

THE WIND DRINKER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BIG SKY WIND DRINKERS, A
RUNNING CLUB FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES IN
BOZEMAN, MT



Photo by Lisa Verwys

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Wind Drinkers,

Fall is upon us – it's apparent in the early morning chill and the yellowing leaves up high. As we wind down and compete in our final races of the summer, this issue of the Wind Drinker will be sure to set the mood. We've collected two Bridger Ridge Run "perspectives" from those who ran the race this year. Read also in the Mature Runner, some inspiration from a 100-year-old marathon runner, who proves you're never too senior to stop.

A photograph of a white goat with small black horns standing on a rocky mountain ridge. The goat is facing left. In the background, there are layers of mountain ranges under a hazy sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow. The title "BRIDGER RIDGE RUN 2021" is overlaid in large, bold, black capital letters.

BRIDGER RIDGE RUN 2021

It was a hot one this year for the Bridger Ridge Run 2021, but after a quiet last year with cancelled races due to the pandemic, runners were eager to return to their favorite, local course. Perspectives are by first place winner David Ayala and Ridge Run veteran, Darryl Baker.

David Ayala

"The start area is a warm scene, for every sense: smiles and nerves on people of many shapes and sizes. Megan and I chat about dreaming. Shane consolidates our intentions with some well-chosen words and prayer, which I summarize as 'May we celebrate our vitality, as individuals and as a people.'

I turn a sharp corner of the first switchback in that open bowl toward Sac with two others on my heels: Dylan and Jason. My peripheral glance toward the forest reveals no other racers in sight — we're already several minutes in the lead.

Just before the saddle North of Sac, Dylan blasts past me. By looks, Dylan is a younger fellow. Noting his bouncy stride, I tell myself I'll pass him again sooner or later, and earnestly try to believe this in effort to remain calm. Oop, now Jason is blasting by in chase of Dylan — he looks strong and ready for this event. The Baldy Blitz with Jason affords me some delicate confidence that I can catch him on descents. But, gosh, Jason is proficient with focus and compartmentalization of will, from years of competitive running and biking. So, while this experience retains its welcome uncertainty, the race clarifies: it will come down to Jason and I descending from Baldy.

Two goats calmly, unblinkingly, watch me jostle from some 3 meters away. I consider telling them to run for their lives and enjoy these closing days of their species, but wonder if they're hoping to get something out of this event as well. The sunrise from Sac, with the entire route in sight — Ross' sheen — is superb as always. I will eclipse the horizon drawn closer by smoke, we all will. The scene is so warm, both in the familial sense and in temperature.

On the South ridge of Naya Nuki, I pass Dylan with flailing finality, and give my regards to sweeps Ana and Tommy. I pass Jason shortly after gaining the foothills trail — he graciously steps aside for the exchange. Jason passes me in the climb leading to Ross Pass — I step aside. I'm already feeling an onset of cramps; my `training' for this BRR has been just lots and lots of time-on-feet, hardly as regulated and explosive as previous seasons. I hope Jason interprets my sluggish ascents as strategic. I figure 5 minutes is the largest margin I could close on Jason in the descent from Baldy, so I commit to keeping him within 4.

I pass Darryl and his perpetual aura of kindness just after Ross Pass.
Tenuously cramping legs tool me uphill for a while.

At Bridger, Nikki says "You know the downhills" in a hushed voice.

I measure I'm 4:20 behind Jason on the ridge North of Saddle.

I commence my usual plan to run everything from that ridge on, and so implement my cramp-avoiding jostle which I'm becoming embarrassingly proficient at. Peder and Mike cheer me on from Saddle; their faces betray that something's wrong with me.

Kristina stands brightly on some rocks just North of Baldy. Be it true or not, she reports "Jason looked hot and tired. You're 4 minutes back. Nobody is behind you." — an expertly communicated anchor for will, though my insecurities mine concern in her voice.

Sam greets me on Baldy across from a petroleum palm tree. In an outfit of flamboyance, Nick reports "4 minutes back" as he pours water into my handheld. Brenden tries to guilt me into tasting some Bozone brew he and crew painstakingly hauled up in a pony keg. I hear him chasing me "C'mon Dave! Gotta have some!" I'd be embarrassed if he catches me, so I pick up my pace. As expected, I feel a heel blister, the blister grow, the blister pop, heel-juice soak my sock, heel-skin tear off my foot, then heel-skin crumple into its resting place like a bunched up sock in my shoe. I measure I'm 1:10 behind Jason by the base of the scree field South of Baldy.

