

On the Run
By Mark Lorenzoni

I first met Harry Landers in the summer of 2008, when, as a fifty six year old, he signed up to participate in the Charlottesville Track Club's Marathon/Half Marathon Training Program. Having served for close to forty years, in a volunteer capacity, as the coach of this popular program, I have seen lots of Harry Landers along the way...folks wanting to either run their first marathon or improve on a previous effort. In the case of Harry, it was the latter but with the caveat that he wanted to try to qualify for his first ever Boston Marathon: the Holy Grail of marathoning! But what I never anticipated and what has made Harry stand out among the thousands of athletes I've had the pleasure of coaching, is not only would that fifty three year old qualify that fall of 2008 with a speedy 3:43, he would then go on to do what no other athlete of mine has ever done: qualify sixteen more times in a row, after that, for the 'Granddaddy of Them All'!,! This incredible feat, makes Harry my longest standing "streaker", having made it to seventeen straight Bostons based on time (only UVa President Jim Ryan, at fifteen straight, comes close).

Along this amazing Boston journey, Landers, who resides in Free Union with his longtime wife Janis and a source of constant support throughout his "streak", has experienced a lifetime of memories. From training with folks like Kenny Ball, Mark Hampton and Kristen Keller for his 3:29 p.r. effort in 2010 and his slow but fun run in brutal 89 degree temps with buddy Paula Capabiancio in 2012, all the way to his gallant comeback from Achilles surgery run with longtime training friend Kara Williams in 2017 and last year's memorable run with dear friend Jane Jackson, who was recovering from breast cancer. And through it all, Landers says his biggest takeaway has been the "special friendships" nurtured over those thousands of miles, not only at the races but, "even more importantly, during the countless hours of training with my friends."

And, as his longtime coach and a front row witness to all of those friendships being formed, I can confidently say that Harry is beloved by all who have shared miles with him. He's not only one of the nicest guys going, he's also one of the wittiest and most entertaining!

Last year, at seventy three, my now longtime dear friend, athlete and Captain of my Boston Bound crew of marathoners, let his almost two decade streak come to an end. With a touch of arthritis and a few other nagging pains whispering in his ear, Harry decided to invest in the future and call it a "finish line" at seventeen straight. But, not to be denied, this energetic and still very much healthy guy, will be walking 500 miles of the legendary Camino de Santiago this spring. And, one thing is for sure: he'll establish plenty of new friendships and entertain lots of folks along the way!

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-UVa's legendary Head TFXC Coach Vin Lananna recently added two more awards to his lifetime of accomplishments. Lananna, who many refer to as "the Dean" of collegiate cross country and track and field, was voted as the Southeast XC Coach of the Year in November and then in December he was honored with the prestigious Robert Giegengack Award, one of the

sports highest accolades, awarded annually to an individual who “excels in contributing to the excellence and high standards to the sport”. Congrats, Coach!

-And speaking of Coach Vin, our running community is grateful to him and Athletics Director Carla Williams, who continue to open the gates of their beautiful Lannigan Field track for our early morning use. What a treat!

-We're thrilled that three of our local high school running stars have committed to continuing their athletic and educational journeys at UVa this coming fall. Charlottesville High's Elaina Pierce and Sam Palmer will join STAB's Quinn Elliason in complimenting a star-filled crew of incoming recruits. We can't wait to continue cheering for these three, as they're not only great athletes but also really nice kids!

-We had two of the speediest marathon debuts, that I can ever recall, by a local athlete as first timers Graham Crawford blazed to a 2:12 (5 minutes/mile) in Arizona in December and Trevor Dunbar scorched a 2:28 (5:40/mile) in Houston earlier this month. Local veteran marathoner Carter Norbo also sped to a 2:36 p.r. in Arizona, joining Crawford by meeting the qualifying standard for the Olympic Marathon Trials!

-The Three Notched Trail, once thought of as a dream, is moving along at a fast rate thanks to all of the fine folks like Allie Hill, Kevin McDermott, Peter Krebs, Amanda Ponca, Tommy Safranek, and Rip Verkerke, who have been working non-stop on this community project. This magical path, that will lead from the city of Charlottesville trail all the way to the Blue Ridge Tunnel in Afton and beyond, will provide runners, walkers and cyclists with a safe and scenic auto free exercising experience. The trail is still very much in the planning stages but your input and support is important. For more information go to the Albemarle County's Project website.

-The Charlottesville Track Club kicked off 2026 with their annual New Years Day race in beautiful Free Union. Close to 250 folks ran and walked the scenic 5K course, with Jack Helmke and Ann Mazur leading the way. Under the volunteer directorship of Rick Willis and the CTC Board of Directors, the event was able to raise a large amount of funds for their ongoing Kid's Shoe Project, where the CTC donates brand new running shoes for our young neighbors in need.

-And while we're talking CTC, this wonderful not-for-profit organization had another banner year. In addition to hosting and organizing several local footraces, track meets and training programs that entertained close to 8,000 folks, they were able to raise over \$200,000 for several area causes.

-The inaugural North Garden 5K, which was held on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, was a huge success as over 225 runners and walkers traversed beautiful Edge Valley Road, enroute to raising over \$15,000 for the Red Hill Elementary School, the North Garden Fire Department and the Cove Ruritan's. The 5K is now set to become an annual pre-Thanksgiving event.

-On the tap locally are the Freeze Your Socks Off 5K at Towe Park on February 8th, the Naked Creek 10K & 25K Trail Races at Panorama Farms on March 7th, the Haven 8K/4K on March 14th and the Charlottesville 10 Miler, the area's oldest and largest footrace, is set for its 50th running on March 28th.

-Looking to improve your speed and meet other folks in a coached group setting? Then come join me and my community athlete runners every Wednesday morning at 5:30 outside the UVA track. We usually have anywhere from 50-100 folks working out together. All paces and abilities are encouraged to join us but your most recent longest run must be in the 5-6 mile or more range. Text me at 434/962-1694 to sign up...it's free!

Mark Lorenzoni has been directing community events and coaching local runners, on a volunteer basis, for close to 45 years. He can be reached at 434/293-3367 or by text at 434/962-1694.

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