

The Pacesetter

A quarterly publication of the **Prairie Striders**



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Race season begins indoors

For the first time in its 46th year history, Prairie Striders began its racing season in January and did so indoors.

The inaugural Prairie Striders Indoor 5K attracted 52 runners of all shapes and sizes and a 70-year age span, from 81-year-old Jim Thevdt to 11-year-old Carley Landmark. The 3.1-mile run in the new Sanford-Jackrabbit Athletic Complex on the SDSU campus was won by 2001 SDSU alum Marty Wennblom in 17:49.

The 35-year-old resident of Withrop Harbor, Ill., (between Chicago and Milwaukee) was back for the track and field program alumni weekend.

He was contested in the early laps by Tim Fryer, the 2014 Brookings Marathon champion, and Tanner Wetzel, a 19-year-old SDSU student. But the U.S. Army member started creating some distance in the final laps as Fryer, 36, of Hendricks, Minn., finished in 18:17 with Wetzel at 18:30.

With the race being held on alumni weekend, a number of former SDSU runners participated as did the daughter of one alum. Rachel Propst, the daughter of Dan Propst of Pierre, was the top female placer with a clocking of 20:15.

The field was divided into two groups based on estimated finish time with those under 25 minutes going in Lanes 6-8 and running 15 laps and the slower groups were in Lanes 1-5 going 16 2/3 laps on the 300-meter track.

The biggest challenge for most runners was keeping track of the number of times they had gone around the track. There were lap counters for the leaders in both groups, but when one is chewing off 5,000 meters there is plenty of opportunity to forget just how many 300-meter laps have been finished.



There go the fast guys. Shari (225) and Carley (226) Landmark steal a look at Tanner Wetzel (2) and others in the lead pack early in the running of the Indoor 5K. Based on estimated finish time, the runners split the track.



Division winners in the Prairie Striders Indoor 5K are, from left, Marty Wennblom, men's open and overall; Mary Held, women's masters; Dan Propst, men's masters; and Rachel Propst, women's open. In addition to the pride in being the first winners in the inaugural event, each received a \$25 gift certificate.

Photos courtesy of Dick Turner

Top placers came away with gift certificates and everyone walked out with a black knit stocking cap.

And it seemed most everyone also left with a good feeling about the event.

"I enjoyed the race very much. What a wonderful facility it was and how neat to have a chance to run on that track. I actually brought a 'clicker' with me to count my own laps and that worked very well. I will certainly participate again if an event like this is held," female master's winner Mary Held said.

Randy Hanson, 52, of Aurora, added, "I thought it was a great way to start the season. Indoors, music playing, great facility, the track surface is forgiving and easy on my old knees. I like that we got stocking caps instead of T-shirts. I have enough T-shirts to last a lifetime."

Race directors Dave Graves and Jay Larsen hope to make the run an annual event and grow participation to 100 runners.

"It's a great place to hold an event and we appreciate all the help that (SDSU track coach) Rod DeHaven provided to us. We had an experienced group of volunteers and that made the morning so much easier. Holding the race the morning of the Jim Emmerich Invitational is an ideal situation for us," Graves said.

For full results, go to prairiestriders.net and look for races.

To see more photos, go to the Prairie Striders Facebook page, facebook.com/prairiestriders.

Prairie Striders
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Prairie Striders 2015

Arbor Day 5K	Friday, April 24
"I'm Ready for Summer" Triathlon	Sat., April 25
Scotty Roberts 5K	Friday, May 1
Brookings Marathon, Half & Relays	Saturday, May 2
Longest Day 10K	Friday, June 19
Beef & Eggs 5K	Saturday, July 11
Predictor Mile	Wed., Aug. 5
Jack 15 Road Race	Sat., Sept. 26
Hobo Day 5K	Sat., Oct. 24

The Hippodrome

A plywood and dirt predecessor to Sanford-Jackrabbit

Editor’s note: *SDSU track and cross country coach Rod DeHaven calls the Sanford-Jackrabbit Athletic Complex “a facility that is without a doubt the best in our school history.” The best in what is a surprising long list of indoor running facilities. Local historian Chuck Cecil discovered some that many old-timers had even forgotten about.*

By Chuck Cecil
Brookings area historian

The first track event in SDSU’s new Sanford-Jackrabbit Indoor Practice Center and its beautiful, sky-blue 300-meter, eight-lane track was Dec. 6, 2014.

