

Thanks everybody, for venturing up to Nashua in the freezing cold to see how fast your team could transport a magnetic wristband to into the slums of Lawrence. The 28th Mill Cities Relay has now come and gone, and NMC had its share of success. A new record for the club, 94 runners on 20 teams, exceeding last year's total by one team, falling short of my goal of 100+ on 22 or more teams. Next year, always next year.

NMC managed two first place finishes, both in grand fashion, as well as a third, three fourths, three fifths, a sixth, and a variety of other places. This is among 20+ clubs, so the competition was strong and deep, and we did well. Overall, we placed 4th as a club (again), missing out by one place (again), on having our team name added to the Mill Cities trophy. It's there from 2009, the one year we managed third place. Now, we need to add it again.

First and foremost, our mixed 60+ team had other teams crying for mercy. They won the whole shebang amongst sunshine teams (W50+, W60+, mixed 60+, and all 70+ teams run with three runners, called the sunshine start). Linda Usher, Vin Rivard and Brian Byrne won the mixed 60+ division by over 9 minutes. All were finished, showered and changed before their nearest competition came into view.

Also claiming a division title was our W50+ team of Darlene, Deb and Carol (no last names necessary). This is at least the second year of three that we've won this division. They finished more than ten minutes ahead of their predicted time, unbelievable when considering they only run the last three legs in the relay. It also proved to be our strongest and deepest division. Zack Tibbetts, Donna LeBlanc and Kris Dorsey finished close behind in the same W50+ division. We had no other division with two such strong finishes.

Our fastest team, maybe ever, running 2:36 and change, were Will Lary, Brandon Davis, Mike Grasela, Jon Miganowicz, and Matt Spano. They smoked predictions, running faster than anyone expected, placing 5th overall. Couldn't ask any more than they gave, except to ask them to do it again next year. See you then, guys.

Equally impressive was our women's open team, a division we seem to struggle to fill, with a rather low number of younger runners to field. A team of runners that scarcely knew each other, Heather Arsenault scorched the first leg badly enough so she almost got arrested, then Karen Chevalier shot by one runner after another in leg 2, Lori Berkey displayed her blazing speed on the pool table flat leg three, Rachel Boudreau showed why she was running the longest leg, and newcomer Kim Pang ran a great anchor. They finished a strong 5th out of over 20 teams. Both open teams, as usual, ran into strong and deep competition that comes with being in just that, the open division.

Pulling third was Mark Fontaine's perennial mixed 50+ team, with the usual fast and lovely Deb and Carolyn putting up with their motley crew of Mark, Tim Blouin and Kevin McCusker. Congrats on lugging home a brick.

Finishing 4th, one place out of the prizes were our women's masters of Jenn Davidson, Sau-Mei Leung, Deb Barry and Erin Vasington. Jenn pulled double duty, running legs 1 and 2, as they lost a runner. Mixed masters also got 4th, with Kris Gleason, Kathy Hayward, Steve Penney, Kevin Fallon and yours truly. Mens 60+ ditto, Pete Orni, George Corff, Larry Mo, Jim I. and club historian Phil McGaw.

Mens seniors took 5th, Mike Auger, Steve Drouin, Doug Usher, Mike O'Hara and Marty Ellowitz almost breaking three hours. Considering that they've all bobsledded past the half century mark, that's amazing. You're all in the second halves of your lives guys, if you're going to break three, let's get a move on :-))).

On to the annual DAJG's (dumb ass Jeff Gould awards). Following tradition, the team that beats my prediction by the most, as well as the team that comes nearest to my prediction are awarded a half gallon of beer. There were no less than 4 teams that came within a minute of my prediction. Jon Miganowicz' team of Katy, Chanice, Max, Chad and Braila finished :48 off, and they were the furthest. Nanci Miller's team was only :37 off, and missing by only :31 was the team led by Paige Arnold. But the closest was the team that spanned the ages, Dom Moruzzi in the open division, George Leslie at almost 80, along with Rick Hersey, Pete Dennechuk and Paul Poisson ran 4:07:18, only 18 seconds from my prediction of 4:07. And they didn't set the record. Mark Fontaine's team missed by 9 seconds one year. Congrats, guys.

Beating my prediction by the most, by 20:27, was the team of Jim McDermott, Molly, Marge, Deb and Brian. Who wants the half gallon? First come, first (and only) served.

Race stats that you can do without include the most common first name, consisting of Jims Shope, Gaffney, Fay, Imprescia, Quinlan and McDermott. There were 3 married couples, Doug and Linda Usher, Mark and Deb Fontaine and Erin and Paul Vasington. Did I miss one maybe?

One of the awards may represent a record. Most travelled was Karen Chevalier, venturing 186 miles to take part in the organized chaos we call the Mill Cities Relay. Karen ran great, leaving leg 2 looking like a dusty trail with spent runners in her wake. Thank you, Karen.

With an e-mail address like Jerrykat, the award for the most creative e-mail address definitely goes to newcomer Kim Pang. As always, if your name is in your address, or there's an obvious refernce to running, you're not eligible.

As I've said many times, especially for you first timers, you might think that the relay finished in Lawrence, but it's really just begun. Now that you're in my sights, I'll be on your back every October to run with us again. I hope everybody has a nice Christmas, and your new year is filled with PR's. Cheers. Jeff