

A lucky 7 in Striderland for 2016

Brogan Austin is fast

Boone prep and Drake standout Brogan took to the roads. In his first marathon at the Los Angeles Olympic Trials he battled extreme heat finishing in 2:24:39. A few months later he was 4th at Dam to Dam. Mid-summer he solidified his road race season with a win of 23:56 at Fifth Season 8k in Cedar Rapids and returned 6 days later to a victorious Midnight Madness 10k in 30:42. In the fall he won Capital Pursuit 10 mile with an exact 5 minute pace and a month later at Pittsburg 10 mile ran 49:03. At his final race of the season he was 16th at the national 10k xc championship in 29:42. Brogan is the best male in Striderland.this past decade.

Johnston HS cross country girls set a record

Johnston high school girls had a record season winning all their meets and then topping the state field easily with 5 of the top 10 team scorers, a record 26 point team victory. Dowling Catholic boys had a harder road at the state meet barely winning by 2 points, a race determined by seconds. Johnston girls was the 2014 winner and Dowling Catholic boys owns this decade with 2011, 2012 & 2015 wins. The season ended on a high note as Karissa Schweitzer, Dowling Catholic prep, won in an epic finish sprint to become the surprise winner of the DI college national xc meet.

Runablaze Iowa celebrates in style

The season for Iowa's best runners ended with a 10th men's team at the national xc championship at the December Florida meet. Many of the top teams had professional runners. The season started on a high note competing against the midwest best at Shamrock 8k in Chicago. Women took 3rd & men 4th in the team competition. With the goal of supporting Iowa's post collegiate runners Danna Herrick moved to Michigan to be part of Brooks Hansons team and Kevin Lewis to Minnesota to be part of the Team USA Minnesota.

Striderland races follow a national trend - less runners

Almost in every race in central Iowa the finisher count has been dropping. The old favorites are not immune to a national trend of a 10 percent drop the last couple years. No race reflects the trend better than Living History Farms. Once billed as the largest cross country race in the country, no longer. The go-go years of 2007-2013 averaging 7000 finishers has now dipped to under 3000. Wow, is the current running boom over?

Obsie Birru continues her marathon excellence!

Johnston prep and Grandview standout Obsie owns the Twin Cities Marathon. Her 2:39:03 was 5th, same as the previous year where she set a best time a few minutes faster than 2016. Her fall season included a 57:57 win at Capital Pursuit 10 mile and a 1:15:23 at Lincoln Half-Marathon. She was 19th at the National 6k xc championship in 20:25. A great season for Striderland's best female.

On-the-ROADS, Hy Vee Road Races and now Drake Relays Road Races . . .

The road races part of the relays has had a steady diet of changes: route, entry fees, organizers, etc. Rain greeted the 2016 version. The half-marathon had 863 finishers, just a couple more than 2010, prior to the upheaval. The relays that prides itself on competition, have now seen top runners abandon the road race. As the race nears its 50th year, hopes remain for a revival.

The changing face of Striderland races

The 1980's organizers of Striderland races were passionate about running and races. They made it happen as volunteers, donating countless hours making today's races possible. A new breed are now taking charge with fresh ideas appealing to completing the distance vs competing (fast or slow). Who would have guessed that groups like Pink Gorilla and Rip Roaring events are succeeding Kurt Schaeffer (Dam), Roman Lynch (Madness) and Steve Bobenhouse (Farm).

By Cal Murdock, observing Iowa Running for over three decades