Visiting athletes and fans from participating schools couldn’t miss the building’s gigantic \$32 million presence north of the SDSU football field.

It’s the largest of its kind in the nation, a white and gray, 150,000-square-foot goliath that’s capturing the bulk of the campus “WOWS!”.

It’s actually the fifth indoor Jackrabbit track on campus or in Brookings.

The first was built in 1966 at the 4-H grounds near Pioneer Park. It had an usually muddy, un-marked, dirt running surface of unknown length. Hastily and cheaply built, it was drafted as a campaigning congressman and built of damaged and surplus federal lumber.

Then SDSU track coach, the late Aubrey Dooley, an AAU pole vault champion from Oklahoma, designed and named it the Hippodrome, borrowing the Greek designation for a chariot-racing oval.

It was made possible because in the late 1940s and early 1950s, nearly 100 rundown barracks from the Ft. Randall Missouri River dam construction site at Pickstown were trundled here for married student housing for veterans returning after WW II.

With the barracks came a truckload of used plywood. This was the material for that first university indoor track located near Pioneer Park.

By the mid-1950s the need for married student housing on campus was waning. So the 4-H grounds track was abandoned and another built on campus. Two barracks were gutted and became the on-campus track’s straightaways.

Damaged plywood from the dam site construction area were cobbled to formed the curves. The 4x8 plywood sheets rattled and banged in the breeze and kept some of the drifting snow out. More plywood made up the flat roofs on the curves, forming draconian caves. Moisture dripped in during warming periods.

That unsightly conglomeration was hidden away south and a little east of the present ROTC building, about where part of the Student Union is now.

For five years, from 1968 to 1973, when Frost Arena with a Tartan indoor track was opened, the Hippodrome provided a winter place for track athletes. There was even space for the baseball team’s pitching machine.

Actually, that campus Hippodrome was the university’s third indoor track.

Jay Dirksen, a 1968 graduate of SDSU and one of the school’s and South Dakota’s best distance runners, remembers participating in an indoor track meet in 1966 with



This first SDSU indoor track in 1966 utilized the livestock sheds at the County Extension Fair Grounds near Pioneer Park and connected them with curved plywood.

Photo courtesy SDSU Briggs Library Archives.



Jackrabbit runners round the curve at the university’s first indoor track. Note the snow at the edges of the track that has drifted in, and the bare overhead light bulb lighting the way. A second and similar indoor track was built in 1967 on campus east and south of the present ROTC Building.

Photo courtesy SDSU Briggs Library Archives.

Yankton College in SDSU’s armory-gymnasium, known as The Barn.

Dirksen, who became SDSU track and cross country coach and later the men’s and women’s cross country coach at Nebraska, retiring in 2011, said The Barn’s oval for that meet was 120 yards.

“There were no lanes, only the flat oval marked with dashed line of tape on the gymnasium floor,” he said. “We won 90-41.” Dirksen won the mile in 4:42.7 and the two-mile in 10:19.7. Since that was the only meet in the Barn, both will remain Barn records in perpetuity, although Dirksen’s career times indoors and out in other venues would be even more impressive.

It was after the 1966 meet in The Barn that the university built the Hippodrome at the Extension livestock sheds near Pioneer Park Dirksen and other tracksters helped build it.

Utilizing the site’s two side-by-side livestock sheds, they made curves out of sheets of plywood. Malodorous kerosene heaters kept temperatures above zero. A few bare light bulbs dangling from the ceiling lit the way. “I don’t think we had any meets in that place, but at least it got the wind off of us and was dry,” Dirksen recalled.

So in all, before the new Sanford-Jackrabbit behemoth, SDSU had three indoor tracks plus The Barn’s taped oval. But none was as impressive as the \$32 million edifice that hosted its first meet Dec. 6.

Recognize the runners?