Now on flatter terrain, my legs cramp: I walk, then stumble, then am forced to lay down locked in cramp. That descent was reckless for my condition. I chew a salt pill, and rise using contortions and maneuvers more familiar in Class 5 terrain, manually bending my legs. As I pass Justin, then Rachel, I rearrange my grimace into a passable smile. Cresting the Knob, I engage a dangerous pace — a dynamic trip, really. Jurro (sp?), at Half-Way, reports "3 minutes behind the leader." Just beyond Yoga Point, I see a flash of Jason; little below the now-burnt TeePee, I catch him. He graciously steps aside; I mutter "nobody behind us". I elect to hold my excruciating pace: my other heel comes off.



I cross the finish line to interested faces, and collapse with urgency in shade to remove my shoes. Denise arranges an ice bucket for my demolished feet; physical therapist Dan relieves my cramps; Dylan fills my handheld.

Jason is placed on a bed while Anne and other medical folk buzz around him. He demonstrates a limpness that I start to aspire to; I cherish the race-element afforded by Jason's performance. Eventually, he comes to, and we make some nice conversation about the morning with the accumulating mass of halfly familiar people. The after party hovers in the grass, mowed by Boz earlier in the week, under the shade of those great trees. Emmiliese, in wedding white, and her friends, finish looking remarkably fresh as they celebrate her Bachelorette party. I'm moved by the industrious and supportive human

activity around me: the volunteers fulfilling each participant's personal little journey, the participants each undergoing their own private acute experience, friends and family generating so much spirit and interest, access to this land and the profound consumption of resources, etcetera.

Darryl Baker

After we had a couple of requests this year for early starts for fear of smoke and heat, and being out there all day we decided to open up "The Heat Wave." One of the requirements was that you had to be in the 7 hour category. We had 14 people sign up and then 2 dropped, including Pat Calis, who is now 83. But he did tell me he'll be ready for next year. The wave started at 6 am so we missed the crowded start, but cashed in on a fantastic red Sacajawea sunrise and over an hour of cool running.



I more or less ran with Art Sanborg, the oldest in the Ridge Run this year (by a couple of months) to Ross Pass. It was like doing a training run with no one else around till we got to Ross Pass. I managed to come into Ross first and it was really awesome coming across the meadow alone. Like doing a low key training run. That by itself was worth it all, and maybe the best moment in my 16 times of doing this. I had written an Excell Spreadsheet to see when and where David would pass me. You know "One train leaves the station at 6:00 pm going....The other train leaves.." I had it calculated he would pass me at Ross and sure enough he flew by about 100 feet south of the Aid Station." At that point he was only a few minutes behind the lead runner.

I climbed "The Wall" out of Ross and I have to say I've always liked that bad boy. I never saw Art again and I felt great going through Bridger and over Saddle. In fact I got to Bridger in 3 1/2 hours which for me is a pretty good time. Since I can always do the second half faster I thought I would be under 7 hours. But once I got over Saddle the heat set in and I had to slow it down. I had a guy bring up some ice at Bridger for my ice bandanna and that really helped. I had ice on my neck to Baldy, where I got a refill there. We flew a bunch of ice to the private land corner on the ridge just below Baldy and had it packed up. There was ice and ice bandannas for everyone, which really helped when it got hot.

It was a pretty slow go from Baldy down. No dangerous pace for me. In fact I sat down for a minute at the new (the old one burned out) 1/2 Way Baldy station where another guy was laying down and really out. But we have a doctor there and she was working on him. They had packed Otter Pops up and Don Rodgers slipped me a couple extra as I was leaving. Those things are amazing. I finished just over 7 hours, second in my age group, soaked my feet in the cold trough and then really didn't feel too bad. But then I had to pick up the finish line, so by the time I was done with that I was beat. Glad to see what David wrote and now I have even more respect for him because he helped pick up the finish as well. And he didn't even have feet.

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THE MATURE RUNNER

By David Summerfield

Does the mature runner have a

future? what DOES a mature runner have to look forward to? That's a subject I've been avoiding for many decades. I keep reading about those runners who are much more my senior (in their 80's, 90's, and 100's) who keep doing amazing things. It's encouraging, but also daunting. How the heck will I ever be able to do those things 20-30 years from now, since I can't even do them now?

