

Bob Cox

Bob Cox can't remember a time when he was not a runner. He grew up on a farm near Goderich, ON. He remembers a time when he was in Grade 9 and there was a fundraiser at school and the kids were dropped off on the highway 10 miles outside of town and told to run back to the school. He was wearing his regular school gear - shirt, blue jeans, canvas shoes – and started the run. A few miles into the run, the Phys Ed teacher pulled up beside him and told him to slow down because it would be a long run. Bob just kept going at his pace and finished second among the entire school, including the high schoolers. After that, it was natural to try cross-country, which he loved. He also did track in high school, but the longer the race the better for him.

Bob went to study journalism at Carleton University and did not join the track team, but he tried the Quebec City Marathon in 1982 and enjoyed the hilly course, which made that marathon more like a cross-country run. During the run, a spectator raced onto the course to greet him and said, "You're Bob Cox! So am I!!" Le Soleil had published the starters list. With the names on the bibs, Bob Cox had kept an eye out for Bob Cox. Bob finished that first marathon in 2:45. A decade later, he ran Ottawa in 2:42 for his PB.

Work took Bob around the country, to Winnipeg from 1984-1988, then Regina, then Ottawa, then Edmonton, then Toronto, and ultimately back to Winnipeg in 2005. He ran in the Manitoba Marathon in the 1980s and in Ottawa and Edmonton in the 1990s, but ultimately life grew too busy to pursue a competitive running program and he gained 30 pounds. He was shuttling his daughters to their gymnastics club and with a busy job, there was little time or energy left for exercise.

When life slowed down a bit, he resolved to shed the extra pounds and get back to running seriously on the roads. Returning to Winnipeg in the spring of 2005, it was too late to train for a marathon, but he ran a few of the other road races. By 2006, he had trained enough to take on the Manitoba Marathon. He also did the Puma Series in April and the Canada Day Run, but did not go out of town for races at that time.

As the years continued here in Winnipeg, Bob ran more and more of the MRA races. In the last 6-7 years, one of his chief goals was to run as many of the races as possible and still not get injured. He did weight training and squats and only rarely suffered an injury. One of his proudest achievements on the roads is to have participated so much for so long with only the rarest injury. Andrew Swan calls Bob "the Iron man". His consistency, in quality and quantity of races, earned him MRA Male Runner of the Year in 2019.

Bob loves the MRA, not just for the wide variety of races it offers over a long annual calendar but for the friendships he has made and kept through the Association. Even during the pandemic, he has sustained those treasured relationships, and noted that the same runners who showed up to the races in the past have their names in the virtual series. In the 2019 Manitoba Marathon, Bob was in the full marathon (3:26) and the relay and was amazed at the support he received along the course. It seemed that every 200 meters, someone would be cheering him on by name and it was often someone he knew. There is something special about running a hometown marathon. At this point, it was his favourite road running experience, although all the big marathons come with lots of excitement from pre-start to finish.

Two weeks earlier, Bob had run the Stockholm marathon. His wife is from there, and many of her family were out to cheer Bob on. Stockholm is one of Bob's favourite marathons, despite how unpredictable the weather is there (sound familiar to anyone from Winnipeg?) In 2018, it was the hottest June 2nd on record, and the chief medical director for the race came out before the 12 noon start and cautioned the

runners to “run at a moderate pace”. Bob is not one to leave anything on the course and ran hard despite the 28-degree temperature. He ran his slowest marathon time ever – 3:54:51. The race is known for its quirky refreshment stops, with the sponsors’ products featured at each. There is a Coke stop, and a dill pickle stop, etc. The finish at the 1912 Olympic Stadium is a memorable feature. Bob wears the Canadian emblem when he participates in international races and always gets positive comments for that.

When asked about his worst road racing experience, Bob remembers running the Melissa’s Park Road Race in Banff one year when he did not know he had contracted a gastrointestinal illness called Giardiasis, or beaver fever. He had cramps and diarrhea and fatigue, but the symptoms only showed up after he had started the race. One can only imagine how tough that must have been, but Bob being Bob, he still completed the half marathon in his misery. He was not diagnosed until 2 days later and had to take antibiotics to get better. As difficult as this race was, it stands as testament to Bob’s perseverance. He is indeed the Iron man.

Bob turned 60 in 2020 and looks forward to his new age class, although his nemesis, Bruce Young, has already entered the 60+. Bob embraces the challenge and longs to race side by side with Bruce and the rest of the MRA.