Jay Dirksen tentatively identifies the middle runner as Larry Triebauer of Clear Lake. The editor is seeking suggestions on the others. Email to: run@prairiestriders.net. To see the photo larger, go to the Facebook page.

McMullen shares memories from Prairie Striders' early days

Editor's note:

We live in the present, plan for the future and, in the case of Prairie Striders, fondly recall our past. Prairie Striders will observe its 50th birthday in 2019 — a truly historic mark that few other running clubs in the nation have reached.

As the calendar creeps up on that noteworthy year, the Pacesetter will take a look back at aspects of the club's formative years. The following recollection comes from Chuck McMullen, one of the original member of Prairie Striders.

If your association with Prairie Striders predates chip timing, energy drinks and DriFit clothing, you're invited to share your memories, either by showing your old school colors and mailing them to Box 504, Brookings, 57006, or emailing to run@prairiestriders.net.

By Chuck McMullen
Charter member

I have been a member since the club was organized — (Sept. 12) — 1969. I believe that I was at the first organizational meeting of the club that year. The people there that night in the old Barn (I think) were: Jay Dirksen, Bob Bartling, Lorne Bartling, Russ Strande, Keith Morrill, Harvey Mills and Grant Peterson.

(Editor's note: Bob Bartling adds John Iverson and Bruce Berger were also present.)

Organization of fellow 'weird' folks

During those early years, running for exercise or for the fun of it was a strange concept for most people. I had a number of people who stopped their cars and asked if I needed a ride somewhere.

The folks who were interested in running for the fun of it found each other primarily through the Bartling Furniture Store contact. I think Jay was probably the person who thought a running club would be an interesting thing to develop.

I don't think any other place in South Dakota had a running organization or very many, if any, people interested in long-distance running unless they were high school or college athletes.

So, it was an organization of fellow "weird" folks who just enjoyed going out and running long distances. Most of us would rather run with a partner or group than by ourselves, so that is how it evolved.

We had a difficult time finding running shoes in those early days, so Bob developed his shoe store and gave us a discount if we were members. The rest is history.

Great way to start the day

Running in the morning always meant that I at least accomplished something each day. It relieved my stress from everyday life in general and my job in particular. I think running kept me sane over those years where stress levels got pretty high.



"While I no longer get the 'runner's high' that I used to experience, I still like the feeling of accomplishing something when finishing a workout. I want to keep at it as long as I possibly can."

Chuck McMullen

While always an "also ran," I enjoyed the competition of workouts and road races.

For quite a few summers we went to a road race just about every weekend somewhere in the region. Back in those days the 10K was probably the most frequent distance but 20K, 10 miles and other long distances were not uncommon. I remember very few 5K races until later.

Being in shape was uplifting after a number of years of college, graduate school and poor lifestyle habits that many of us experienced.

Favorite memory: The camaraderie

It is somewhat difficult to pick out one favorite running memory in more than 45 years of running.

I think our group Sunday morning runs is my favorite. We started meeting at 7 a.m. at Russ Strande's home on Third Street many, many years ago. (However many years Russ lived there before he moved to Sioux Falls.)

I do not recall how it all came about really. We wanted to have one longer run during the week. The minimum distance was usually 10 miles. The upper end was around 20 miles. Most Sundays it was 12-15. The number of people ranged from probably four to more than 12.

Every once in a while Jay and the cross-country boys would show up. They would run with us going out (like to Aurora) and then leave us in the proverbial dust on the way back. We had a lot of fun times on those Sunday runs.

We actually kept meeting at Russ's for a month or so after he sold the house and moved to Sioux Falls. It finally sunk in that it made little sense to continue meeting there and switched over to Al Hublou's place.

Most of the old group has quit running for various reasons, usually injury related or having moved or died. So, it is

a small group of us that still meet on Sunday morning, usually Al Hublou, Brenda Algood and Don Denure. Nothing like the good old days.

We no longer go on long runs. Our usual route is 3 miles, which we would not have even considered lacing up our shoes for back in the day.

6 o'clock group keeps ticking

We also used to run with Scotty Roberts in the mornings and I remember he had a pager that would go off if he was on call. At least once a police car showed up to take him to the hospital.

