

**The Seashore Nature Trail 50K at
First Landing State Park
Virginia Beach, VA
December 19, 2009**

By Mel Williams, Race Director

The Tidewater Striders is one of the most active running clubs in the nation and over the course of its 38-year history has sponsored races ranging in distance from 100-meter sprints to 100-kilometer ultramarathons. However, the last ultramarathon sponsored by the Striders was a quarter-century ago, in 1984. The *Bud Light Ultra Classic* included both a 50K and 100K race on paved roads in Chesapeake, Virginia, but was discontinued when its main driving force, a Marine named Jim Hintz, was transferred out of the area.

Having run the 50K in that 1984 event, over the years I became increasingly intrigued with the idea of resurrecting the ultramarathon race for our area. However, conducting distance races on the streets of southeastern Virginia had become increasingly problematic. While running the trails in First Landing State Park (FLSP) one day, it dawned on me that the park would be a perfect venue for an ultradistance run.

In the early years of the Striders, back in the 1970s, the club sponsored several races totally within FLSP (then known as Seashore State Park). However, following a state budget crisis in the early 1980s, conducting official races in state parks was prohibited. Nevertheless, the trails were open to all runners and FLSP continued to be the most popular training venue for runners in Southside Hampton Roads. I proposed the 50K race to Rich Hildreth, president of the Striders, and he and the Strider Board of Directors were very supportive. I then contacted John Price, an extraordinary ultra runner, and John designed an excellent course that covered nearly all of the trails within the park.

A draft proposal was submitted to the administration at FLSP, which thought the proposal had merit but suggested some small changes that restricted the course to the main trail and to several side trails. Although not running all trails, it was still an exceptional course. At this point, I assembled a committee consisting of experienced ultrarunners, marathoners, and race administrators, including John Price, Gene Bachman, Dan Edwards, Bee McLeod, Linda Palluch, Jean Phelan, Steve Speirs, Stacin Martin, and Goody Tyler. We submitted the application to the FLSP administration in August and the race was approved. Kim Miller, activity coordinator at First Landing State Park, was very supportive and cooperative in helping to secure the use of the park as a race venue.

Preparation over the next four months involved numerous factors, such as designing the race logo, selecting amenities for the runners including technical shirts, refrigerator magnets, sport bags, and finishers medals, organizing a list of volunteers needed, arranging medical coverage,

outlining course management, and preparing and stocking the aid stations. Unique awards were designed for the top three runners in three categories—overall, master (age 40 and over), and senior (age 50 and over). Thanks to Steve Speirs for his design of the logo that appeared on the awards and most of the amenities.

The weather forecast a week before the race was just about perfect, indicating the possibility of a little rain on Tuesday, but then clear weather the remainder of the week through Saturday, which was race day. I copied and forwarded the weather forecast via email to all registered runners, indicating it looked like we were in for some pleasant race day conditions. I should have realized that was a *kiss of death*.

The weather forecast changed the next day, indicating that Saturday would be cold with rain. As the week progressed, Saturday's forecast became much gloomier, including heavier rain and high winds. For those of you familiar with the meteorological term *nor'easter*, that was the prediction for race day. Flooding was expected in low lying areas. Not the best conditions for running a race, much less a trail ultramarathon.

Given the predicted weather conditions, several suggestions were made concerning the fate of the race. Some recommended that the race be cancelled outright, whereas others suggested the complete opposite—that it should go on as scheduled. After weighing the pluses and minuses of these diametrically opposite suggestions, it was decided to go on with the race but modify the course as a safety measure. The side trails were eliminated because it would be difficult to access runners in difficulty with motorized vehicles. Additionally, part of the course on the main trail that was prone to flooding was switched to a parallel paved state road. Instead of two big loops involving the main and side trails, the course was now a three-loop course involving only the main trail and paved road. Overall the runners covered 21 miles on the trail and 10 miles on the paved road surface. Aid stations were set with a 3-mile distance between each access.

