

2012 Minnesota Marathon Finisher's Medals

A look back at how these cherished race mementos came into being

BY MICHAEL ISERMAN

A MARATHON FINISHER'S MEDAL is perhaps one of the most cherished and meaningful race mementos. It represents more than just completing the 26.2 miles and crossing the finish line. The marathon finisher's medal symbolizes the countless hours and miles of training, the commitment, the sacrifice and the dedication required to make it to the starting line adequately prepared for this test of cardiorespiratory endurance and mental toughness.

For some, having the finishers medal draped around their neck represents much more, such as honoring a lost loved one, overcoming significant health challenges or perhaps conquering an addiction. Regardless of the meaning it symbolizes, the vast majority of marathoners would likely attest that the finisher's medal is one of their most prized possessions.

I earned my first finisher's medal at Grandma's Marathon in 2002. At that time, I was still naive to the significance of my accomplishment and the influence it would have on my life over the upcoming years.

I wish I could say my first marathon was an outstanding experience, but physically, it most certainly was not. I wasn't instantly hooked on the marathon distance and, frankly, I had serious doubts that I would ever attempt it again. In fact, immediately following the race and for the next couple weeks, I was convinced that running 26.2 miles just once was more than enough for me.

Of course I was pleased with the accomplishment and proud of the finisher's medal I had received, but at the time it did not have as much significance as these race souvenirs would gain over the

years. I wrapped the medal in its red, white, and blue ribbon and placed it in the back of a drawer.

As the weeks passed and my legs began to recover, I resumed my running "routine." Of the many aspects of running that I enjoy and look forward to the most, it is the solitude and the opportunity to process my thoughts that keeps me returning to the trails.

I guess sometime during one of those runs following my first marathon, I began to think about the possibility of improving upon my inaugural performance. I can't recall exactly when I decided to take on the marathon for a second time, but I did. In doing so, I began to learn more about myself, the allure of the marathon and the personal significance of my growing collection of finisher's medals.

Perhaps to my wife's chagrin, I now proudly display all of my marathon medals. Seeing them on a daily basis provides an important source of inspiration and motivation, not just for training in preparation for the next marathon, but also for inevitable challenges presented by life.

I have completed many marathons since 2002, and I am cer-

tainly not alone. According to Running USA's Annual Marathon Report (2012), there has been a 47 percent increase in the number of finishers among U.S. marathons from the years 2000 to 2011: an estimated 353,000 to 518,000, respectively.

Along with the growing participation has been a steady increase in the number of marathons in the United States. Over the last 10 years, the U.S. has seen an average of 26 new marathons each year (USA Running, 2012). Subsequently, as race organizers attempt to attract participants, one of the many strategies has been a trend toward larger, more intricate and creative finisher medal designs.

Each year, *Marathon & Beyond* magazine features an article (typically in the May/June issue) highlighting the best marathon medals for the previous year. I always look forward to seeing the artistic designs. Occasionally, one of the medals I had earned even makes the list (e.g., Grandma's Marathon, #20 among M&B's 2009 top 25 finisher medals) (Gentry 2010). Inspired by these articles, I thought it would be interesting to take a look back at the 2012 finisher medals from all of the Minnesota marathons.



Zoom! Yah! Yah! Indoor Marathon, January

Minnesota's first marathon of the calendar year is the Zoom! Yah! Yah! Indoor Marathon held at St. Olaf College in Northfield. The race is run on a 282 meter track which equates to 150 laps for the participants. The finisher's medal, designed by Tom Daymont, displays a runner with stars circling around his head representing this dizzying course. The runner's arms are also raised in triumph, or maybe out of desperation. The Zoom! Yah! Yah! finisher medal is the rarest among Minnesota marathons with a maximum of just 44 awarded each year.



Lake Wobegon Trail Marathon, Holdingford to St. Joseph, Minnesota, May

The Lake Wobegon Trail Marathon is presented by the St. Cloud River Runners. The race begins in Holdingford and ends in St. Joseph, Minnesota. The mostly rural Lake Wobegon Trail is a former railroad track converted to a paved bike path.