Another group that I did not mention before was the "6 o'clock" group that met on the corner of Sixth Street and Medary. Keith Morrill would run by and pick me up at about 5:35 a.m. (we lived on Cedar Avenue) and then we would meet others along the way (Bill Jensen, Robin Savage, Bob Ritter, Al Hublou, Lorne Bartling, Ken Haug, Scotty Roberts, Curt Wait, and others that would show up once in a while).

We'd run down to Western Avenue and then back to Medary, where we would gather and then take off north to the bypass, over to the I-29 and then up the ramp by the motels and scatter home.

It was almost always an 8- or 10-mile run for most of us. In later years the route got shorter and we had a new folks join the group and others dropped out for various reasons. People such as Brenda Algood, LeRoy Anderson, Don Denure, and Daryl Englund started running with us.

The 6 o'clock group has dwindled down to just a few of us that meet at 5:40 a.m. at the HPER Center. We jog/walk a 4-mile loop.

No retirement for running shoes

I really no longer run, it is more of a slow jog and walk. It is just part of my life to go out and put one foot in front of the other. I no longer worry about times or longer distances.

While I no longer get the "runners high" that I used to experience, I still like the feeling of accomplishing something when finishing a workout. I want to keep at it as long as I possibly can.

Member Spotlight

Editor's note: *Member Spotlight is a recent addition to the Pacesetter. If you, or someone you know, would like to be featured, please contact Dave Graves at 605-627-5718 or run@prairiestriders.net.*



Marcel Thielke

Age: 28
Residence: Brookings
Occupation: Global Account Manager at Wurth Electronics Midcom
Family: Wife Christina and Daughter Leiana
Years as a Prairie Strider member: Four
Why you're a member: I like to support the local running scene and I love our local races, which are very well organized.
What do you enjoy about running: It's a regular excuse to get outside and unplug from the world. Also, a long run allows me to sort all of my thoughts and get a clear head.
Favorite running memory: During my first marathon (Brookings 2004, no less!), I was struggling pretty bad around mile 15. I told another runner that I will never do this again. She simply responded, that once I crossed the finish line, I would be addicted. How right she was! I have not stopped running since.
Your favorite Prairie Striders race: Brookings Marathon
Favorite workout: 10 mile interval
Your running goal: I want to run a marathon (official and unofficial) in each state and in 50 countries. As of now I am at 7 States and 5 countries.



Marcel Thielke competes at the Prairie Striders Indoor 5K Jan. 24. No. 8 finished ninth with a time of 20:31.

2014 Friend of Running



Prairie Striders Running Club's Friend of Running is presented by president Dave Graves, right, to Daniel Freese at the club's Frostbite Frolic Jan. 31. Freese represented the family of Reed Hart Jr., who included in his will a \$20,000 gift to Prairie Striders. Hart, a Pipestone, Minn., native and a resident of Egan at the time of his July 14, 2014, death, became a life member of the club in 2010. Hart, 87, was known for his passion for running and for motivating others to run.

Frank Farrar

Dean of South Dakota triathletes returns to Brookings event

By **Dave Graves**
Newsletter editor

Frank Farrar is getting the last laugh — and it’s coming long after many who laughed first are no longer breathing.

The Britton lawyer, banker and former Republican political leader remembers writing an article back in the 1960s that declared “if you exercise you will have a long life and a positive attitude.” The response? “Everybody just laughed and said ‘How do you know?’” Farrar recalled in a Feb. 25 interview.

Years later, science has proven Farrar’s statement correct. What’s more, Farrar has proven Farrar’s statement correct.

The former South Dakota governor (1969-71) turns 86 on April 2. He flies his own plane, takes an active role in the banking/credit card firm he owns — Capital Card Services, visits his wife three times a day in the nursing home, exercises daily and competes in eight to ten triathlons per year.

He already has registered for the April 25 I’m Ready for Summer Triathlon sponsored by Prairie Striders Running Club and SDSU Wellness Center.

“If I didn’t do this, I couldn’t do what I do. Exercise gives you a positive attitude and solves your problems. It’s been a wonderful ride and I’m going to continue to do it as long as I can,” said Farrar, adding that he no plans to retire from either his profession or his avocation.

