

June 2009

Boy, what a busy month. This is probably the toughest stretch of the year with three mountain races and a road 5km. Add to that race directing duties at Northfield and training for a new job at work and I ended up pretty drained by the end. Anyway, I started off the month with the Rhody 5km which was part of the seven race Grand Prix. I've run over 90 NE championships over the years but never ran all seven in one year, and thus be named "Iron-runner". I'm hoping that I'll stay healthy enough to make it through this year. On to Rhody, I don't like 5km races, too darned short and no time to really settle in....but you gotta race all distances if you want to be an Iron-runner.

Dan picked me up and the 1:30 drive went by quickly with lively discussions of races past and future. We met up with a big CMS contingent and headed out onto the course for a warm-up. This course is boring and exposed, basically looping through the parking lot at the Twin River dog track in Lincoln RI. We did our standard 3 mile warm-up then I put in another mile with some strides (joined by WRT legend Craig Fram). I was not feeling very good, I had a bout of carsickness on the ride down and was still feeling queasy. Mostly I think it was just nerves, I was very nervous about racing 5km. I had lowered my mileage this week hoping for a good run and maybe that was part of my nervousness.

The start line is very tight at Rhody only about half a road wide. It is kind of funny as the road is very wide after the start but they funnel us all in to get under the start banner. I lined up about 3 or 4 rows from the front and could not believe how hard my heart was pounding in the last minute leading up to the race. Usually I get into a zone and just relax on the line, today I felt like I'd never raced before and just couldn't wait for the gun to go off.

Finally we were gone and I was steadily passed by people in the first half-mile. I was having trouble gauging how I was doing early on as it seemed quick but a boatload of folks were streaming by. I was aiming for 5:10 at the mile then hoping for 5:20 & 5:20 which would bring me home right around my 40+ PR (16:27). I hit the mile in 5:13 and was working pretty hard. Terry McNatt (who ran most of the 12km champs with me) went by just after the mile. I tried to focus on going with him as I know he has better leg speed than me. I kept looking ahead as well, trying to reel in Dan V and Tim Mahoney and also trying to keep TiVO (Tim Van Orden) in sight.

The second mile at Rhody is always tough, it is kind of lonely out there and it is just a long gently curving (and maybe slightly uphill) and full exposed section. Last year I was completely alone during most of this mile, this year I had people all around me. I caught Dan and Tim M at about 1.5 miles and stuck with Terry as we passed the 2m mark in 10:35 (5:22). I was wheezing a bit and feeling rough around the edges.

It seemed like just after 2 miles a few guys pulled by and some others pulled away, but I also closed a little on TiVO and tried to keep Terry close. I just kept thinking "hold on" and kept looking for the starting line which would mark about 500m to go in the race. I knew that I wouldn't be outkicking anyone as I was full-out so I did my best to move in the last half-mile. Mike Platt (Whirlaway) went by in the last half and I could not respond. I hit the three-mile mark in 15:55 (5:20) and dug down for whatever was left.

I didn't have much left, and actually almost tripped on the final turn/uphill onto the track. I bumped into Joe Lemay as we both tried to cut the tangent. I think he may have thrown an elbow at me, but it went way over my head (he is about a foot taller than me). The 100m on the dog track was over before it started and I crossed the line wheezing in 16:30.

All in all it was a decent run for me. I was a little bummed about missing my 40+ PR, but I did run my fastest time of the year, taking 5 seconds off my track time from earlier this season. I also felt I ran aggressively, racing it more than worrying about hitting any particular time. We finished out the day with another big warm-down with about 10 guys looping around the parking lots and checking out the women's race.

Checking out the results, we really lucked out that Kevin Connor came and gave us a full five man team. That got us second place! CMS = 16:04 16:26 16:30 17:04 17:38 = 1:23:42 with Joe Shairs, Tim Van Orden, Dave Dunham, Dan Verrington, Kevin Connor scoring. I ended up 60<sup>th</sup> overall and 16<sup>th</sup> in the 40+, just shy of my goal of top 15.

