

Marathon Milestones

Two Big Marathons Celebrate Big Anniversaries

By Tara Lynne Brown

A paratrooper jumping from the Baltimore sky, a torch carried all the way from Marathon, Greece, to Arlington, Virginia, and over 30,000 runners hitting the streets. This is all happening in October when two nationally recognized marathons celebrate their anniversaries. The Baltimore Marathon—part of the Baltimore Running Festival—is ringing in 10 years, while the Marine Corps Marathon returns for its 35th year.

Charm City Classic

In 2000, over 8,000 runners hit the streets of Baltimore for the inaugural Baltimore Marathon. This fall, more than 22,000 marathon runners will lace up for the 10th annual event on October 16th.

Corrigan Sports Enterprises (CSE) is the event developer responsible for growing the Baltimore Marathon into a staple event. From incorporating green initiatives in recent years to re-coordinating the course due to construction projects around the city, CSE annually adapts their operations to ensure the marathon will be most enjoyable.

2010 brings two big firsts: this is the first year that race registration is capped. The race has grown 15 percent every year since its inception. Lee Corrigan says that the entry cap will limit their annual growth to 10 percent so that race day is even more seamless for runners. And for the first time in its ten year history, the course will be identical to the year prior.

Celebrations are in order for the festival itself and for individual runners. "There will be more bands out on the course and a special concert at the Pier 5 Pavilion," Corrigan said. "To kick off the event, at the start line a paratrooper will jump out with a flag."

There will also be a finish line tent for members of The 10 Year Club for runners who have completed every Baltimore Marathon. Among them is Michael Shilling, a New Jersey business developer who has been a distance runner for 16 years.

"I make the Baltimore Marathon a part of my life, just like a birthday," says Shilling. "I look forward to it each year."

Creating a routine works for other ten-year runners as well. Cory Sorice of Towson, Md., hopes to complete every Baltimore Marathon for as long as he can. To keep his streak alive, he even walked the marathon with an injury



one year. Kathy Sulik, of Burke, Va., will be taking a more relaxed approach to her personal 10-year celebration. Sulik plans to "collapse, eat chocolate, and sleep in front of the TV."

Most Baltimore Marathon veterans agree that the second half of the course is tougher than the first 13.1 miles. The level course during the first half makes for a fast and comfortable run, but after the 16-mile mark, the inclines grow.

Hard Corps

Just two weeks later on Halloween, the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) celebrates 35 years. Now the 8th largest race in the world, the Marine Corps Marathon offers runners a tour of America's most prized historic sites. It's even importing a few international landmarks: The mayor of the Greek city of Marathon is creating gold, silver, and bronze wreaths comprised of branches from olive trees at the site of the Tomb of the Athenians. This is the 2500th Anniversary of the Battle of Marathon, where the marathon originated.

"The marathon's roots are in military battle, and we are a military-organized marathon," says Marc Goldman, the event's marketing and sponsorships manager. "It's a unique tie-in for us."

The Marine Corps Marathon is also working with the Greek Embassy in D.C. to import a flame from Marathon. The flame is scheduled to travel through several Marine Corps sites

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This year marks the 2500th Anniversary of the Battle of Marathon—where the vastly outnumbered Athenians defeated the Persian Army with the help of Phidippides, a professional runner who covered a rugged, mountainous 140-mile journey from Athens to Sparta in about 36 hours.

Today's marathons commemorate Phidippides' historic run, and several marathons are celebrating anniversaries of their own. The Marine Corps Marathon celebrates its 35th year this October. It's planning on importing a flame from the Greek city of Marathon to be carried to Arlington, Va., for the start of the race.

HERE ARE A FEW OTHER MARATHON ANNIVERSARIES IN 2010:

- Boston Marathon: 113
- Grandfather Mountain Marathon: 43
- Rocket City Marathon: 34
- Richmond Marathon: 33
- Kiawah Island Marathon: 33
- Chickamauga Marathon: 31
- Black Mountain Marathon: 13
- Country Music Marathon: 11
- Hatfield-McCoy Marathon: 11
- Louisville Marathon: 10

in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia before making its way to Arlington, Va.

The Marine Corps Marathon has evolved over its 35 years from a completely Marine-organized event to a civilian staff. Oprah Winfrey's running of the Marine Corps Marathon inspired the change in organization.

"Oprah changed people's perspectives," says Goldman. "The marathon became more of a personal statement and less about running fast."

Last year, the Marine Corps Marathon received silver-level certification from the Council of Responsible Sport for its green initiatives. This year, runners are expected to bring their own eco-friendly practices to the course through a Green Plan, which outlines how they will travel, what they will eat and what they will wear. The contest encourages runners to carpool or use mass transit, eat local, and re-use clothing. Two of the greenest runners receive free admission to the race.

Recognized for running the marathon for 35 consecutive years, three runners—known as "Ground Pounders"—will be inducted into the Marine Corps Marathon Hall of Fame. The marathon also honors five-time finishers in the Front Runners Club.

+ BIRTHDAY PARTIES

The 10th Annual Baltimore Marathon will be held on October 16th. Visit thebaltimoremarathon.com for event details. The five-hour run will be televised live by Baltimore's NBC affiliate. The Marine Corps Marathon will celebrate 35 years on October 31st. Visit marinemarathon.com for more information.