In writing this September 2021 newsletter article, I really didn't have a whole lot of inspiration to keep training to be a good "Mature Runner". Every breakthrough "run" has always been followed by long periods of recovery, which is discouraging. Is this what I'm looking forward to every day from now on? Then I remembered this amazing Indian runner named Fauja Singh. This article should settle all doubts about what lies ahead - a life of constant inspiration for others, as Fauja has done for me. Read on in his own words:

"I was born in a village in Punjab in India in 1911. My memories are of a simple life without the stresses that people all over the world seem to have nowadays. I came from a farming family, and we learned to live within our means after working hard and honestly. We remembered God and were thankful to him. We shared with others less fortunate than ourselves. This is in keeping with the three tenets of my Sikh religion. I had a happy childhood and I was nurtured because I was weak. I couldn't walk until I was five. I wanted to be sporty, but until then, I lacked the strength. But I enjoyed watching all the simple sporting activities that were prevalent in the rural environment at the time. And I remember the joy all around me when I became strong enough to be able to walk.

My last race was the Hong Kong 10km in 2013 when I was 101. As I never went to school, I farmed all of my working life. It was always handy to be able to run after straying cattle, but that was about as exciting as it got.



I didn't really run competitively until I arrived in England 20 years ago.

Since then I have been looked after by one of my two remaining sons – this is the Asian culture where the parents are looked after by their children. I don't speak English and not being able to communicate with those whom you meet does pose problems, but a smile always helps. I am usually accompanied, but over time I have become familiar with the routes and places I visit regularly. It must be equally frustrating for those who want to communicate with me. One thing is for sure: shouting or saying things slowly does not make it easier – this is what I observed from tourists visiting other countries! Being illiterate and monolingual does have its advantages – I am not aware of any abuse that may be directed at me. Anyone who is different sadly suffers this in the modern world.

When I attempted to run a marathon for the first time at 89, the reactions were mixed. Some were excited to see if I could do it and wished me well, others doubted I could do it. Those who have been constant in supporting me were my coach, Harmander; my running club, Sikhs in the City; and my family.

Training was easy: I just followed the instructions of my coach without question. If it was a training run, he never let me be exhausted as he said it is good to train but not so good to strain. When it came to the race, I was simply awestruck by the support from the crowds along the route. My coach always ran alongside me and held me back from exerting myself too much in the early stages of the race. He then encouraged me to keep going later on in the race, when the going got tough. I also then started talking to God to help me get through to the finish.

I don't think I ran competitively in the true sense – it was simply a case of me finishing a distance as fast as I could. My records seem to be simply a by-product of my age. Records are meant to be broken and I wish the person who breaks my records all the best. If running a marathon at my age has inspired others to not give up then I am pleased to have had a positive impact on society. My last race was the Hong Kong 10km in 2013 when I was 101. Currently, I am not able to run as I have a hernia, but I remember fondly the feeling of freedom when I used to run not so long ago. I am just pleased that I am still mobile and independent. I still walk about five miles each day. Freedom for me is being independently mobile, and retaining a sound mind and a positive outlook. The rest is up to God."

Fauja Singh has been awarded the British Empire Medal. He is thought to be the oldest person to complete a marathon, but as India did not issue birth certificates in 1911, the record is deemed unofficial. This interview was translated by Harmander Singh.

And here is more information and statistics Mature Runners thrive on:

"Fauja Singh was born in Beas Pind, Jalandhar, Punjab, British India on 1 April 1911, the youngest of four children. Singh did not walk until he was five years old. His legs were thin and weak, and he could hardly walk long distances. Because of this, he was often teased, and he was called by the nickname "danda" (Punjabi: **ਡੰਡਾ** for "stick") for the next ten years. As a young man, Singh was an avid amateur runner, but he gave it up at the time of the Partition of India.

It was only after witnessing the death of his fifth son, Kuldip, in a construction accident in August 1994, that Singh returned to his passion for running, in 1995. The death of his wife in 1992, and his eldest daughter who had died from complications after giving birth to his third granddaughter, gave him the determination for this new focus in life. He emigrated to England in the 1990s and lives with one of his sons in Ilford.

At 89 years, he took seriously to running and ended up in international marathon events. When he first turned up for training at Redbridge, Essex, he was dressed in a three-piece suit. The coach had to rework everything, including his attire. Singh ran his first race, the London Marathon, in 2000. According to his coach, he used to run up to 20 kilometers easily and wanted to run a marathon, thinking it to be just 26 kilometers and not 26 miles (42 kilometers). It was after he realized this that he began training seriously.