A couple of days later Trisha Steidl arrived in town. I went into Boston and brought her back to rainy Bradford. Trisha was in town for three weeks to race at Mt Washington and Cranmore where she'd get to test herself against the best mountain runners in the country. We haven't had an elite runner stay with us in quite a while (I don't count **local elites** like Kevin Tilton, TiVO, Paul Kirsch, etc.). She was barely settled in when had to take off and get things ready for the New England Trail running championships at Northfield Mountain.

I headed out to Northfield on Friday and got the course set up in about 1.5 hours. I was on my own so it took a bit longer, but the bugs weren't too bad and the rain had stopped so it wasn't that bad. I put out about 400 flags and put some additional arrows out at some of the trickier spots, I also placed mile markers at the *traditional locations*. It is not a road race but I like the miles to be fairly close to the same spot if for no other reason than to compare from year to year. Al and Diana caught me with about 1.5 miles to go and they assisted me in flagging the last part of the course and then setting

up registration. We headed off for Brattleboro and had a quick swim then the traditional (for me) pre-race dinner of Pizza and Cheesy bread.



Heading into the NF parking lot I was surprised to see so many vehicles 1:30 before race time and a full 30 minutes before registration was slated to begin. The **DRC crew** had everything in hand and along with Al, Diana, Trisha and Chrissy we had registration going smoothly. So smoothly that I got in a normal warm-up of 3 miles with Tim Mahoney, Eric Morse, and others who joined us at various points along the way. The day was warming up but it wasn't nearly as warm or humid as last year. I felt pretty flat but not terrible.

A quick change into my new Inov-8 shoes and my recently re-colored singlet and I was off for some strides. I gave a few instructions and off we went. I was in the top ten right away and quickly settled in. I was hoping to keep Jim Pawlicki and Tim M close and also wanted to beat Tim Van Orden to the summit. I figured all of them would bury me on the down so I tried to work hard in the early going. By the mile (5:47) Jim and Tim M were pulling away and TiVO and I were running side-by-side. I could see Justin Fyffe up front with Josh Ferenc and then a line of guys trailing them.

Between 1 and 2 miles Allan Serrano began to gap me, I wanted to stay with him as he is a 40+ runner and he beat me by a couple of seconds at Wachusett. TiVO also gapped me by a couple of steps on the tough climb up the "Chute" the steepest section of the course. I closed the gap at 2 miles (12:20) and passed TiVO soon after. I knew I really needed some distance on him before the top and pushed as hard as I could. This course is just a bit too fast for my liking. I hit three miles (19:57) alone and kept my head up looking to reel in Serrano and Tim M. On the long straights I could see Jim Pawlicki and Todd Callaghan pulling away.

**Left - Me digging deep for the finish - below Josh Ferenc gets his award**

The out-back section near the summit gives a great opportunity to check out the competition.

Serrano was a step or two behind Tim and I

was 15 seconds back. I tried my best to air it out on the down hill. I hit four miles in 26:59 and was 12 seconds behind Serrano. I felt like I was closing the gap, especially on the steeper sections. Mostly I was worried that at any second TiVO would come flying by. I hit 5 miles in 32:29 as I drew even with Serrano. I was pin-wheeling my arms like mad on the steep downs trying to not run completely out of control. From 5-6 I could hear him behind me but now I was focusing on Tim. He never really came back and I think may have run the last 1.5 quite a bit quicker than I did. Six miles was passed in 37:24 and I hit the finish in tenth place running 39:30.



Ferenc won by 39 seconds running the fifth fastest time ever at Northfield. Justin ran a solid 37:05 for second. Eric Morse was top 40+ in 37:35 breaking TiVO's CR from 2008 by 49 seconds. I took 2nd in the 40+ but came up 8 seconds slower than last year. Abby Mahoney ran the third fastest time ever taking the women's title in 43:42.