“I’m not going to retire. I’m just going to keep going until I fall off the cliff. If I sit down and watch TV, I’m going to die. I want to get to 100. I put in my will ‘If I die.’

Farrar will die some time, he just is doing a good job of hiding the symptoms.

Kevin Jones, his 50-year-old triathlon traveling partner from Britton, said he would think Farrar was in his early 40s if he didn’t know better. “He is very serious about triathlons and what benefits it has done for him. He’s an amazing man. I wish everybody had a chance to meet him like me,” Jones said.

36-time Ironman competitor

Farrar does concede that age has dimmed his memory. “The names don’t come out like they used to,” he said. That, however, was not sensed during the interview for this article. He adds, “I don’t run any more. I think I’m running, but I really am not.” The Britton native is a dedicated shuffler.

“I’m not any good at (triathlons), but I just love the sport,” Farrar said, pointing to the camaraderie it produces.

While Farrar said he is not a natural athlete, he has completed 36 Ironman Triathlons — a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride and 26.2-mile run — all since age 65. One year he won the North American Championship in his age group. But Farrar adds, “I’m not that good. I’m just a doer.”

Jones said that earlier in his life, he called Farrar “crazy,” but about nine years ago he had a desire to do an Ironman before he was 50. So he turned to Farrar, who signed them up for the Wisconsin Ironman in September. They arrived separately and with 2,000 competitors, Jones didn’t see Farrar until shortly before the triathlon began.

“I saw an older man trying to get his wet suit on. It was Frank. I helped him get his wet suit on. He gave me a hug and said ‘Have fun, Kevin. You have all day to do what you love,’” Jones vividly recalled.



Frank Farrar, center, poses with longtime friend Howard Bich, of Sioux Falls, left, and triathlon travel partner Kevin Jones, of Britton, at the Eureka Triathlon June 29, 2013.

2,500th out of 2,500

Farrar has competed in nine Kona Ironmans, which requires entrants to have won their age group to qualify for the most prestigious Ironman.

The overall winner of the Kona Ironman is the best athlete in the world, Farrar opines. In the senior citizen’s category, they may be the most persistent athletes. Oftentimes he was the only one in his age group at a qualifying Ironman, so Farrar knew he could write his ticket to Hawaii.

But he jokes that one year, “I couldn’t beat anybody in the United States, so I went to Brazil so I could win my age group.”

His best Ironman time was 14 hours at age 65. He kept doing Ironmans until age 82. At age 73, he had the dubious honor of being the last of the 2,500 finishers, completing the Kona course in 16 hours, 59 minutes and one second — just 59 seconds before the midnight deadline for completing the race.

It resulted in an article in the December 2002 issue of Ironman magazine.

Asked how it felt to finish last, Farrar told the magazine, “It felt great. It’s always great to hit the finish line in an Ironman.”

No longer an Ironman

Once he could no longer do that, he quit entering Ironmans. His last one was four years ago in Florida. “I didn’t make cut off on the bike and they wouldn’t let me finish it.” He doesn’t face a deadline in the Brookings triathlon. Director Shari Landmark said the finish line will be kept open for Farrar as well as any who might finish behind him.

See **Farrar**, Page 6

15th annual “I’m Ready for Summer”
Triathlon
Saturday, April 25

Start times: Kids’ Tri – 9 a.m.; individuals, teams – 10 a.m.
Location: SDSU Wellness Center
Distance: 500-yard swim, 20K bike ride, 5K run
Teams: May enter teams of two or three and any male/female combination.
Cost: Individual — \$35 before March 31, \$45 afterwards; team — \$60/\$75.
Registration: Must be done online at allsportcentral.com by April 21.
Info: Shari Landmark, race director, shari.landmark@sdstate.edu.

Farrar: 1946 knee surgery held up; cancer defeated

He last competed in Brookings in 2013 and finished in 2:13:49, nearly a full minute ahead of the last-place finisher, a 33-year-old.

Often he would compete in Morris, Minn., on Saturday and in Brookings on Sunday. Now both events are on Saturday and Farrar prefers the “I’m Ready for Summer” because he said the event is so well run. His partner, Kevin Jones, echoed that, noting that Landmark is efficient in moving people through the pool.

