasses filled to the brim as they hauled their huge bag of “schwag” while receiving the latest “tweets” from Dean Karnazes.

However, these same people may pump some new blood and energy into our wonderful club just when many of the “old guard” are starting to wobble just a bit. They may provide some new ideas and different ways of doing things that will keep our mission going forward for many years.

They may just jump in and get their hands dirty doing the hard work of putting on races, managing club resources, promoting running and all the myriad tasks associated with what we call the Empire Runners – and they may have fun while they do so.

If all of that comes to pass then things will not have changed so much after all.

Next time that dude in the ER Runners sleeveless t-shirt runs by, yell out “Go Empire”!

Tahoe Bound

I will be joining six other crazy gentlemen over the age of 50 for the fourth straight year to run around the shore of Lake Tahoe in June at the **47th Annual DeCelle Memorial Lake Tahoe Relay**.

Our men’s 50-59 team won our age division in 2008 and 2009 and took second in 2010.

This year I believe we will have a women’s team for the first time and a co-ed team as well to go along with our over-50 team.

It can be brutally hard but also incredibly fun.

More on this later!