The finisher's medal seeks to represent the trail seen passing by pine trees and its connection to central Minnesota. The Minnesota imagery is also strongly represented on the beautiful medal that will be awarded to finishers in 2013. A must have for every marathoner's medal collection.



Minneapolis Marathon, June

The Minneapolis Marathon celebrates its fifth anniversary in 2013. The 2012 finisher's medal, similar to that of both 2010 and 2011, is shaped like a quarter circle to fit like a puzzle piece, forming a complete circle or wave design with other Team Ortho finisher medals earned throughout the year.

The medal is plated in 24 karat gold and similar to the other medals within the Team Ortho series. It also features a stained glass like inlay, in a blue wave-like pattern representing the Mississippi River along many sections of the course.



Brainerd Jaycees Run for the Lakes, April

The Run for the Lakes Marathon starts and finishes near Nisswa, Minnesota. The course tours runners along tree lined country roads through the north woods of the Brainerd Lakes Area. Race Director, Tad Johnson indicates, "Since the medal is the one thing a runner receives and keeps after completing a race, we wanted ours to be impressive enough so a runner sees it and remembers fondly that they finished the Run for the Lakes."

The finisher's medal incorporates the race's logo including the national historic Brainerd Water Tower, a section of the trail and a lake in the background representing scenic Clark Lake and Lake Hubert around which portions of the marathon course circle.



Med-City Marathon, Byron to Rochester, Minnesota, May

The Med-City Marathon is a point-to-point marathon run each May from Byron to Rochester. The design for the 2012 finisher's medal evolved as a byproduct of the race's shirt design. The medal designer, Paul Brandrup, recalls that he wanted to capture an urban look using elements that portrayed Rochester, such as the downtown Rochester skyline, which outlines "Marathon 2012." To further differentiate the look from previous years, he also decided to use a distressed font type which further draws upon the urban feel.



Grandma's Marathon, June

Grandma's Marathon is run every June along the beautiful north shore of Lake Superior from Two Harbors to Duluth. Around mile 14, runners catch their first glimpse of the distant aerial lift bridge near the finish line.

Zach Hitchcock, designer of Grandma's 2012 finisher medal states, "This medallion was trying to capture that sighting. It represents fruition and accomplishment. The lines streaming into the sky represent the energy and the celebration happening in our finish area. As thousands of people find their way across the line they take a deep breath and look back on what they just achieved. It is very simple imagery, but for every runner who has crossed the line at Grandma's Marathon, this first sighting must build up excitement and anticipation."



Moose Mountain Marathon, September

The Moose Mountain Marathon, run primarily on the rugged Superior Hiking Trail, is Minnesota's most challenging marathon, boasting 11,000 feet of elevation change. According to John Storkamp, it seems fitting that Moose Mountain has the most modest finisher's medal since, "Just finishing this race is bragging rights in itself."

The medal is actually a simple two sided, two inch wooden nickel. On the back, each finisher writes in some basic information such as the year, finish time and place. Storkamp states, "We believe that the race is about the experience and not the medal, so by design, have kept this aspect pretty modest, and most people think it is pretty cool. After all, when you run the Moose Mountain Marathon, you are surrounded by thousands of acres of forest, so I think a wood medallion makes some sense."



Walker North Country Marathon, September

Last year marked the thirtieth running of the Walker North Country Marathon, which provided the inspiration for the finisher's medal. As stated by designer Melanie Rice, "We wanted to do something really different with our logo and our slogan. Not wanting a shape that was the traditional circle, the shape of the state of Minnesota seemed appropriate."

Rice explains that the 2012 medal places "more focus on the unique qualities of our race: the quaint town of Walker, the winding trails through the Paul Bunyan and Heartland Trails, and along the shores of Leech Lake, the majestic pines along the way, and finally, celebrating

the big finish at the top of the hill where you stand on the finish line and look over the expansive view of Walker Bay on Leech Lake. If that doesn't spell out 'North Country,' we don't know what does."



Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon, October

Known as "The most beautiful urban marathon in America," the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon has become one of my favorite annual marathons. As noted by TCM's Marketing and Media Director, Teresa Fudenberg, "The design of the 2012 Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon finisher medal reflects the energy and personality of the marathon's theme."

"The geometric facets and strong lines have several meanings. The facets are a nod to the urban setting of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The overlapping lines represent the personal paths that each runner takes on their quest to complete the event. When shown in color [as seen on the 2012 finisher's shirt], the lines and facets layer over each other in rich autumnal hues, creating a vibrant color palette inspired by the beauty of the marathon course. Combined, these signature elements tell the bold story about the powerful experience of finishing a marathon."



Mankato Marathon, October

The Mankato Marathon is one of Minnesota's newest marathons with the inaugural race held in 2010. The Mankato Marathon logo is perfectly fit for a finisher's medal. As Event Support Specialist, Paige Schuette indicates, "Not only does the shape and size lend itself well for this medium, we also felt the logo itself was unique, interesting and depicts the features of the Minnesota River Valley in which Mankato is settled."

In writing this article, I became motivated to add each of the Minnesota marathon finisher's medals to my personal collection. I also wondered, has anyone completed and earned a finisher's medal for each of the Minnesota's marathons? How about in a single year? If you enjoy the art and inspiration that a marathon medal provides, you can view additional photos of finisher medals from both U.S. and international marathons at www.26point2medals.com.

Special thanks to: Dick Daymont (Zoom! Yah! Yah!), Sharon Hobbs (Lake Wobegon Trail Marathon), Wally Arnold (Med-City Marathon), Paul Brandrup (Med-City Marathon), Paige Schuette (Mankato Marathon), John Storkamp (Moose Mountain Marathon), Zach Hitchcock (Grandma's Marathon), Teresa Fudenberg (Twin Cities in Motion), Melanie Rice (Walker North Country Marathon), Tad Johnson (Brainerd Jaycees Run for the Lake) and John Larson (Team Ortho's Minneapolis Marathon) for the support and information each provided for this article regarding their respective marathons. ■

Zoom! Yah! Yah! Indoor Marathon

Designed by: Tom Daymont

Produced by: Dynabuckle

Next Running: January 5, 2014

www.zoomyahyah.com

Brainerd Jaycees Run for the Lakes

Designed by: Kim McLellan

Produced by: Winner's Trophy & Engraving

Next Running: April 27, 2013

www.runforthelakes.com

Lake Wobegon Trail Marathon

Designed by: Christy Ramler

Produced by: Always Advancing

Next Running: May 11, 2013

www.lakewobegontrailmarathon.org

Med-City Marathon

Designed by: Paul Brandrup, Superior Screeners (Rochester)

Produced by: Medals and Insignia

Next Running: May 26, 2013

www.medcitymarathon.com

Minneapolis Marathon

Designed by: Jason Lehmkuhle

Produced by: Team Ortho

Next Running: June 2, 2013

www.minneapolismarathon.com

Grandma's Marathon

Designed by: Zach Hitchcock

Produced by: Advantage Emblem

Next Running: June 22, 2013

www.grandmasmarathon.com

Moose Mountain Marathon

Designed by: John Storkamp

Produced by: Old Time Wooden Nickel Co.

Next Running: September 7, 2013

www.fall.superiortrailrace.com

Walker North Country Marathon

Designed by: Melanie Rice, Rice Creative Services, LLC (Walker)

Produced by: American Solutions

Next Running: September 21, 2013

www.walkernorthcountrymarathon.com

Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon

Designed by: Elle Conyers,

Orangeseed Design (Minneapolis)

Produced by: Maxwell Medals & Awards

Next Running: October 6, 2013

www.tcmevents.org

Mankato Marathon

Designed by: Taymark, Inc.

Produced by: Taymark, Inc.

Next Running: October 20, 2013

www.mankatomarathon.com