The Brookings event is the state’s traditional kickoff to the triathlon season and for Farrar it will be his first time to swim this year.

Britton has no indoor pool. So unless he is visiting his daughter in Pierre, swim training doesn’t begin until summer. During the winter, he is on the treadmill and stationary bike. “I used to train outside in the cold weather. I’m to the point now where if I fall, I’d break something.”

Running with defects

The threat of an injury is always out there, but after overcoming his 1946 injury, Farrar isn’t likely to let an ailment stop him.

He was a junior at Britton High School when a football injury left doctors considering a leg amputation. “They didn’t have any knee replacements at that time.” Instead, his parents took him to the Mayo Clinic, where artificial cartilage was tacked into his left knee, although doctors said, “It won’t last long.”

They were wrong. More than 68 years later, it’s still there.

But Farrar is by no means a perfect specimen. His bad knee hurts so much that the walking/running portion of the triathlon is difficult. “Also, my left leg is a little shorter than my other one. I tend to wobble,” Farrar said. He has avoided knee replacement surgery because patients are urged not to run on their artificial joint.



“I’m just going to keep going until I fall off the cliff. If I sit down and watch TV, I’m going to die.”

Frank Farrar
Age 86

“I didn’t want to take that chance of not being able to exercise if had knee replacement surgery,” said Farrar, who did have right hip replacement surgery five years ago.

How to beat cancer

He also has lived 23 years longer than doctors gave him after being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma in 1992. Farrar, who was competing in Olympic-distance triathlons at that time, questioned the doctor’s mortality report. At his age, 63, that’s what Farrar should expect, the doctor said.

When the doctor prescribed chemotherapy, Farrar requested extra dosage and asked if he could continue with triathlons.

The doctor said he could if he felt like it. Farrar did and within six months had completely recovered. “I attribute that to good health and good exercise,” he said, noting he follows a vegetarian/Mediterranean diet. That, more than the exercise, is what has kept him at a steady 175 pounds since high school, Farrar said.

He won’t extend his Brookings stay to include a celebratory beer and steak dinner.

“We will fly to Brookings, ride bike to the course and fly back,” Farrar said.

Brookings Half Marathon, marathon relay races filling up

Two months before race day finds two of the Brookings Marathon weekend events well on their way to filling up.

As of March 2, there had been 320 sign up for the May 2 Brookings Half Marathon. The race is capped at 400. Last year the race hit the cap March 24, the fourth consecutive year for the race to cap and the earliest yet. To date, the top returning placer is third-place finisher Lang Wedemeyer, 42, of Brookings.

Also as of March 1, there were 37 relay teams registered with a cap of 50 teams. Last year the relay teams hit the cap during the weekend of April 5-6.

Plenty of space remains in the marathon, which has a cap of 300 and was at 86 on March 2. Among the early sign-ups are Tim Fryer, 36, of Hendricks, Minn., the 2014 champion.

Sign-ups are just beginning in the Scotty Roberts 5K, which

is held May 1, the evening before the other events. Runners can sign up for the 5K right up until race time. For the other events, sign-ups close April 26 regardless if the cap has been hit.

No major changes are planned for the 47th running of the Brookings Marathon, which is again directed by Matt Bien.

For more information, go to BrookingsMarathon.com.

Arbor Day run set for April 24

Prairie Striders will open the outdoor racing season with the Arbor Day 5K, a 3.1-mile jaunt around the SDSU campus Friday, April 24.

Now known as the Kay Cheever Arbor Day Run (or Walk) for Shade, the race begins at 6:30 a.m. with registration beginning at 5:30 a.m. At press time, the registration site had not been finalized.

The event continues to be a free race. Race director Steve Britzman said children of ages are welcome.

Each participant will receive a free tree after the race compliments of the City of Brookings. Refreshments also will be supplied.

The event honors the late Kathleen “Kay” Cheever, Brookings’ “Friend of Trees,” a lifelong advocate for the planting, nurturing and appreciation of trees.

For more information, call Britzman at 697-9058 or visit www.prairiestridders.net.