All in all it was not a bad week, I took it pretty easy and still got 75 miles. I also got some of the worst heel blisters I've had in many years, from the Inov-8s. I was pretty sore from Northfield and was definitely getting nervous as next up was Mt Washington. I also got my second cortisone shot in my shoulder: the rotator cuff that I somehow managed to injure in April had gotten bad enough that I was having trouble sleeping. The day after Northfield I organized a run & brunch at the Radisson in Chelmsford. We got in a nice run on the Freeman rail trail. Did I mention I was having a busy month?

As tradition has it, we headed off to Atitash on Thursday leading up to the big race. I kicked off the long weekend (for me) with an easy and wet 8m run with Kevin Tilton. It was rainy but not too bad and I found it funny how lousy I felt on even the smallest of hills. I guess it was nerves. That afternoon I hit the trails behind Atitash for a final run before the big race. The rain continued and I still felt less than great. I sold a couple of copies of my book at the Friday night talk and we had a nice dinner at the spaghetti shed. I had half of a lemon pie for desert while watching the Sox game and called it a night by 10 PM.

Race day dawned a bit too sunny for my liking. It really looked to be another warm/humid race. Francis Burdett drove the Atitash group (plus Petey) and we were at the start before 9 AM. A big group of us (CMS and a few others including the Bryant's and Bob Hodge) headed out on the gently rolling trails at the base of the mountain. I got in just under 24 minutes of running then changed into racing flats. My heel which I'd blistered badly at Northfield was very sore but I took Francis's advice and just lubed it up like crazy. I did another mile of running including some strides and headed towards the line. The final five minutes were nerve wracking; I just wanted to get going. I was all the way over on the right and there was a problem with a speaker that was potentially in the way. The cannon fired and it caught a few people, including one of the pre-race favorites - Rickey Gates, off guard. He didn't go by me for the first 30 seconds of the race. I went out reasonably hard and was surprised to see Brandy Erholtz a couple of steps up on me.

I tried to settle in and find a rhythm. It looked like I was in around 25<sup>th</sup> place as the real climb started. Eric Morse went by at about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile, I was hoping not many more would pass. Francis had been on my shoulder from the start and he made a move near the mile. I was surprised but figured he must have felt good. I didn't want any masters going by but there wasn't much I could do. Right around that time I pulled away from Glen Guillemette and was also passed by Sean Livingston. Wow, that was early for Sean who always goes out conservatively and has very fast second halves. The mile split was 6:55 which was 1 second slower than last year, I had hoped to run faster this year but knew better than to panic this early. I focused on Sean and tried to use him to pull me along.



### Happy to notch another sub-1:10

I split mile two in 8:44 which was 6 seconds slower than last year. It was humid but not particularly hot so I just wasn't feeling great. I continued to trail Sean as we both caught Jim Johnson after 3 miles (9:05). Jim had been looking back quite a bit and gave Sean some words of encouragement as he passed. He told me he felt good at the pace he was running. I thought he stayed with me for a while but it turned out to be Brendan Callahan who I caught at 4m (9:09 split). The half split was 32:59 which was promising. A sub-1:10 was still possible. Callahan would be the last person I would pass and soon after we hit dense fog. I could barely see Sean 10-15 seconds up, but tried to look where he went to run the tangents. The fifth mile was totally socked in and my 9:55 was the slowest split of the day (that is typically the slowest mile). I kept doing the math and knew sub-1:10 was going to be close. At 6 miles (9:41 split) I could still see Sean and sometimes I could see Eric Morse not far ahead of him. We all came out in a different world at 7 miles when we emerged into bright sunlight. I was surprised to see a line of guys in front of me, well it was the first time you could see ahead and I could see the 10 guys spread out then a dense wall of fog. I hit 7 with a 9:34 split and an overall time of 63:03 and knew that barring a complete disaster sub 1:10 was possible. I kept pushing, and as we got out of the fog could see the summit building. I took a final look at my watch at the base of the wall (knowing it would take under a minute) to reassure myself I had a shot. I hit the line in 1:09:22 and almost bowled over Kevin T as I weaved to the summit. Jason Bryant joined me and we met up with Francis on the very top to enjoy a moment (albeit a wobbly one for me) at the summit post. The under-cast made for a unique view that we enjoyed for a bit.

