



## The Long and Short of It

### The Merciless Clock Part I

The Empire Runners Summer Track Series has come and gone for another year. Five times a year we head out to the oval and see what we can do running with and against each other, but especially against the clock and ourselves. Long before the spring during the dark days of winter I made my way over to the Montgomery HS track and did my speed-work. I spent many a Saturday morning running 800's, 400's, 600's and bare-foot sprints and strides on the football field hoping it would pay off in the summer. Before I knew it track season was here and in spite of my best intentions I found that I was too beat up for serious running in the first meet having just done the Tahoe Relay. The days of running a race on Saturday and turning around and doing a track meet the following Tuesday are over. Still, I knew there were four more chances to see how I would do.

This year I decided it would be fun to concentrate on the 400. In '08 I managed a 68.7 and I hoped to improve upon that due to the extra work I was putting in. It was not to be.

Every time I ran the 400 I suffered the same phenomenon – I would come around the final curve ready to sprint for the finish and I would look down the track and see the big clock counting the seconds. The clock would show 56, 57, and 58 as I tried to kick it in and it would seem that I had plenty of cushion to cover the remaining distance but I found that no matter how hard I tried I could not cover the last 80 meters quickly enough to prevent the merciless clock from showing 70, 71, and 72! I tried different strategies, going out hard, going out easy, keeping it steady but the times were consistently in the 71 -72 range.

### The Merciless Clock Part II

I am walking down the sidewalk with my two best friends our chocolate Lab Gunther and our cattle-dog Molly. Gunther is lean and in good shape at age ten. Ten! So in dog years he is approximately 70 years old. He has grown gray around the muzzle, his eyes are slightly cloudy and he gets tired a bit quicker than he did a few years ago.

I began to think back to when Robin first got Gunther when he was just a few months old. At the time I had just recently turned 44 years old and by most standards you would say that I was in "early middle age". Gunther on the other hand was a mere baby. Flexible and frisky, he would run around in circles chasing a ball, a cat or his own tail until he couldn't see straight. I could barely keep up with him.

Now, ten years later I need to provide Gunther with lots of encouragement to keep him going on our weekly dog-jogs and watch what I feed him to keep him lean and strong. He still can be frisky but he is not very flexible and we worry about him overdoing it.

As we continued to walk along I pondered the cruel force that would render a puppy into a senior citizen in such a short time and realized that this force was and is working on us all. No matter how hard you work, no matter how well you eat, no matter how closely you guard your health, this force continues to work in the background ticking off the seconds like the big race clock.

### Thumbing Your Nose at IT

When Gunther was a puppy he enjoyed playing because... well, because it was FUN. Now that he is older he still enjoys playing because it is *still* fun! Gunther does not know that he is getting older but he still benefits from a good diet and regular exercise. I am thinking that he is doing as well as he can. I *know* that he gets vast amounts of pleasure from the little things he enjoys doing every single day.

# The Empire



# Runner

Unlike Gunther I do know that I am getting older and sometimes I have to work at having fun when things are harder than they used to be. When I am moving down the final straight in the 400 and I see the seconds ticking by and my legs are straining and I am using all the tricks I know to stay smooth and powerful, I am doing the same things I did when I was young. Only the numbers on the clock are different. The lines on the track, the other runners in my peripheral vision, the pounding in my chest are the same as they were 30 years ago and I decide that this is what I love about running.

I try again to be like Gunther and enjoy the experience of what I can do on *this* day and decide that life is very good indeed.

**DM Peterson**