It rained periodically through the night before the race. The race started at 7:30 AM with light rain and temperature in the high 30s. The temperature gradually rose during the early hours of the race, reaching a high of about 50 degrees by noon. The rain was off and on, mostly light to moderate. At about noon the rain became intense, the winds increased in velocity, and the temperature plummeted 13 degrees in one hour.

Runners without protective rain gear became soaked to the bone. The main trail became a quagmire. Deep puddles of water and mud were everywhere. Runners' legs were caked with brown muck. Dan Eldredge, who ran with his wife Penny, jokingly noted that *our only complaint was that there was an occasional section of the trail that did not have mud or standing water and we therefore believed we were not properly challenged*.

[Photo of runner here]

[James Moore, from Maryland, runs through the mud of the Cape Henry Main Trail in First Landing State Park]

[Photo courtesy of TriDuo.com]

The paved road should have provided a respite from the muddy trail, and it did to some extent. However, as the day wore on, the water that flooded the lower main trail began to creep across the paved road. The first loop was relatively dry, but for some runners the depth of the water on the road was ankle deep during the second loop and knee to thigh deep on the third loop. Some runners took a side loop on dry land through bush and brambles, but most just ploughed on through. One runner, most likely *tongue in cheek*, tried to look at the positive side of the deep water, noting that *now he did not have to sit in a cold water bath back in the hotel to help reduce muscle soreness*. Talk about positive thinking!

[Photo of flooding here]

[Early flooding on the state road and lower Cape Henry Narrows Trail. Flood waters would later cover the state road, knee-to-thigh deep for some runners]

[Photo courtesy of TriDuo.com]

Our main safety concern was hypothermia. Once the projected weather conditions were known, an email message was sent to all runners and was also available at packet pickup. The message described conditions leading to hypothermia, the key symptoms such as uncontrollable shivering, and the need for immediate assistance with severe symptoms. Runners who needed to be warmed up after the race had access to a heated recreational vehicle, courtesy of ultrarunner Gene Bachman. Two hypothermic incidents were noted. One runner was escorted from the course while the other finished the race. Both recovered rapidly with dry clothes and being placed in a warm vehicle.

You all have heard the cliché from runners “*We could not have done it without the volunteers*” and it was never more appropriate than it was for *the Seashore Nature Trail 50K*. Most runners endured and finished the race, with 150 finishers of 168 starters, nearly a 90 percent finish rate. Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with most comments praising the role of the volunteers on the course and at the aid stations, one which also served as a drop-bag station. Here are several examples of typical comments from the runners.

“I know the 3 loops may have been boring to most, but it truly was a blessing to hit the volunteers/tents all those times . . . that is truly what kept me going, knowing that I was going to get great support when I turned around to go back the way I just came. They truly will not understand how much they helped me get through my 1st, and hopefully not last but better weather, ultra marathon.”

“I know this falls into the category of a ‘me too’ post. But those who volunteered on Saturday deserve all the thanks and kudos we can express. I’ve never seen more smiles among a group of people The more I was offered food at the aid stations, the more I felt like I did when I

would visit my mother. You're not going without taking some food, are you? I've been cooking all day. Here, eat, take something. It was almost like that. All of you managed to turn a miserable day into a memorable one. Thank you all."

Stacin Martin was outstanding as overall coordinator of volunteer efforts, while husband/wife team Goody Tyler and Bee McLeod (Past-president of the RRCA) were superb in coordinating the volunteer activity at the two aid stations. Angelo Celesia, Rob Levinsky, and Jim Ross spent the day touring the course to assist runners, while Dan Edwards, Jean Phelan and Linda Palluch coordinated volunteer efforts at the finish line. Rick Brown supervised recording of results. All in all, about 75 volunteers served on the course, many for 9-10 hours straight.

