

Rob Rose Column - 1/24/08

I believe it's time to give February some respect. Entrenched in mid winter, February is viewed as a portal to spring, a month to endure to get to something better. It's salient points are completely overlooked and it's time to bestow some credit. One of its attributes is the top notch races that will be held next month. Each weekend in February gives competitors a choice of two superb races. Runners have an additional choice, deciding between an old time classic that has passed the test of time or a relatively new race that has garnered accolades. What February lacks in quantity it makes up with quality. Either way, February has a lot of variety; here's what it offers runners before the spring equinox.

Weekend of Feb. 3 & 4 - Classic Race - the Great Stew Chase, whose name originates from the post race beef stew served to the runners, has been held in Lynn for 33 years. It offers runners an opportunity to assess their distance capabilities for Boston. "I thought the Great Stew Chase was a relatively challenging course with a great hill through the industrial park," said Norton's John Winters of the 15K race. "I witnessed many elite runners almost wipe out on the down hill descent because of the icy conditions. It was well organized and of course plenty of great stew at the finish." Newbee Race - The Super 5K has only been around for three years but runners, over 400 last year, flock to it. "I ventured out to Narragansett on Super Bowl Sunday last year," said Plainville's Steve Squadrilli. "It just happened to be the time when the real cold weather set in. The course was quite picturesque running along the sea wall and it was a fairly quick course with only one decent size incline. There was a good size turnout."

Weekend of Feb. - 10 & 11 - Classic Race - The Paddy Kelly Five mile started out in 1981 in Taunton with the course winding around Lake Sabbathia. Several years later, the Colonial Road Runners, the sponsoring club, moved it to Brockton where the course now travels through scenic D.W. Field Park. "A great safe race by old pros who put on a cozy post race feast which leaves most runners lingering for hours after the run," said Colonial old pro Dick Carnes of Norton. Newbee Race - 2008 will see the debut of the Half At Hamptons, a half marathon in Hampton Beach, NH. It was spawned by the same organization that does the acclaimed Big Lake Half in New Hampshire in April. You can't have enough half marathons before Boston.

Weekend of Feb. 17 & 18 - Classic Race - The Old Fashioned 10 Miler in Foxboro has only been around a dozen years but it has older antecedents. The race originally started in the 1970's under the auspices of the Sharon Road Runners. This race draws huge crowds every year and is the best race in the Attleboro area. Newbee Race - the motto printed on the Martha's Vineyard

20 Miler T-shirt is 'No weenies'. This race is for Boston Marathon candidates testing their preparedness for their April final exam. The course, terrain and meteorological factors can make it a daunting trek around the island. Don't forget the ocean trip to get there. Pass out the Dramamine!

Weekend of Feb. 24 & 25 - Classic Race - Boston Marathon historian and Amherst 10 Mile founder Tom Dederian described the race as "an hyperbole of the Boston course, hillier and to be run at a faster pace. Rodgers won it before his Boston win in 1975." Steeped in tradition where running royalty once honed their game, the race continues to offer the basic man (or woman) versus hills survival test. Newbee Race - the Hyannis Marathon, which debuted in 1978, can't be described as a new race but the event has gotten a face lift recently. The Hyannis package now includes a half, 10K and the very popular marathon relay. BA Events offers a weekend's worth of activities revolving around the race and running celebrities are de rigeur here. This year Rodgers, Shorter and former World Marathon record holder, Belayneh Dinsamo will be on site to gild your experience with their presence.

Didn't realize that February had so much to offer? Oh course, it's all predicated on having the weather cooperate so that we can make the trek to Lynn or Amherst or Martha's Vineyard. If inclement weather does occurs then February will revert to being a snow blighted, frozen curse on the calendar. Respect for February does have its limits.

Footnotes - Congratulation to Mansfield's Keith Purrier and Norfolk's Kris Porell for qualifying for Boston; Purrier got it done at Disney and Porell at Rock 'n Roll Phoenix earlier this month ... Not Your Typical 5K Dept. - an interesting new race will debut in Scituate, RI on March 29, the Reservoir 15K; race director Milt Schumacher is putting together the details and will have race applications shortly; the course will be different from the old Foster 15K & 30K of several years ago; contact him at miltschumacher@hotmail.com for more info ... seven time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong has entered this April's Boston Marathon; he qualified at the 2006 New York City Marathon ...