

# Ken Perchaluk

You could call Ken Perchaluk “Ken Marathon” for his signature running event but that would only cover a fraction of his achievements throughout his remarkable running career. Unquestionably a member of Manitoba’s pantheon of road running legends, his life as a runner began rather modestly in the late 70’s when he started running on his own with occasional runs up to 5K. His destiny as a runner would be sealed for him with the public announcement of the inaugural Manitoba Marathon, which he immediately set his sights on running.

In 1979 the “running boom” found its way to Manitoba as Winnipeg joined the ranks of North American cities hosting an international marathon. The race attracted about 4500 entrants from around North America and Perchaluk was on the start line for his first 26 mile test of mettle. Still a novice at running he prepared for the race by doing a 14 mile training run the day before the Father’s Day event. His finishing time of 3:22, with very limited preparation, was a portent of his performances to come. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1980 he began his training for the 1980 Manitoba Marathon with the goal of breaking 3 hours. He finished in 3:00:12 and his passion for running was fully ignited. That fall he would improve his PR to 2:50 at the Twin Cities Marathon, again while training solely on his own over the summer.

In the fall of 1982, his running would become more focused by his joining the Phidippides Running Club (later to be renamed Prairie Sky Road Runners) to be coached by local running guru Doug Sammons. Now training at a higher level with some of Winnipeg’s finest road runners, in November he would journey to the Big Apple to run the New York City Marathon in 2:53, on the notoriously demanding five boroughs course through the city.

1983 would be Ken’s best year of competitive racing. Training with the running club under the direction of an experienced coach paid big dividends. Ken began competing in MRA road races for the first time and at a variety of distances new to him. He was an immediate success on the race circuit and became a popular fixture at MRA events for years to come with his ever present smile and jovial disposition. At the 1983 Manitoba Marathon he would set a new PR of 2:41:19 and would follow that up with the fall Twin Cities Marathon run on a blisteringly hot, humid day where just finishing was a badge of honour.

Ken’s competitive road racing endeavours continued through the rest of the 80’s training with a small, close-knit group of running friends who would meet regularly for long Sunday morning runs at Bird’s Hill Park and mid-week speed workouts at Assiniboine Park or the Grant Park High School running track. With his consistent year after year quality training, he recorded personal best times of 5K - 16:41, 10K - 34:29, 15K – 52:38, 20K – 1:11:28 and marathon – 2:40:25 (at the 1989 Twin Cities Marathon).

A running legend isn’t just about fast times and high placings in races, it is also about giving back to the sport you love and positively affecting the people you encounter throughout your running career and this is where Ken really shines. In 1990 he began helping some members in his After Five Running Club with their training. In 1992 a debilitating back injury prevented him from training and competing in races for the next two and half years. Even during these forced down years he never lost his passion for running and continued to participate in the running community however he could. It was during this layoff from running that the coaching bug really bit him. By now he had collected a wealth of knowledge and experience about training and began to share that resource with other runners who wanted his help to improve. In the fall of 1993, a small group of 7 runners would coalesce around Ken to train under his guidance. Through the rest of the 90’s, an ever growing number of runners were showing up at Tuesday

night workouts, to do group training with him. They would adopt the name Road Kill Running Club and a new running juggernaut was unleashed on the local road racing scene. For over a decade Road Kill was the pre-eminent torchbearer in Winnipeg, for the continuation of the Running Boom into the 21st century and worthy bearers they were. The club was inducted into the MRA Road Running Hall of Fame in 2017. ([see the Plaque here](#)).

Although it looked for the longest time like Ken would not be able to return to running himself he doggedly kept up his recommended rehabilitation program, never giving up hope and made a remarkable recovery. In 1995 he again became a popular fixture at local road races for over a decade. By now age and wear and tear on his body had taken it's toll on his running ability and his race performances declined accordingly but not his commitment, passion and enjoyment of running and participating in road races.

In 2007 Ken retired from his long time job with Canada Post and looked forward to reinvigorating his competitive running career with increased training. He set his sights on a return to his cherished event the marathon and prepared diligently for the October 2007 Twin Cities Marathon. His expectations for a good finishing time were high but the race day conditions were a horrid 84 F and 94% humidity. Not being a heat runner, he persevered to the finish to complete one more marathon, his last. More disappointments would follow when a painful hip condition surfaced in the fall of 2008 that ended his ability to run. Life does not always give us the ending we want but once again, robbed of his ability to run, Ken continued helping others through his coaching and encouragement.

Ken Perchaluk was duly recognized for his prodigious running ability and exceptional volunteerism by his well deserved induction into the MRA Road Running Hall of Fame as an Athlete/Builder in 2007, in only it's second year of existence. His contributions to the sport in Manitoba include several periods on the MRA Board of Directors, including executive positions of President and Vice-President, MRA equipment manager, race director, race support volunteer, race finish cheerleader, master of ceremony at post race awards, contributor to the MRA newsletter, and most of all friend to all. He is one tough act to follow. ([see the Plaque here](#)).