I shot a quick video and then George Z, Woody, Eric, DQ and I headed out for a warm-down. It really was down as we ran back down the course (in 66:03). Thanks to the big mileage day at Mt Washington I had a total of 87 miles for the week which is my best so far this year.



**Jason Bryant, Me, and Francis on the summit**

**Me and Dave Dunham - he ran the race in 1961 & 62**

The final weekend of the month started off early for me as I went into Boston to pick up Richard Bolt. Rich flew in for the weekend to act as the USATF liaison at Cranmore which was the site of the US Mountain running championships. The race was also the NACA champs which meant runners from Canada and Mexico were present. As if that wasn't enough, it also served as the first of two selection races for the US team which will compete in the World mountain champs in Italy this September.

We headed up to Cranmore on Saturday morn. I had picked up a crappy head-cold and felt miserable. I debated even running in the morning, but felt good enough after being dizzy for the first mile. Once we arrived at Cranmore Rich hung out chatting with Andy Schachat who was checking out the start area where he'd do the announcing on race day. I headed out to run the first kilometer and check out the 100m of tricky descent through the "glade". This was really the only part of the course that I was worried about. There wasn't much of an indication of a trail in this part; there also wasn't much rock so it wasn't too bad. I figured I'd give up a little in that section to guys who have no fear, but I'd make up a lot on the upper slopes when most everyone walks.

Rich and I both took a soak in the river before meeting up with Paul Kirsch and his family along with Trish Steidl and Nancy Hobbs. I ate a ton of pizza at Flatbreads, and was a bit bummed that I couldn't find anything non-organic☺. After dinner it was back to Paul's where we helped out with some final preparations for the race.

My head cold didn't feel much better but I had a decent nights sleep. We were up at 6 and on the way to Dunkin's by 6:30. We were not the first to arrive despite getting into the parking lot 30 minutes prior to registration beginning. Paul had pretty much everything under control so I finished my large regular and got ready for the race.

Double-J, DQ, Ed Horse, Justin Fyffe, Tim & Abby, Trish, Jim P, and maybe a couple of others joined up and we did a nice out/back run on the trails that kept us from doing any big climbs prior to the race. I was still a bit dizzy doing the run and despite the slow pace felt a bit winded. I was finally starting to get nervous about the race after a week of being in a post-Mt Washington blah.

I switched into the Unitard™ and put on the blister causing Inov-8's that have great tread. The course was wet and muddy and traction would be a concern. I did a light jog, but no strides as my energy was very low. Over 225 of us lined up, with cloudy skies and temps in the 70's with super-high humidity. Then off we went in a blur of arms and legs. Some people went out VERY fast for the first 100m of flat running. I was not in the top 50 as the climb began.

It was still easy to pass as everyone was moving pretty slowly. We slowed to almost a walk at the first brief single-track. In the second single-track I called out "trail" which got a couple of laughs. I did a little bushwhacking and slowly passed

some early speedsters. We exited the single-track and Ben Nephew went flying by with Eric Morse right behind him. Then things began to settle down. I was just a step behind Brandy Erholtz who seemed to be working very hard. I was working hard as well and did a quick count of my place (about 35). I think that helps me focus on who is ahead of me. I definitely was looking to reel in a lot of people. Heck, we weren't even 1KM into the race and people were beginning to realize they may have gone out too hard.