The race also benefited from the contributions from some local businesses. Jerry and Amy Frostick of *J&A Racing*, the company that produces *the Shamrock Sportsfest*, provided a variety of supplies, while Jim Golden, owner of *Final Kick Sports* in Virginia Beach, and Mike Robinson, owner of *Running Etc.* in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, donated various raffle prizes. Jim Ross provided tents for the aid stations, and Ada and Allen Lester of *TriDuo.com* spent the entire day taking photos along the course from start to finish.

The runners also should be praised, not only for enduring such harsh weather conditions, but also for their overall courtesy to the volunteers and trail etiquette. One trail race etiquette guideline is to leave the trail as clean as you found it, and the entire trail was left exceptionally free of trash following the race.

We had established a limit of 250 on race entries, and ended with a total of 245 registered runners. Of this total, 191 picked up their race packets before the race. Many runners could not make the trip from the western parts of Virginia, the District of Columbia and other points north because of a massive snow storm on Friday and Saturday. In our area, that snow of course fell as rain. Of that 191 runners, 168 started the race and, as noted, 150 finished. Here are the results, including the top three male and female overall, master, and senior winners and others by age group.

Overall Female Open Winners

Place	Name	City	Age	Overall	Time	Pace
1	Jennifer Jellig	Va Beach VA	30	27	4:50:44.1	5:49/K
2	Judy Urwin	Va Beach VA	44	31	4:54:27.0	5:53/K
3	Stephanie Manny	Va Beach VA	28	35	4:57:12.1	5:57/K

Overall Female Masters Winners

1	Mary Guertin	Monson MA	43	40	5:03:08.2	6:04/K
2	Janet Skinner	Va Beach VA	50	43	5:06:54.6	6:08/K
3	Suzanne Weightman	Greensburg PA	45	52	5:15:35.3	6:19/K

Overall Female Seniors Winners

1	Jeanne J Kruger-Williams	Norfolk	62	55	5:19:21.7	6:23/K
2	Jean A Richards	Stockton NJ	56	100	6:17:53.7	7:33/K
3	Ruth McGovern Forehand	Norfolk VA	50	104	6:24:17.2	7:41/K

Female 1 to 39

1	Jill Michele Herrick	Belchertown MA	36	39	5:03:07.0	6:04/K
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2	Jamie D Brennan	Va Beach VA	25	47	5:12:10.9	6:15/K
3	Brenda Carawan	Va Beach VA	32	49	5:14:17.1	6:17/K
4	Christina Goral	Va Beach VA	31	58	5:23:45.6	6:29/K
5	Salena D Oxenford	Va Beach VA	32	60	5:26:19.5	6:32/K
6	Donna M Lewis	Va Beach VA	35	87	5:52:06.5	7:03/K
7	Tina Dyane Grimes	Va Beach VA	26	109	6:30:30.6	7:49/K
8	Kirsten A Kelly	Virginia Beach VA	39	111	6:30:45.0	7:49/K
9	Kevin Griffin	Va Beach VA	34	112	6:30:50.0	7:49/K
10	Erica Leffler	Norfolk VA	22	126	6:43:28.1	8:04/K
11	Joan Kretschmer	Va Beach VA	28	130	6:45:25.4	8:07/K
12	Elisabeth Piff	Kitty Hawk NC	33	134	6:51:04.4	8:13/K
13	Jennifer Parker Baar	Chesapeake VA	26	142	7:35:00.1	9:06/K
14	Liz Santos	Alexandria VA	39	149	8:34:30.0	10:17/K

