Bike Path Summer Fun Runs

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

By

Joseph Sherman

Thesis Director

Dr. George Branam

_________________________(advisor's signature)

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana
SENIOR HONORS PROJECT

Sponsoring Professor:
Dr. George Branam

Materials Enclosed

1. Program Proposal by Joe Sherman.

2. Program Evaluation by Joe Sherman.

3. Reaction to Proposal by Mr. Bill Reiter, Director of the Muncie Recreation Department.

by

Joseph William Martin Sherman
BIKE PATH SUMMER FUN RUNS

This is a suggested program for a summer distance running that would last 8 consecutive weeks beginning June 7, and ending

Philosophy: To help stimulate an interest in distance running in the Muncie Community among all age groups in a relaxed competitive atmosphere.

Location: All races will begin at the Bicentennial Park, and will use the dirt road along the river and the bike path.

Time: Races will be held on Wed. evenings at 6:30.

- Fitness run - 6:10
- Open run - 7:00

Schedule:

1st week, 1 mile fitness
3 mile Open

2nd week, 1 mile fitness
Two man 4 mile relay

3rd week, 1 mile fitness
Open 4 mile

4th week, 1 mile fitness
Open 5 mile

5th week, 2 mile fitness
Two man 6 mile relay

6th week, 2 mile fitness
Open 5 mile

7th week, 2 mile fitness
Two man 8 mile relay

8th week, 2 mile fitness, 6 mile Open
The White River Fun Runs (WRFR) were a series of distance runs ranging from three to six miles that were held on Wednesday evenings during the summer of 1978.

I made a program proposal in April of 1978, and with the help of Bill Reiter and the Muncie Recreation Department, the program began the first Wednesday in June and lasted eight consecutive weeks. At the end of the eight weeks another run, called the Yorktown to Daleville Run, was added to the program. This was the second summer this run was offered.

My motivation for beginning the program was initiated by a need I thought existed for a low-keyed competitive running program in which people of all ages in the city could participate with easy accessibility. I think the program was a success only in that it had a successful beginning. (And I might emphasize beginning since what this paper will be is an evaluation of what needs to be done.)

I. PLACE TO RUN

Distance running is blooming into one of the most popular forms of exercise and sport in the country today; however, the major problem facing runners is finding a place to run and to hold distance races. Runners have been kicked off the golf courses, parks in Muncie are inadequate to non-existant, and with the exception of Burris High School, all high school and university tracks are locked. This forces runners onto the less traveled byroads, which will cause new problems in the future as more and more runners take to the roads.
I held my program on the bike path and the dirt road along the river. Using every ounce of ingenuity I could muster, I tried to plot courses that wouldn't cross roads, and used the few places along the river that had been spared by B-1 bomber attack.

With the discontinuation of the Bicentennial Park funding, I hope money can be found somewhere to help develop the area along the river. This area is ideal for training and holding a program like I initiated this summer; but the bike path is going to have to be maintained better, and the river bottom has to be smoothed, graded, and then closed to all motorized vehicles. Before my program began this summer, $500.00 was spent for a bulldozer and a grader to spend eight hours smoothing out the river bottom. This really helped, but just wasn't enough. Inside a month, 4-wheeler had undone any progress that was made. I think for between 20 or 30 thousand dollars the entire length of the river bottom, from High Street bridge to the end of the bike path across from the Ball State University nature area, could be made suitable for running. A dirt road ten feet wide could be smoothed and pressed, and the rest seeded. A permanent 3,000 and 5,000 meter course could be made which would begin and end at the Bicentennial Park. The area along the river containing these courses could be maintained a bit nicer than the rest of the area. Utilizing a combination of these loops, a series of runs from three to ten kilometers could be easily run without the constant measuring and remeasuring I had to do this past summer.

Personally, I rather enjoyed the ruggedness of the past White River
Fun Run program. The few hardy, wild footed runners like myself wouldn't really care one way or the other if the river bottom was made more streamlined; however, since the philosophy of the program from the beginning was to attract the masses from all ages, the river would have to be improved or else an alternate site will have to be found to hold the runs. One would think that since our attendance was always from 50 to 100 runners every week, that our runs were successful. But I really believe that with the size of our community and the number of runners contained herein, a continuation of last summer's program could easily draw 200 to 300 runners weekly (if the river bottom was made more accessible).

