

Ken Friesen

I ran some races in elementary school 'field days' with some success and because of the feeling of accomplishment I never looked back.

I started doing some road races as a high school athlete close to 50 years ago.

I enjoyed both the training and the competitive aspect of running right from the start. I increased my involvement as I realized that the sport needs more than just runners to flourish. It needs the support of volunteers, coaches and concerned organizations to put events together for the runners so they can compete and make the important social connections we all crave from the sport.

When I look back over my years of involvement in road running and the many satisfying achievements I have had, it is hard to single out one, but if I was to narrow it to the top 3, it would be;

- Running the Boston marathon in 1980, because of all the hard work leading up to it that paid off on a hot, sunny race day.
- As a Coach, the connections I made while helping with the training, running form & injury prevention of young athletes that have a passion for running. There is a special feeling you get from giving back to appreciative athletes as they try to achieve their goals.
- Then as Race Director – organizing the Athletes Wear 10 km the first year with only a few months' notice before race day. With the help of a core group of great people we successfully put on a race for over 3,000 participants.

My favourite memory of my road running years was running with my son. I have run several road races with my son, Scott. When he was younger, I would let him outkick me at the finish line and all those times running with him were special. But my favourite memory was the first time Scott finished ahead of me because he was now faster than me.

This is an example of my times back in the day

5km – 16:47

10km – 33:52

10 mile – 56.46

20km – 1:12:16

Half marathon – 1:20 (back to back during my full marathon race)...

Marathon – 2:40.00

My favourite race is always the next one I sign up for. It's not always about the race itself. I enjoy the training process and getting out for the run, pushing myself and enjoying the anticipation of race day.

My worst experience was after training to be in the best shape of my life I was running my 2nd Boston Marathon in 1982 and on pace for a significant PB time. About 5 miles from the finish I took a cup of water from a bystander filling cups out of a water hose. I took a big drink and found out it was ice cold water. My stomach cramped up so badly that I could only keep moving at a walk and bent over at the waist. Had to walk for close to 2 miles like this and was then able to start a shuffle jog and slowly picked up the pace and finished but much slower than I was on pace for.

An important part of my road running involvement has been my volunteer work, as an example I was on the MRA board of directors back in the 1980's Manitoba Marathon as an aid station organizer for many years. Ron Melnichuk memorial Half Marathon Coach at stride ahead Tough Track club Plus many other assorted run & walk events

Sponsorship is also important for the advancement of road running events and as a manager at Athletes Wear I was influential in getting that company to take on and sponsor the Athletes Wear Run For Fun 10 km (formerly the Trib 10km) which became the second largest race in Manitoba after the Marathon back in the early 1980's. We supported the MRA at this time as well.

Shortly after I opened Stride Ahead Sports running store, I became a key sponsor of the MRA. During this time, I helped support some up and coming athletes, a track team, some triathlon teams, & multiple running and Triathlon events ranging from the Manitoba Marathon to small start-up events.

Now, recently retired, I'm still enjoying the 'life on the road' as an active Master runner.