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(F1C)



C.J. Risak

Medal-gap: win at all cost

WHAT WE NEED now is some real leadership.

The time has come. We're beyond the stage of pussyfootin' around. No time for meetings to plan agendas and schedules for other meetings. We are at the critical stage. We need action!

Where's General George Patton when you need him? He could get us out of this problem. Better than that, he never would have let us get into it to begin with.

Yes, fellow Americans, we have blindly fallen into another crafty, deviously constructed Communist plot. They tricked us as easily as a travelling medicine man slickers a country bumpkin into buying his miracle cure.

The resulting mess is what will be known as — drum roll please — MEDAL-GAP.

HOW DID IT happen? How could we have been so easily deceived?

Those questions are answerable. What's difficult to swallow is how easily we fell into the Communists' real trap.

For years, We Americans cleaned up at the Olympic Games. No problem. Any of the major sports (major sports are defined as those receiving the most TV air time, which, not surprisingly, are those that Americans do best in) were ours.

Track and field, basketball, swimming — forget it. No race necessary. Just point us to the podium and start playing "the Banner."

THAT'S WHEN the Communists hatched their plot. In 1968, we captured 107 medals at the Olympics to the Soviets 91. "What competition?" we asked smugly.

By 1972, our lead had somehow disappeared. Shock waves rippled through our amateur sports leadership. "Medal-gap! Medal-gap! Where's our medal-gap?" the anguished members of the sports media cried.

U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) officials replied calmly, "Never fear. The '72 games were only a mirage. A trick accomplished with mirrors and steroids. Things will return to normal in Montreal in '76."

But they didn't. The Soviets captured 99 medals in '72 to 93 for the U.S. In Montreal in '76, the condition worsened: 125 for the Soviets, 94 for the U.S. and 90 for the East Germans.

THE TRAP WAS SPRUNG. Just as the Communists expected, we panicked.

Superior training facilities, paid athletes — how do you expect us to compete against that?" our athletes claimed. "We need more support."

So we gave it to them. The Amateur Sports Act of 1978 was born. The USOC, the national governing body for most of our sports, gave them some say in USOC decision-making and made USOC the international coordinating agency.

The American plan to recapture our past glories was founded in our deepest belief: money can buy anything. Corporations, from beer to autos to cameras, poured capital into our Olympic plans. The USOC budget grew from \$4.6 million in 1969 to \$8.1 million for '84.

WE REACTED just as the Communists figured. And planned.

It's all simple to see, in retrospect. Take a look at the medal results from the first-ever World Track and Field Championships, held last week in Helsinki, Finland, 24; USSR, 23; East Germany, 22. The East Germans even had more gold than the U.S.

We should have fared better in a sport we usually dominate. All that money the U.S. has invested in national training centers and sports festivals has so far accomplished very little. We haven't improved much at all.

Instead, we're trying to play the game according to the Communists' rules. We changed our organization to match theirs.

Which, I might add, is just what their ultimate plan was.

Can we win playing their game? Not with our present philosophy. There are a handful of local athletes who have a shot at competing in the '84 Olympic games.

Livonia's Craig Payne (boxing), Jeff Pierce (cycling) and Al Laird (hockey); Plymouth's Greg Wadsworth (swimming); Jamie Gilbert (field hockey); Macomb's Michelle Berube (rhythmic gymnastics); Garden City's Steve Kogler (skating); Southfield's Richard Dally (figure skating); Canton's Dave Hine (marathon racing); and Westland's Carol Fox (figure skating).

Will any of them see any of the \$20.1 million? Perhaps a bit, but not much. The money will benefit the elite athletes, the popular sports the most.

BUT WE'RE committed now. There's no turning back. The Communists figure we can't beat them at their game. That's their plan when they started forcing their people to become athletes, pumping them full of drugs to make them stronger and letting them work full-time on their sport at their country's expense.

Who's the next somebody to shake us up. Woody Hayes would be the perfect choice — someone militaristic to train our Olympic team. Whip them into shape. Force them to win — just as our rivals do.

That's the path we decided to travel. In the past, we won without national training centers and millions of dollars, but it wasn't good enough.

Medal-gap. After all, that's what's important; the medal count.

It's a battle we intend to win. No matter what the price.

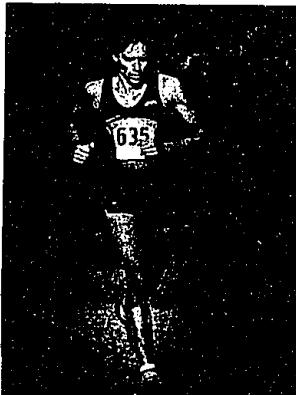


Runners jockey for position at the start of Saturday's Total Runner 10 Mile Run through Bloomfield Hills.

photos by JERRY ZOLYNSKY

Grabowski digests 'Salad Bowl' course

By Tom Henderson
Staff writer



Orchard Lake's Ed Grabowski was the run's overall winner.

The weather was gorgeous, so was the course, and the first annual Bloomfield Total Runner 10-Miler for the Muscular Dystrophy Association was a smash success Saturday for most of the 650 entrants and both of the major sponsors.

It was tough, but gorgeous," said Ed Grabowski, 27, a West Bloomfield High grad and former Eastern Michigan track and fielder who had his first overall in 51:44.

"I was like running in a big salad bowl with all those trees. I really enjoyed it."