Female 40 to 49

1	Elizabeth McMichael	Leonardtwn MD	44	68	5:35:40.4	6:43/K
2	Carmen Wasserman	Carrollton VA	43	69	5:36:39.9	6:44/K
3	Sherry Ferro	Granby LA	42	79	5:46:32.1	6:56/K
4	Michele Smith-Harden	Norfolk VA	46	88	5:53:38.4	7:04/K
5	Donna Ornosky	Birdsboro PA	47	89	5:53:41.9	7:04/K
6	Beth L Morgan	Bristol TN	41	91	6:00:57.4	7:13/K
7	Lori A Tubbs	Va Beach VA	46	93	6:05:38.2	7:19/K
8	Susan Jennings	Bluemont VA	48	96	6:10:44.3	7:25/K
9	Jami Brill	Hampton VA	43	140	7:06:52.7	8:32/K
10	Mary E Spear	Va Beach VA	49	143	7:35:00.4	9:06/K
11	Lori A Sherwood	Portsmouth VA	45	148	8:08:56.5	9:47/K

Female 50 and over

1	Gail F Biermann	Va Beach VA	51	110	6:30:44.1	7:49/K
2	Patti S. Fisher	Mohnton PA	57	146	7:39:33.6	9:11/K

Overall Male Open Winners

1	Tommy Holland	Va Beach VA	37	1	3:37:25.9	4:21/K
2	Tommy Neeson	Va Beach VA	40	2	3:51:12.6	4:37/K
3	Steve Speirs	Va Beach VA	43	3	3:56:40.6	4:44/K

Overall Male Masters Winners

1	Stephen Vreeke	Canyon Lake TX	40	4	4:10:40.6	5:01/K
2	Lee True	Va Beach VA	45	5	4:19:04.5	5:11/K
3	Tyler Peek	Morrisville NC	44	8	4:22:11.7	5:15/K

Overall Male Seniors Winners

1	Ben Loredo Cavazos	Va Beach VA	50	9	4:23:44.3	5:16/K
2	Allan Perez	Silver Spring MD	52	15	4:30:40.2	5:25/K
3	John A. Price	Va Beach VA	55	16	4:31:47.2	5:26/K

Male 1 to 39

1	Greg Smith	Chesapeake VA	38	6	4:19:19.4	5:11/K
2	Kevin Townsend	Lebanon VA	37	7	4:22:11.2	5:15/K
3	Michael Payne	Va Beach VA	37	10	4:24:11.0	5:17/K
4	James M Booth	Va Beach VA	32	11	4:25:39.5	5:19/K
5	Thomas Anthony Donovan	Va Beach VA	35	13	4:27:52.3	5:21/K
6	Wade Barrett	Houston TX	33	14	4:28:28.4	5:22/K
7	Jay Dantone	Norfolk VA	38	17	4:35:14.3	5:30/K
8	Mark Manny	Va Beach VA	30	18	4:37:13.7	5:33/K
9	Jonathan Morgan Musenga	Va Beach VA	29	19	4:38:50.1	5:35/K
10	Michael Wolfe	Va Beach VA	28	23	4:44:48.4	5:42/K
11	Jimmy Alan Markins	Va Beach VA	36	24	4:47:19.3	5:45/K
12	Bryan Storholm	Va Beach VA	30	25	4:47:19.6	5:45/K
13	Gregory Schwartz	Va Beach VA	39	26	4:49:15.3	5:47/K
14	Anthony M Sweitzer Jr	Ashburn VA	37	30	4:53:05.7	5:52/K
15	Brian Robert Cobb	Va Beach VA	37	33	4:56:24.1	5:56/K
16	J David MacLuskie	Yorktown VA	36	34	4:56:57.6	5:56/K
17	Jeremy Clover	Portsmouth VA	28	36	4:57:13.1	5:57/K
18	Henry Parke Wakley	McCoy VA	24	38	5:02:39.2	6:03/K
19	Joe Gabana	Va Beach VA	35	42	5:06:49.1	6:08/K

