

Len Rolfson

Len Rolfson had been an athlete for years before he took up running. Once he discovered running, though, he embraced it to the point of becoming the only person to complete every one of the 40 plus Manitoba Marathon full marathons.

Len and a colleague from work at Inco in Thompson saw in the news that John Robertson was starting a Manitoba Marathon to raise money to bring people with intellectual disabilities back into the community and they decided to start training for that 1979 race. It was 1978 and Len was recovering from shoulder surgery and wanted to get back into shape. He had played hockey but that would not be the best activity for someone recovering from a shoulder injury. His wife gave him a copy of "The Complete Book of Running" by Jim Fixx and with the Robertson announcement, the training process began. After completing that first race, Len thought it would be noteworthy to say after ten years that he had completed all ten races. He has accomplished that as well as every Manitoba Marathon since. His time in 1979 was 4:17. A year later, he improved his time by an hour, and in 1981, he ran a personal best of 3:06.

In addition to his 42 Manitoba marathons, and 73 other full marathons, Len has done several ultra marathons of 100 km, 60 km, 50 miles and even a 125 km race. One of his most challenging was the 125 km Canadian Death Race in Grand Cache, AB, NW of Edmonton which he completed in 2002 as a 54 year old, in a time of 23.5 hours. He also did the Polar Bear Run across Lake Winnipeg 3 times. Len has also run the big marathons, such as Boston, Chicago and Hawaii.

Len's proudest achievement was running MB in 2000 with his youngest son who was running his first full marathon. The two ran the whole way together, on Father's Day. It will surprise no one that the Manitoba Marathon continues to be Len's favourite race.

One of Len's worst, or at least most embarrassing road running experiences was one year in the Manitoba Marathon when he tripped around mile 18, crossing the Norwood Bridge and fell just in front of one of his friends. Len's shoulder was injured but not as badly as his pride. He rolled back to his feet and carried on to the end, but not before hearing his friend's teasing comments. Another year, Len got stung by a bee on his lip while running at mile 19 on Lyndale Drive. It hurt a lot, but less after getting ice at the aid station. Len has been in some hot and humid races and some where he felt out of gas in the first half of the race, but he has always persevered to the end.

Len's best 5 km time is 20:33; 10 km 41:43, 10 mile in 74 minutes and 1:39 for the half marathon, although he split faster than that in his fastest marathon.

Len is truly the Cal Ripken, Jr. of the Manitoba Marathon!