II. PROGRAM UNIFICATION

People organizing and putting on distance races in this area are going to have to get together so as to avoid race conflicts and develop a year-round program. The last race on the river this past summer was the same day as the Dunkirk Glass Festival Run. This really fissled out the WRFR season finale. There is really no sense in those types of scheduling overlaps to occur. A series of races like the White River Fun Runs was held at Wapahani on Tuesday evenings, and my program was held on Wednesday evenings. It would be a good idea for both of these programs to come under the same authority; and be scheduled on Tuesday & Thursday evenings, or alternate Tuesday evenings.

As to developing a year-round program, a series of runs like the WRFR should be held in the spring and fall. These seasons wouldn't have to be
as long as the summer seasons, perhaps running six consecutive weeks. Some distance races on the track could be intermixed with road runs in the spring, and some cross-country runs could be intermixed with road runs in the fall. The north side of the reservoir has super potential for a site for a permanent 5,000 meter cross-country course.

In addition to the weekly race, a monthly to bimonthly major race should be held attracting people from outside the surrounding community. Races like the Yorktown to Daleville 10-Kilometer Run, and the Prairie Creek 15-Kilometer Run are examples of already established runs of this type.

Before leaving the topic of unification, I might add a word about friction I can already sense developing between the Muncie Recreation Department and the Muncie YMCA over control of certain programs. I hope action can be taken to resolve any minor problems now existing before problems such as those facing major sport governing bodies begin to surface.

III. MIDDLETOWN STRIDERS

A local club, with a name like Middletown Striders, should be started which would send teams of runners who wished to excel in a capacity above a local level, to competition abroad. Examples of what could be done: Begin a youth program for junior high and high school kids that would meet daily for practice, and travel around the state to other road races in addition to the Muncie sponsored runs; begin a masters team; send a group to the Boston Marathon; form a women's team that would travel
to the Bonne Bell races...

IV. RACE ORGANIZATION EQUIPMENT

I don't know how much time I spent this summer going around scrounging for the materials I needed to put on my races. I will make a list of materials that need to be put together in order to put on races of any dimension.

1. A good quality measuring wheel - please don't scrimp here - at least $70.00.

2. Different colored flags. The wooden flags I used this summer didn't even last the summer without falling apart. The river bottom gets pretty hard which gives a wooden stake a good workout. Furthermore, a wooden stake doesn't want to give upon collision with a runner. The best flag I can think of would be a fiberglas pole that would have a metal base as follows. The metal base would have a side protrusion to facilitate being pounded into the hard river bottom.
   A. 15 yellows - right turn.
   B. 15 reds - left turn.
   C. 15 blues - straight ahead.

3. Cones. Cones have to be used if the flags need to be on a paved surface; hence, the flags will have to somehow fit the
cones as follows:
20 cones would be adequate. I might add that it would be of prime importance that the cones be fairly heavy or the wind will blow them over.

4. Some type of a chalk liner to help line a course on the dirt or grass and a few cans of white spray paint for lining the roads.

5. 10 stop watches - I think we would be able to get by with fewer watches on a local race; but for a race like Prairie Creek, I think we would need at least 10 watches so that mile or kilometer splits can be given.

6. One 10-mile mark sign, one 15-kilometer mark sign. These should be made out of metal and be designed as follows:

   1 m → 10 m

   1 km → 15 km

7. Refreshments. After finishing a race, I think it is a good idea to provide some type of liquid refreshment. Not just to be sociable, but any distance race causes large fluid losses; and by providing some type of liquid, especially during summer months, would be a good way to prevent heat strokes or other heat problems.

   A. 3 x 10 gallon drink dispensers.

   B. Adequate supply of cups.
V. RACE FINISHING MATERIALS

With races drawing an increasing number of participants, I've been thinking about a finish system that can be used to handle any race, large or small. After putting on the races this summer, I still think it's best to stay simple.

1. Have a color coded pin-on card, but only color coded for let's say red (guys) and blue (gals). These cards will be pre-labeled with the following information:

```
| NAME:  |
| AGE:   |
| ADDRESS: |
| TIME: |
```

2. Have a finish board made out of a light colored pressboard or plywood that looks like this:

```
1  16  31  46  61  76
2  17  32  47  62  77
3  18  33  48  63  78
4  19  34  49  64  79
5  20  35  50  65  80
6  21  36  51  66  81
7  22  37  52  67  82
8  23  38  53  68  83
9  24  39  54  69  84
10 25  40  55  70  85
11 26  41  56  71  86
12 27  42  57  72  87
13 28  43  58  73  88
14 29  44  59  74  89
15 30  45  60  75  90
```

3. Have an age group finish sheet already made up that has the age groups and blanks for group awards to be given.
The finish sheet could look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEN (13-14)</th>
<th>WOMEN (13-14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 time</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 time</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 time</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The runner would cross the finish line where he hears his finish time. He enters a long finish shoot and removes his color coded tag. With the help of an assistant he sticks the tag on the board and fills in his time. He then keeps moving along the finish shoot to the end where he receives an award from a pretty girl. (I know this is sexist, so we could put a handsome guy at the end of the finish shoot also.)

