

Rob Rose Column - 8/9/2007

Let's do a survey. Who loves the Falmouth Road Race the most? I see a lot of raised hands out there from those of you who profess a special affinity for the summer classic, which will be held this Sunday. More locals, approximately 300, make an appearance here that any other race, anywhere. It has become, for numerous families, an annual ritual where husband, wife and children go the 7.1 mile route for fun, perhaps fitness. Undoubtedly, the Falmouth Road Race is the most popular running event in the Attleboro area and many of you would proclaim yourselves its biggest fans. Sorry to disappoint but only a select few can make that claim.

It's not well known but the Falmouth Road Race is contested twice a year. The mega August event with its 9,500 field and the little known Falmouth in the Fall, which is run on the first Sunday in November on the same course with a sparse, in comparison, crowd of 400. Only about a dozen area runners do the November race and last year only five ran both. So who are the Falmouth Five and why do they love Falmouth so much?

The word 'electric' may be one that some members of the Falmouth Five would use to describe Summer Falmouth. "Falmouth in the summer is very exciting," said North Attleboro's Allison Dyer, who did her first Falmouth double last year. "The field size is huge and there are many elite runners." Her friend and fellow Falmouth Five member, Liz Taylor of Wrentham, has run Summer Falmouth almost continuously since 1987 and for her, the experience has never been a jaded one. "I mark the second Sunday of August and I plan my summer schedule around the Falmouth Road Race," she said. "What I love about it are the people. The spectators come out, even in the pouring rain, to cheer you on, entertain you with music and cool you off with their hoses." The whole course offers a myriad of sights, sounds and emotions beginning with the start. "At Woods Hole I have butterflies in my stomach as I wait among the runners. The first mile is run on adrenaline alone," said Taylor.

"At the end of the first mile, I love running up the hill by the lighthouse (Nobske) to the sound of the theme from 'Rocky'," said Dyer. The core of the course is replete with crowds, heat, music and scenery. Then the finish where hill, heights and harbor harmonize and the spectacle hits its apex. "You finish under the giant American flag and then are herded like cattle to the ball field where you get your fill of water, Cape Cod chips and the best watermelon popsicles," said Dyer. "The crowd seems to hang out for hours."

"When I see the giant Mt. Rushmore flag flying over the finish line, it's a great feeling and I know I'll make plans to do it again next year," said Taylor.

The word 'unpretentious' sums up Fall Falmouth. "Falmouth in the fall is laid back," said Dyer. "The weather is much cooler and the field size is much smaller. There are less distractions and more opportunities to enjoy the scenery. No crowds and everyone heads home" Taylor concurred. "I enjoyed the natural beauty of the race course more than in the summer," she said. "The weather was perfect, warm, sunny and no wind."

Although Summer Falmouth draws runners based on its reputation, Fall Falmouth needs help in presenting its merits. "It never appealed to me since the PEOPLE make the Falmouth Road Race for me," Taylor said. She detoured here several years ago, persuaded by friends, to run Fall Falmouth and fell to its charms. "I was pleasantly surprised," she said. "I was hooked on another Falmouth race."

The other members of the Falmouth Five are North Attleboro's Grant Forbes, Norton's Cathy Nowak and Wrentham's Patti Piatelli.

Of the two, Summer Falmouth is the preferred. "I like the quiet and the beauty of the fall but I prefer the excitement of the summer," said Taylor. "If I had to choose one, I think I would stick with the summer," said Dyer.

Both runners plan to continue running both races but only if conditions are favorable. "I would not do the fall run if it is raining," said Dyer.

So you think you love Falmouth? November on the Cape beckons for those who really do.

Footnotes - The Runaways have a big time name for their race on August 19; two time Olympian Amy Rudolph has committed to run the North Attleboro Five Miler; Rudolph, per the Runaways Bill Beardsworth ... the Wampanoag Road Runners summer classic, FitzFest X, will be held in Mansfield on Aug. 18 - 19; the outing begins at 1 p.m. and has been known to draw up to 100 members; the club provides the main edibles; you bring a side dish; call debonair host Kevin Fitzgibbon (508-339-6089) for more info