20	Andrew Thomas Arroyo	Va Beach VA	35	44	5:07:27.4	6:09/K
21	Daniel K Hollingshead	Portsmouth VA	29	46	5:10:04.8	6:12/K
22	Shawn Chabot	Norfolk VA	35	48	5:13:58.2	6:17/K
23	Peter Hudec	Brooklyn NY	39	51	5:14:25.2	6:17/K
24	Michael Nathani Gaona	Rockville MD	23	56	5:20:41.4	6:25/K
25	Brian Bennett	Alexandria VA	36	59	5:25:35.7	6:31/K
26	Paul Andrew Grosch	Va Beach VA	33	63	5:28:04.1	6:34/K
27	Jason Lamb	Arlington VA	37	64	5:29:22.6	6:35/K
28	John A King	Midlothian VA	38	70	5:38:40.0	6:46/K
29	George T Dillon	Va Beach VA	32	71	5:39:37.6	6:48/K
30	Todd Sartwell	Va Beach VA	36	72	5:39:37.9	6:48/K
31	Brandon Kyle McWilliams	Norfolk VA	36	73	5:39:44.6	6:48/K
32	Coleman Ruiz	Va Beach	34	77	5:43:24.2	6:52/K
33	Stephen D. Jones	Va Beach VA	37	80	5:46:38.8	6:56/K
34	Richard Chad Bollinger	Va Beach VA	37	81	5:46:40.5	6:56/K
35	Jonathan Olszyk	Va Beach VA	31	82	5:46:44.7	6:56/K
36	Michael Bordi	Va Beach VA	36	83	5:47:52.6	6:57/K
37	Paul Charles Reed	Va Beach VA	34	84	5:47:59.2	6:58/K
38	Vincent C Savage	Chesapeake VA	33	86	5:49:38.7	7:00/K
39	Jason Robert Sullivan	Inman SC	35	90	6:00:33.0	7:13/K
40	Andrew K Fortmann	Va Beach VA	32	94	6:08:07.0	7:22/K
41	Eric Krapf	Virginia Beach VA	28	101	6:18:05.6	7:34/K
42	John Paul Donovan	Va Beach VA	30	107	6:26:22.8	7:44/K
43	Zachary Brian Emery	Portsmouth VA	19	113	6:31:00.9	7:49/K
44	Richard Roth	Va Beach VA	28	117	6:33:44.1	7:52/K
45	Brad Workman	Va Beach VA	31	118	6:35:14.0	7:54/K
46	Chris W Clevenger	Norfolk VA	28	120	6:38:19.6	7:58/K
47	Alex Barrett Weaver	Blacksburg VA	21	122	6:39:41.2	8:00/K
48	Christopher Damon	Va Beach	26	123	6:40:35.2	8:01/K
49	Phillip Andrew Snead	Va Beach VA	36	125	6:43:25.6	8:04/K
50	Mac F Talbert	Va Beach VA	39	127	6:43:29.4	8:04/K
51	William Kongesor	Chesapeake VA	26	129	6:45:24.9	8:06/K
52	Kevin A. Lane	Norfolk VA	37	139	7:06:48.1	8:32/K
53	James Kenneth Delano	Richmond VA	30	141	7:09:01.6	8:35/K
54	Brandon Fisher	Mohnton PA	29	145	7:39:33.1	9:11/K
Male 40 to 49						
1	Jeremy Davidson	Va Beach VA	40	12	4:27:25.5	5:21/K
2	Jonathan L Elder	Chesapeake VA	45	20	4:41:47.7	5:38/K
3	Bob Nugent	Binghamton NY	49	21	4:43:19.2	5:40/K
4	Loren G Erickson	Va Beach	45	22	4:43:59.7	5:41/K
5	Scott Carlson	Va Beach VA	46	32	4:54:30.5	5:53/K
6	Francisco Rodriguez	Va Beach VA	48	37	4:58:47.2	5:59/K
7	Christopher Jo Bradley	Va Beach VA	45	41	5:04:53.3	6:06/K
8	Ray Emmerson	Va Beach	46	50	5:14:21.1	6:17/K
9	Kevin M. Burns	Va Beach VA	41	62	5:27:39.2	6:33/K
10	Thomas Daniels	Va Beach VA	49	66	5:31:11.1	6:37/K
11	Echard Wheeler	Va Beach VA	42	74	5:39:57.4	6:48/K
12	Jeffrey Green	Va Beach	47	78	5:45:21.0	6:54/K
13	Tom Grant	Ashland VA	46	85	5:48:22.7	6:58/K
14	Tim Large	Middleburg FL	43	92	6:04:44.9	7:18/K
15	Kim H Mitchell	Va Beach	49	95	6:10:35.8	7:25/K
16	Michael Yoder	Dayton MD	44	99	6:17:16.8	7:33/K
17	Tom Cobb	Peabody MA	40	102	6:19:23.3	7:35/K
18	Michael Daniels	Va Beach VA	43	105	6:25:06.8	7:42/K
19	David Klisz	Ashland VA	40	108	6:26:52.0	7:44/K
20	Jim McCoy	Va Beach VA	42	121	6:39:04.2	7:59/K
21	Chris Brogan	Va Beach VA	43	124	6:40:39.0	8:01/K
22	Scott Swenson	Va Beach VA	43	128	6:43:49.2	8:05/K
23	Stephen Rowan	Va Beach VA	47	133	6:49:16.4	8:11/K
24	Daniel E Eldredge	Norfolk VA	47	138	7:06:47.4	8:32/K
25	David W Demmin	Norfolk VA	41	147	7:57:10.5	9:33/K
Male 50 and over						
1	Rob Hoy	Chalfont PA	50	28	4:51:16.6	5:50/K
2	Herman Richards	Stockton NJ	56	29	4:52:24.0	5:51/K
3	Michael Chaney	Chesapeake VA	53	45	5:08:13.6	6:10/K