At the age of 93, Singh completed a marathon in 6 hours and 54 minutes. This knocked 58 minutes off the previous world best for anyone in the 90-plus age bracket. In 2004, he was featured in an advertising campaign for sportswear manufacturer Adidas alongside David Beckham and Muhammad Ali. Singh holds UK records for the 200 m, 400 m, 800 m, mile and 3000 m for his age group, records all set within a single 94-minute period.

At the age of 100, Singh attempted and accomplished eight world age group records in one day, at the special Ontario Masters Association Fauja Singh Invitational Meet, held at Birchmount Stadium in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Timed by officials in Canada, he ran the 100 meters in 23.14, 200 meters in 52.23, the 400 meters in 2:13.48, the 800 meters in 5:32.18, the 1500 meters in 11:27.81, the mile in 11:53.45, the 3000 meters in 24:52.47, and the 5000 meters in 49:57.39, setting five world records for his age group in one day. Some events had no previous record holder, as nobody over age 100 had ever attempted the distance. Some of his marks are significantly superior to the listed world record in the M95 age group as well.

Three days later, on 16 October 2011, Singh became the first 100-year-old to finish a marathon, completing the Toronto Waterfront Marathon in 8:11:06. As it took him over 14 minutes after the gun to cross the starting line, the official time submitted for the age group record will be 8:25:17.

However, Guinness World Records refused to include Singh in its record book because he could not produce his birth certificate to prove his age. Birth records were not kept in India in 1911. He was however able to produce a passport listing his date of birth as 1 April 1911, and a letter from Queen Elizabeth II congratulating him on his 100th birthday.

In October 2011, Singh, a vegetarian, became the oldest man to be featured in a PETA campaign. In July 2012, Singh carried the Olympic torch. Singh had stated that he would retire from competitive running after taking part in the Hong Kong marathon on 24 February 2013, five weeks shy of his 102nd birthday. He completed the 10 kilometre run at the Hong Kong marathon in 1 hour 32 minutes and 28 seconds, and said that he intends to continue running for pleasure, health and charity.

Singh was awarded the British Empire Medal in the 2015 New Year Honours for services to sport and charity. Singh is 1.72 m (5 ft 8 in) tall and weighs 52 kg (115 lb). He attributes his physical fitness and longevity to abstaining from smoking and alcohol and to following a simple vegetarian diet. He has been quoted as saying "I am very careful about different foods. My diet is simple phulka, dal, green vegetables, yogurt and milk. I do not touch parathas, pakoras, rice or any other fried food. I take lots of water and tea with ginger. ... I go to bed early taking the name of my Rabba (God) as I don't want all those negative thoughts crossing my mind."

Speaking about the marathon, he said: "The first 20 miles are not difficult. As for last six miles, I run while talking to God."

Running Career

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| ● Marathons run: London (6), Toronto (2), New York (1) | ● London Flora Marathon 2004: 6:07 |
| ● Marathon debut: London, 2000, aged 89 | ● Glasgow City Half Marathon 2004: 2:33 |
| ● London Flora Marathon 2000: 6:54 | ● Capital Radio Help a London Child 10,000 m 2004: 1:08 |
| ● London Flora Marathon 2001: 6:54 | ● Toronto Waterfront Half Marathon 2004: 2:29:59 |
| ● London Flora Marathon 2002: 6:45 | ● Toronto Waterfront Marathon 2011: 8:11:0 |
| ● Bupa Great North Run (Half Marathon) 2002: 2:39 | ● London Marathon 2012 : 7:49:21 |
| ● London Flora Marathon 2003: 6:02 | ● Hong Kong Marathon (10 km) 2012: 1:34 (raised \$25,800 for charity) |
| ● Toronto Waterfront Marathon 2003: 5:40 | ● parkrun uk 2012 – Age graded record holder: 179.04% with a time of 38:33 |
| ● New York City Marathon 2003: 7:35 | ● Hong Kong Marathon (10 km) 2013: 1:32:28 |

BSWD INFORMATION

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See www.winddrinkers.org for updates and more information



**“FITNESS CANNOT BE BORROWED,
BOUGHT OR BESTOWED; LIKE
HONOR, IT MUST BE EARNED.”**



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THE WIND DRINKER

Published monthly by the Big Sky Wind Drinkers, a non-profit organization devoted to the promotion of physical fitness.

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