

Rob Rose Column - 2/7/08

One of the unwritten tenets of baseball is to ignore the obvious whenever a no-hitter is in progress. The perceived consequences of tempting fate are evident by the conduct of everyone involved in the game. All types of bizarre behavior come to the fore in order to ensure that good luck isn't jeopardized. Teammates not only don't speak to the pitcher but they also avoid contact, relegating the pitcher to an isolated corner of the dugout. Announcers can be mum and the fans also play an integral role in the tradition. I was at Derek Lowe's no-hitter at Fenway a few years ago and one of my companions wouldn't speak from the fifth inning on. Everyone has to do their part.

Considering that in the world of sports, everything is susceptible to jinx, misfortune and bad mojo, I hesitate to proceed with the following disclosure about next Sunday's (Feb. 17) Old Fashioned 10 Miler (OFTM) in Foxboro but I will.

I have been associated with the OFTM since inception, running it the first two years and writing about it the next ten. That's twelve which makes this year's race gulp, number 13. Unlucky 13. Bad news 13. Unmentionable 13. No thirteenth floor 13. The OFTM race application never states which edition of the race that is being held and for this year, that's probably a good idea.

What makes the impending 13th anniversary more ominous is that the race has never had an issue with weather. For a mid February race held in New England, that's quite a stretch of good luck. There have been years when it has been bitterly cold and there was one year when it snowed sometime before the race and the roads had some slick spots. However, the race has been conspicuously devoid of any weather problems. So is this the year when 13 comes to claim its due?

The Old Fashioned 10 Miler is above and away the best race in the Attleboro area. Over the past decade, it has established itself as a must stop on the winter road race circuit. The race is a reincarnation of one that was held in the 70's and 80's. The Wampanoag Road Runners brought it back in 1996 and based it in Sharon. The field expanded so quickly that it outgrew its Sharon facilities and moved to the Foxboro Co. facilities in 1998, where the runners will congregate again next Sunday. Approximately 400 runners will participate with regional clubs such as the Rhode Island Road Runners, Colonial, Tri-Valley, Thirsty Irish and others bringing in legions of runners to compete. Nine years ago, the club added a 5K which attracts over a hundred runners.

It is so respected that since 2000, the Boston Athletic

Association (B.A.A.) has brought a stable of top flight runners to the race each year to compete. They will be a presence in Foxboro again this year bringing the competition to a high level. OFTM alumnae Janelle Krauss (2nd in 2004) and Brett Ely (1st -2005, 7th - 2006, 5th - 2007) will represent the B.A.A. at the women's U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials in Boston in April. U.S. Olympic Marathon qualifiers such as Cathy Campbell, Terry Shea, Beth Whitney, Mark Coogan, Casey Moulton, Matt Pelletier and Walpole's Mimi Fallon have left their contrails in Foxboro. Warwick's Pelletier, who finished 19th in 2:17:17 at last year's men's U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon, only has a second place (2004) as his best OFTM finish.

"There are always concerns," said OFTM race director Roland Desrochers when asked about the onus of 13 on this year's race. "A ten mile race in New England in the middle of February, anything can happen. We have had a couple of close calls, two to three inches of snow the night before which made for a slushy race, about 100 foot stretch of ice just past the start and a snow storm that dropped eight inches of snow starting on my ride home."

The club is proceeding with their usual quiet efficiency in putting the race together and thirteen isn't in their contingency planning. "Somehow the race has enjoyed beautiful weather with the temps in the 40's more times than not," Desrochers said last week. "That we are coming up on the 13th edition doesn't have me any more concerned than usual. The way I look at it is that we are 12-0 now with the goal of at least 19-0, just like the Pats."

Let's hope that next Sunday goes better than last Sunday.

Footnotes - There is a high probability that the Mansfield High School Boosters 5K will change its date; now slated for Sunday, May 18, the race may move off that date due to a scheduling conflict; stay tuned for breaking news on where it may land

