

## **An Interview with Lifetime Achievement Award Winner Ron Bienstock**

### ***When did you first get really serious about running?***

I was a basketball player and generally found many reasons not to run, and I might add that running in basketball shoes was not exciting. I was on tour with a band in late 1977 and friend in grad school told me he had just bought a pair of "Nikes" (he pronounced that "NYKS") and was running 4 miles a day. I went out and bought a pair of blue waffle trainers and running in them was a revelatory experience. I ran up to 1.5 miles a day!

### ***Did you have runners/friends you looked up to/admired?***

As a basketball and bass player, my heroes ranged from Walt Frazier to Jack Bruce, a decidedly different set of heroes, although I did admire Frank Shorter and other Olympic heroes.

### ***Did you bike race before running?***

I did not own a bike until I met my lovely and amazingly talented athlete wife, Lisa Swain, in 1987. When I met Lisa, she was already competing in Triathlons. I had to keep up with my then girlfriend or get dropped! I really didn't have my first real serious bike, one that really fit me, until the early '90s, when I competed in my first TRI.

### ***How has your biking with running evolved over the years? Are there any synergies that you find mutually beneficial & supportive? How do you time-manage the season's two race schedules?***

I always preferred the cycling part, perhaps because of my lanky giraffe-like frame that I fit that sport a bit more easily. I swim, bike, and run all year. I think running helps my cycling; cycling helps my running a tad less, but builds some strength, and swimming is important to keep all of the muscle groups a bit more equalized.

### ***Could you tell us more about swimming and your Duathlon/Triathlon experience?***

I am not certain anyone would say what I do is swimming as much as it is "not sinking". I have improved over the years. Lisa, in addition to being an assemblywoman is also a swim instructor. She has done her best with me, but I may not be her best client in that regard. For many years I would just swim a day or two before a TRI and just hang on until the bike and run portions. However, there are those days when you just get in the pool or lake and it feels comfortable and it all goes swimmingly. I would probably opt for Duathlon (run bike run) as my favorite multi-sport event.

### ***When and why did you join North Jersey Masters?***

Lisa and I joined NJM about 25 years ago when we moved from NYC to Bergen County. Lisa has always been a social athlete and belonged to several clubs. Now we have an extended family through all of our NJM friends.

### ***What do you find personally beneficial running as part of NJM that you couldn't otherwise do on your own or with another club?***

Over the last 25 years, we have swam, biked, and ran with so many wonderful people. Our Saturday or Sunday long runs, or in TRI season, rides, would not be the same without all of the NJM members.

***What are your most memorable experiences and races since joining NJM? Why?***

The Memorial Day lead out/guide for the wheelchair racers I do on the bike and then run the 5K is always a challenge, but always memorable. Having your teammates root for you while on a race course is pretty hard to beat!

***What races (distances) have you done? What distances have you done the most and why?***

Running-wise, I have competed in 5Ks to marathons and all distances in between, including 12- and 24-hour running relay races (those were all Lisa's zany events she got us into). As to Triathlons – sprint to half-Ironman, Duathlons – all kinds of various distances. Biking - I have raced on the road, mountain-biked, and cycle-crossed.

***Has your love of running & racing changed over the years?***

Running is superbly simple - shoes, hopefully some clothes – and go. I still get all worked up before races - even local 5Ks. I don't think we ever lose that competitive spirit - we just lower our expectations occasionally and continue to find new events.

***What advice would you give to other runners, especially newer runners?***

It is a lifelong endeavor. Look to expand your horizons with some other activities like cycling, swimming, and be in it for the long haul.

***Do you intend to run "forever"?***

I plan on being that annoying old guy who keeps showing up at races, telling everyone, “in my day we strapped leather sandals onto our bare feet, we only had togas to run in, and they had not invented water yet”.

***How do you feel about running together with your NJM family?***

NJM is a community – get to know your running neighbors - you may be surprised how easy that long run becomes. I know when I run with my NJM teammates, they often say, “Heck Ron, with all of your chatter, that 10K felt more like 10 miles!”.

***Is there anything you want our readers to know that we haven't covered?***

When you finish an event, and have caught your breath - everything is funnier. Pick races with great post-race chow - you deserve it!