

A Record Breaking Year at the Virginia 24 Hour Run for Cancer

The 7th Annual Virginia 24 Hour Run for Cancer broke all event records this year. It keeps getting better each year. It was held as usual on a flat, 3.75 mile out-and-back loop trail at Sandy Bottom Nature Park in Hampton Virginia from 7:00 a.m. 17 April until 7:00 a.m. 18 April. The weather was almost perfect with highs around 70, lows in the upper 40s, low humidity, and partly sunny skies most of the day (except for a short morning drizzle).

A new men's record of 125 miles was set by Joe Ninke, who repeated his win from last year. A new women's record of 101.25 miles was set by Cheryl Lager, a local ultrarunner who lives in Newport News. A new relay team record of 213 miles was set by a local High School cross country team. They "blew away" the old record of 156.5 miles. A second relay team also beat the old record with 187.75 miles. Five runners earned the coveted 100 mile plaque, 18 runners were awarded the 75 mile plaque, and an amazing 54 runners received the 50 mile plaque. These are all event records. The total money raised for the American Cancer Society Relay For Life of over \$9000 (with more still coming in) is the most important record of all.

For the first time, the starting field for this year's race had several people with "big time" credentials. Last year's winner and runner up were both back for a re-match. One runner had done 232 miles at the 2008 Across the Years 72 hour run! Another had run the H.U.R.T 100 miler ten times. A woman runner had run the Umstead 100 miler three weeks before in a little over 17 hours! Another woman had done 109 miles in a previous race.

The men's race was primarily a test to see if Joe Ninke could repeat from 2009. A small "pack" of 3-4 men (including Stuart Kern, last year's runner up) tried to keep up with Joe from the outset. Joe led from the beginning and never "looked back." Eventually all the "chase" runners fell back and either dropped out before 24 hours or settled for 100 miles.

The women's race was a test of experience versus youth. Young Sabrina Moran set a blistering pace and held the lead for most of the first 10 hours, but soon after hitting 50 miles she dropped. Shannon McGinn then had a commanding lead for a few hours, until she dropped with a little over 70 miles with "stomach issues." That left Sarah Llaguno and Cheryl Lager vying for the lead. When the dust settled, it was Cheryl who not only took the prize, but set a new women's course record. She maintained a steady, even pace all day and got stronger during the last hours of the race. Sarah

later commented that she was using this race as a training run for Western States and dropped after reaching her goal of 75 miles.

The relay team record was easily “destroyed” by the Lafayette High School Cross Country team. They managed to keep up a blistering 6:30 per mile pace well into the night. No one thought they would get 200 miles, let alone 213 miles. The young kids were amazing!

The seven other teams who were there to see how many total miles they could accumulate also far surpassed most teams from previous years. Captain Cody’s Pirate Crew was back from last year, and set a new total team mileage record of 553.75 miles. The second place team ran 410 miles and every team was over 262 miles.

There were many returning runners from previous years. Many come back year after year as the race grows in popularity. Runners came from 12 states and as far away as California. And as always, there were many people who were trying a 24 hour race (or even an ultra of any kind) for the first time. Many far exceeded what they thought possible. This year we presented a “best first Ultra” award to the runner who I (race director’s privilege) decided went the farthest “above and beyond.” The award was in honor of a Marine who had done the 2009 race as his first ultra, but had died during the past year. I gave the award to Suzanna Turanyi, a member of CPT Cody’s Pirate Crew who did 75 miles, having never run more than a marathon before!

Once again the Ranger staff at Sandy Bottom was outstanding in their support. Every need we had was anticipated and taken care of. Their support was even better than in previous years. And as always, the volunteers from the Peninsula Track Club (Jerry Schenck, Deb O-Hara, Pete Navin, Michele Smith-Harden, Kristin Harmann, Tracey Atterbury, Gail Lucado, Gary Porter, Nina Stickles, and Mike Angelo) were critical to the success of the event. This year I again had several outstanding Sergeants from the NCO Academy at Fort Eustis help out. Based on feedback from the participants we’ll see you next year at the 8th edition. Same time, same place.