Grabowski lives near Phoenix, where he teaches high school biology and coaches cross country, where the trees are sparse, the countrywide flat and the heat often well into the 100s. Grabowski spends his summers in Michigan, running races on weekends and working as pool director at Tam O'Shanter.

Grabowski, who earlier this summer won the five-mile Siekell Cell Aromatic Run in downtown Detroit and the three-mile Zoo Be Run at the Detroit Zoo, was paced the first couple of miles by his brothers, John and Gerard. He ran pretty much by himself the last half of the course, which finished with three-quarters of a lap around the Andover High track.

As Grabowski crossed the finish line, the second-place runner, Eugene Miron, 31, was just popping out of the woods above the track. He finished in 53:24.

Joe Davey, 18, the Birmingham Brother Rice runner, was third. He is the son of Chuck Davey, the former Michigan boxing commissioner who won the 50-and-over division.

BETH TRUDGEON, 24, of Southfield was the women's champion in 62:40. She passed Ella Willis of Detroit in the bike path three miles from the finish and breezed to a 55-second win.

"It was a real nice day," said a thankful Trudgeon. "With August, you never know what the weather's going to be like. That's why we have to start so early (8 a.m.). I don't like heat at all. I've had some real bad races in the heat."

Trudgeon, a seven-year veteran of running, works at Total Runner, the Southfield and Gross Pointe stores that co-sponsored the race with the Detroit area 7-Eleven stores.

"You know, when we first got into this, I was leery," said Charlie Blanchard, owner of Total Runner. "I was worried about the cost it would take and getting it organized. But everyone was so nice. Store supervisor Fred Korro, who from the very beginning gave us everything we needed, the police, 7-Eleven. I'm just really pleased. It's definitely going to be an annual event."

"The course was tough, but beautiful, and that's just what we wanted. It was a fun course. Who wants to run a flat, boring course all the time?"

THE COURSE was anything but boring. It has mostly rolling, some would say steep, hills. It ran along big, but blocked-off streets (Telegraph), on dirt roads through woods, around lakes, along Wabek Club, up and down, up and down.

Most of the way, the sun was low enough for the trees to provide shade. The weather was in the 60s with low humidity. The breeze was gentle.

But in case anyone got to the 9¾-mile mark and thought the race was a piece of cake, there was a killer finish. Leading up to the Andover track was a half-mile uphill on a dirt road that seemed more like a dirt wall to the runners.

Dave Nyquist, a spokesman for 7-Eleven, said the company will again co-sponsor the race next year. "We were pleased. We would have liked more runners, of course, but it was the first year. It went well, and the weather was just perfect, of course."

Other winners by age groups were:

MEN'S DIVISIONS

19 and under: Joseph Davey (Birmingham), 53:30; 20-24 years: Tobin Jones (Livonia), 54:17; 25-29 years: Pat Fitzgerald, 53:57; 30-34 years: Eugene Miron (Port Huron), 53:24; 35-39 years: Larry Olzewski (Detroit), 54:28; 40-44 years: David Emery (Farmington Hills), 57:56; 45-49 years: Brian Harris (Royal Oak), 55:19; 50-59 years:

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Sports staff realigned

OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC sports coverage will feature a new look this fall, as we continue to provide the best local sports news in western Wayne and southern Oakland counties.

Four of the 12 communities in our coverage area will have new sports editors.

Marty Bedner is the new sports editor of the Southfield Eccentric. He will continue his duties as sports editor of the Birmingham-Bloomfield Eccentric and the West Bloomfield Eccentric, in addition to Southfield.

Bedner joins sports editor Jim Hughes at our Eccentric sports desk in Birmingham. Hughes covers sports news in Troy and Rochester.

Coaches and residents from these five communities can reach Bedner and Hughes at 544-1101.

Chris McClosky is the newest member of our Observer staff. He is the new sports editor of the Livonia Observer editions in Farmington, Plymouth and Canton. He replaces Tom Barr, who took a new assignment as news reporter in our Farmington office. McClosky comes to the O&E from the Advisor Newspapers in Utica where he was an associate editor.

McClosky joins sports editor Brad Grooms at our Observer sports desk in Livonia. Grooms covers sports news in Livonia, Westland, Garden City and Redford.

Coaches and residents from these seven communities can call Grooms and McClosky at 591-2312.

C.J. Risak, former sports editor in Plymouth and Canton, now works on

both sports desks. As a fifth sports editor, Risak's duties will include writing weekly columns and features. He also will cover colleges and aid in our comprehensive reporting of area high schools.

THE BIGGEST change in O&E sports coverage occurs in Farmington, where production of sports news shifts to our Livonia office. Farmington coaches and residents are encouraged to call in sports news and results at a new phone number, 591-2312.

Farmington athletes now are eligible to achieve a spot on our popular All-Sports team, which recognizes the area's top athletes, as selected by coaches at the end of each high school sports season.

Farmington players will compete for all-star status against athletes from Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Redford, Westland and Garden City.

Athletes from Birmingham-Bloomfield, West Bloomfield, Troy, Rochester and Southfield will battle for all-star positions on the All-Eccentric squad, also selected by area coaches.

O&E's sports alignment changes in response to the recent formation of a new league, the Western Lakes Activities Association, and the addition of West Bloomfield and Rochester high schools to the Metro Suburban Activities Association.

O&E sports staffers are excited to begin their new assignments. They look forward to the challenge of continuing to bring their readers the best local sports coverage around.

— Dennis O'Connor
Sports Coordinator

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Chris McClosky (left)
and C.J. Risak (right)
assume new duties

