

# Darcy Ready

Darcy Ready has been one of the most prominent runners on Manitoba's roads over the past 50 years. Born and raised in Brandon, Darcy had a brother 10 years older than he was and his brother was in the famous Brandon Sundowners Track Club. Darcy wanted to join but members had to be at least 12 years old. He knew from when he won his first school cross country race in Grade 4 that running would be part of his life. It didn't hurt that as winner of the race, he was given red licorice to eat in his classroom!

Once he did turn 12, Darcy was accepted into the Sundowners and was a successful runner on his school cross-country and track teams. He attended Neelin Collegiate in Brandon and had a star contemporary to run with: Angela Chalmers from Shilo, who would go on to win an Olympic medal in Los Angeles in 1984. Coaches Ron McPhail and Ron Moffat were strong influences on Darcy's development. They trained in the snow and on Brandon's hills. In high school, Darcy won 400, 800, 1500 and 3000 at the Provincial B meet, and dropped the 400 when only allowed to run 3 events at the Provincial A meet.

After a very successful high school running career, Darcy took a year off to work and tried for a US scholarship but did not quite get one. After that year, he entered U of MB in Science, then Phys Ed and finally Education. Although Darcy didn't make the top 5 for Cross-country in his freshman year, he went on to be a key member of a very high-quality team that included Rob Guy, Bob Cook, Bruce McKay, and Claude Berube. Later, Henry Klassen, Darren Klassen and Chris Weber joined this exceptional team, all coached by Alphonse Bernard. They came within a few points of winning the Canadian University championship. As part of the training in those years, team members participated in the Puma Series in the spring and in the bigger autumn races just before the cross-country season started.

He worked as an elementary school teacher, which gave him the time he needed to continue to pursue his running career. Although he still competed in a few track races, Darcy really focused on the road races post university and produced impressive results. He trained in part by running to and from work.

On looking back on a long racing career, Darcy's proudest achievement is winning the mixed relay at the Manitoba Marathon, with teammates composed of his 3 daughters and his son. Darcy led off and ran the full marathon, running side by side with each of his kids through the entire course.

If he has a regret in looking back, Darcy is disappointed that he never won the Manitoba Marathon, although he came second twice, and was in the leading group in other races before developing cramps in his calves.

One of his favourite races was the Thompson Calm Air 10 km, which he won entry into by winning major races in Winnipeg. Going so far north in the autumn was a special treat. One time, his wife was in labour with their second daughter and there was smoke in the cabin. Fortunately, his worst fears of how the flight might end were not realized.

One of his worst experiences was in his first Manitoba Marathon when he was in the lead trio with Dennis Rinde (all-time record holder in the MB Marathon) and Roger Schwegel (who won the race many times). Darcy had a detailed race plan developed with his coach, Ron Melnichuk. Sadly, the calf cramps arrived at mile 18 on Main Street, and Darcy had to drop back. Roger ran on his own to the finish, believing that Darcy was just behind him, but Darcy had to walk on Lyndale Drive and ended up having to drop out at the Canoe Club at mile 21.

Darcy and Claude Berube stayed at the Chateau Laurier in the early 1990's and enjoyed the cheering crowd as they circled the Parliament grounds in loops in the race. As well as Darcy did in his prime years, he was even more successful as a Masters competitor, coming 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nationals in Ottawa. Darcy also took second in the Masters category in the National Capital 10 km race in 2004.

Darcy's best 5 km was a 14:24; 10 km was 29:27; 20 km was 62 minutes in winning the Bird's Hill race, which he won 3 times; best half marathon was 1:08 and best marathon was 2:25:58, finishing 4<sup>th</sup> behind Peter Maher.

Darcy's long and successful running career ended with a painful hip condition in 2018, at age 55. He certainly retired as one of our greats.