As the runners are finishing, another worker begins to fill the age group finish sheet. When all the runners are finished, the age group awards can be given out in a quick little ceremony.

I think this easy little system can be used up to 500 runners, with only a longer finish shoot needed for races with large numbers of participants. One could even bring along a typewriter and a little portable zeroxer and whip up a result sheet on the spot.

VI. AWARDS

I think an award should be some type of special momentum of achieve-
ment for accomplishing a certain task. In a program like the WRFR, I think there should be two different types of awards; an award for participating and an award for the swiftest to the finish.

Last summer I gave out ribbons for participant awards. Now these ribbons are real easy to pass out at the end of a race, and a quick call to good ole Mel Wilson can get a batch in a short period of time. But as far as being special... Now don't get me wrong, I think ribbons are fine but I'm sure with a little imagination we can come up with a variety of different parifanalia for participation awards.

My big gripe is with trophies. Now I think it's a good idea to give an award to the fastest runners that carries with it a bit more emphasis and furthermore, I also think it's a good idea to break these awards into different categories according to age and sex. But the cheap, guady pieces of scrap metal given as "special awards" these days are simply a joke. The real irony of the whole mess is that these awards aren't cheap, especially when it costs $3 to $400 dollars to finance the awards of a major race. I think the answer to the entire award topic is for the community to make it's own awards. With proper planning; craft and art classes, clubs, interested parents, or whatever could put together some truly unique and beautiful awards.
SUMMARY

I have listed six major items to be looked at and some way acted upon to improve the WRFR program. The first item labeled **Place to Run** is the most important, with the following items decreasing in importance as the numbers become larger. I hope you can give a reaction to these proposals. Then, if you wish, I can try to make a tentative schedule for a spring and summer program.
In response to the program evaluation of the White River Fun Runs, I listed the following comments and recommendations.

1. The evaluation by Mr. Sherman was excellent and demonstrates the amount of time and sincere effort he has devoted to the program.

2. The utilization of the White River as a long distance running area is still a very good possibility. The Bicentennial Park will be developed through funding for the second phase. Agencies in the community, as well as interested individuals, will have an opportunity to express their views as to how the second phase will be developed. The groundwork is now being laid to enforce the law that no vehicular traffic will be allowed on the floodplain. People who are interested in the development of a running area should make their views known to the Muncie Community Development office and the Muncie Park Board. Also, a meeting with the architect would be beneficial.

3. Program Unification. Efforts will be made by our office to help unify many of the races in this area. However, some people or agencies will want to continue to hold their own races. In that case, the Recreation Department will attempt to avoid conflicts with other races and programs. Our office is aware of the problems and is certainly receptive to solving them, with the end result being better programs for the local citizens.

4. Middletown Strides. Local interest will need to be shown for such an organization. It is generally not the policy of the Recreation Department to financially sponsor such a group. I feel we must first
build a solid, local program and the Middletown Striders would then be a logical portion of our overall program.

5. Race equipment. Steps are now being taken to either purchase or build the needed equipment to conduct a quality program and eliminate the need to "scrounge" equipment.

6. Race Finishing Materials. At this point our department has access to or owns materials needed to finish a race in an organized fashion. It is also the job of the race director to insure that all areas are covered for a good race. Planning prior to the race is the factor which determines how successful the race will be. Poor race organization will quickly destroy the reputation of a particular race for a great length of time.

7. Awards. It is a point well taken and it is my desire to have awards which are not the traditional trophies. It is a difficult area to find the right answer as to how awards should be distributed and to have an award which is unique. We will explore different possibilities and hopefully find a solution which will appeal to most people.

8. Summary. The Recreation Department is still relatively new to this entire area but I feel the interest is to see the program improve and grow each year. The public must also do their part in contributing to a successful program. I feel the program will continue to grow and, with the help of people such as Mr. Sherman, will be a very high quality program.

Respectfully,

William E. Reiter
Director of Recreation