### Left-Joe Gray wants to know where he can get a Unitard!

I hit the KM in 5:48 and heard Tim Van Orden call out something about poison ivy (perhaps warning some of the Raw Foods people to not eat it?). I was glad to hear him behind me, not so glad that he was RIGHT behind me. I knew I'd need to have some distance on him at the top as he can fly on the down. I had to work hard to get around Brandy, every time I pulled even with her she sped up. I thought that was pretty aggressive this early in the race. I pulled clear of her just after the 2 KM mark as we got onto the steep narrow washed out section.

I kept my head up and could see a line of guys in front of me. I caught Tim Mahoney on the first grassy steep climb and reeled in one of the Mexican runners. I caught a Canadian runner soon after when we hit the steep glade and most everyone was walking. I don't like to power-walk, maybe I'm afraid I won't be able to start running again. I hit the top in 17:02 and grabbed a cup of water as we started the long downhill. My goal for the downhill was to not get hurt and to run as fast as possible on the "good" sections.

It seemed to take a long time to get to 4KM and even longer to get to the glade. I couldn't believe that someone was running the down slower than me, but I caught some poor sap. Just as I entered the glade I heard someone coming in behind me. It turned out to be two someone's as TiVo and Tim M both blew by me during the 100m of nastiness. I turned the power back on as we hit the better footing and ran even with Tim M right behind TiVo to the bottom. This was a bit of a replay of last year when TiVo got me in the glade and put 30 seconds on me on the bottom. I was surprised that neither of the Tim's could pull away on the flat. That could bode well, as we hit the second loop stride for stride.

### Right - Tired and happy

I tried to push as much as possible on the climb and hoped to gap them early and maybe discourage them from following. I was a bit concerned about how bad I felt but knew I needed every second I could muster on the climb if I wanted to hold them off on the drop. The three of us are very close in the point totals in the USATF NE mountain series of which Cranmore was the fourth race (of six). Every second would count. It took forever to get to the 1KM marker but I kept focus ahead and had Todd Callaghan in site along with a Mexican runner.

On the steep climbs I could even see Morse not too far ahead. Of course not too far ahead on a 20% slope is actually pretty far back on flat running. I walked a couple of wobbly steps on the really steep stuff, my only walking of the day. Then I was on top of the mountain again and heading down the dirt road. I was a bit wobbly and felt like I wasn't moving well. My first downhill split turned out to be within a second of what I ran on the first loop so I guess I wasn't doing badly. I focused on getting to the glade and once I did that I just worked my way through it. The glade was better this time around as there was a much more distinct path with all of the people blasting through. Once back on the better footing I gave all I had. I was relieved to hear "no one is behind you" when I hit the bottom. My gas tank was close to empty. I hit the finish line in 25<sup>th</sup> place in 56:20. That was about 1:30 faster than I ran last year and was good enough to get me a gold medal in the 45-49 age group. Dave Quintal took second which was pretty cool, sort of like to old days for us getting All-American back at U-Lowell.

The warm-down was slow and painful. I had some bad blisters and sore hips, along with some sore muscles that I didn't even know I had. The award ceremony was pretty cool; Kevin Tilton was in the top 10 and got a medal. Ben Nephew had a great race as well. All in all the entire CMS team had good runs. Tim Mahoney came through with a coke for me which really helped as I couldn't seem to kick the post-race bonk.



Next up will be the Loon Mountain race which is probably my favorite. It starts out easy and gets progressively more difficult. It is a little to easy in the early going for me but the 30-40% slope on Upper Walking Boss helps bring back some of the speedsters. I've had good luck at the race in the past and hope to kick this cold and feel "normal". I'm also registered for the Carson 2 mile on the fourth but may pass on that if I'm not feeling good. I'm very sore and tired, but that is how you should feel if you ran Cranmore right.



**CMS teammates - Jim Johnson, Dave Quintal, and Eric Morse....relieved to have not gotten injured running up and down Cranmore.**



**Top 3 in the 45-49 age group, me, Dave Quintal, and Todd Brown.**

Totals: June 331  
2009 - 1,982  
Life - 106,094