4	Charles Pifer	Chesapeake VA	54	53	5:16:12.0	6:19/K
5	David Livingstone	Ludlow MA	57	54	5:17:02.3	6:20/K
6	John Wills	Va Beach VA	57	57	5:23:16.8	6:28/K
7	Tom Patton	Va Beach VA	69	61	5:26:53.7	6:32/K
8	Rene T Fariss	Va Beach	54	65	5:29:53.3	6:36/K
9	Tom Burke	Va Beach VA	53	67	5:32:39.1	6:39/K
10	George Nelsen	Newport News VA	54	75	5:43:07.2	6:52/K
11	Dean Clark Wewetzer	Newport News VA	51	76	5:43:07.5	6:52/K
12	James E Moore	Bowie MD	65	97	6:12:47.8	7:27/K
13	Konrad Wassman	Va Beach	54	98	6:12:54.4	7:27/K
14	Roy F Blackburn	Va Beach	54	103	6:19:23.9	7:35/K
15	Jay A Bowman	Kitty Hawk NC	52	106	6:26:18.4	7:44/K
16	Robert Rantanen	Va Beach	57	114	6:33:00.4	7:52/K
17	Sam Wittenberg	Va Beach VA	56	115	6:33:02.5	7:52/K
18	Jim Duffy	Va Beach VA	57	116	6:33:04.3	7:52/K
19	Chris Nicolaides	Midlothian VA	50	119	6:36:04.9	7:55/K
20	Douglas Dean Hartman	Springfield VA	50	131	6:48:01.8	8:10/K
21	Richard M Hildreth	Va Beach	61	132	6:48:12.3	8:10/K
22	William Joseph Dungan Jr	Va Beach VA	53	135	6:52:35.4	8:15/K
23	Charlie Surran	Norfolk VA	59	136	6:59:29.4	8:23/K
24	Jacob Anderson	Va Beach VA	53	137	7:04:11.7	8:29/K
25	Gary W Searcy	Va Beach	53	144	7:38:37.9	9:10/K
26	Tom Gerhardt	Chesapeake VA	58	150	8:38:05.5	10:22/K