



# OMAHA RUNNING CLUB NEWSLETTER

*For the members of the Omaha Running Club \* Vol. 50\* Winter 2020-21*

## Keep fingers crossed for Chiller

**I**t may be a New Year, but 2021 began with the same old uncertainty when it came to dealing with COVID-19 life in general and road races in particular. ORC members who participated in the 2020 Chiller Challenge couldn't have foreseen what the next 10 months would bring.

Early predictions from the health "experts" ranged the gamut from "it'll end as soon as summer's heat arrives" to "millions of Americans will die from this virus." One thing came true: The landscape of organized road races changed in historic fashion.

Will that carry over to the 2021 Chiller Challenge? Club president Tom Whitaker said he hopes not. He and other organizers continue to work with Papillion Recreation officials to determine if and how the event can be staged.

"We will put it on if we can meet Papillion's requirements and still create a safe and meaningful event," Whitaker said the first week of January.

The Chiller has been one of the Club's longest ongoing events. Always held in January or February (usually on Super Bowl Sunday), the race has encountered occasional hurdles — most often related to frigid temperatures and snow as you might expect during winter.

The Chiller moved to NP Dodge Park in 2006, an ideal location at the time with ample parking. But with the Missouri River flooding that began in earnest in 2010 and continued off and on for years,



**Here's a blast from the past: The Chiller Challenge moved to a new venue in 2006, NP Dodge Park. Serving the Prima 140-provided meal — as was the case for many years — was the Bean Team, pictured above. (2006 photo by Ken Juhl.)**

the park closed permanently in 2019, forcing a new venue for the Chiller.

That new home became available with the opening of Papillion Landing. It turned out to be the ideal choice — and, happily, the weather was unseasonably warm that Feb. 2 Super Bowl Sunday.

Soon after came the wrath of COVID-19, and race organizers across the country had to evaluate whether events could be safely held. From the largest, such as the Boston Marathon, to much smaller ones, the health of participants took top priority. And that often meant either cancellation or postponement. The Heartland Marathon, thankfully, wasn't a victim, although numbers were down.

Looking back, the Club president said 2020 was most difficult.

"It was very challenging to put on events in 2020, thus the necessity to cancel most of them, both regular races and fun runs," Whitaker said, "particularly fun runs that have a main purpose of socializing rather than racing.

"Heartland was very important, along with Lake Wehrspann, Go Girl 5K and The Bones Runs as they demonstrated an event could be put on and meet the official requirements to create a safe environment for runners, volunteers and spectators. It was also significant that runners accepted and almost totally lived by the new procedures."

### 2020 wasn't all that bad

Craig Halverson bounces back from a tough 2018 to qualify for the Boston Marathon two years later. **Page 2.**

### Badillo vs. Father Time

Longtime ORC member Jose Badillo says age is just a number, so he keeps on running — and volunteering. **Page 5.**

### Runners be safe, be seen

With the shorter days of winter, there isn't much sunlight, so it's best to be more visible when running. **Page 7.**

# Pandemic can't stop one ORC member

**C**raig Halverson credits running for helping him give up cigarettes. He also found it a therapeutic means of overcoming a rough time in his life. His reward for persistency came during 2020 when he qualified for the Boston Marathon.

The 40-year-old Omaha resident called the pandemic-dominated past 12 months his “best year ever,” despite the bizarre nature of the times we all endured.

“Yep, it sounds weird to say, considering how crazy this year was, but I think that’s what made me push harder,” he recently posted on his Facebook page. “I ran every race as if it was my last.”

Halverson’s long journey to the Midwest began with his 1982 birth in Tucson, Ariz. Shortly after, the family was uprooted to Greece, where his dad was stationed in the military. Eventually, upon his father’s retirement, they started a new life in Pisgah, Iowa.

Next came a move to Missouri Valley, where they lived on a farm. After his parents separated, Craig lived with his mother in Council Bluffs, and he graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School.

At Tee Jay, he didn’t go out for track or cross country, but he did take up running in 2013.

“A friend of mine from school did a race in Des Moines,” he said. “We were always kind of competitive, and I wanted to try doing a race.”

Halverson first picked the 2013 Omaha Marathon’s 10K race. He signed up months in advance to give him plenty of time to train for it. A casual smoker, he realized early during his training he would need to make some changes.

“After that first day (of training), trying to run, it helped me quit smoking,” he said.

He’ll always remember that first 10K race for a not-so-funny thing.

“I was having a good race,” he said. “I was running next to this guy, and we were talking and having a good time. I



**Craig Halverson signed up to be a pacer at the 2018 Heartland Marathon. “It was pretty fun,” he said. “I think that was the only year of good weather.”**

asked him where the 10K turnaround was, and he said it was about a mile back.

“So my first race I ended up missing the turn and did a half-marathon. I did it in an hour and 15 minutes. I was pretty dang sore.”

That was Halverson’s lone race for 2013. The following year, he entered Council Bluff’s Gambler Marathon. He agreed to hook up again with his high-school pal for the event and hoped to beat him in the half-marathon. Another friend joined them.

“It was really wet that day,” he said, “and we took off our shirts around the halfway point. I looked down and realized my bib was on my shirt.”

Halverson turned around to retrieve his shirt. Meanwhile, his friend kept running with his bib on his shorts.

“I tried to chase him down, but I never did end up catching him,” he said. “That race sucked. I was cursed there.”

Running at that point didn’t become a passion, but it did soon enough.

“It wasn’t until probably my fifth or sixth race,” Halverson said. “It was a 5K, a volunteer event through work. The lady said she would let a couple of us run if we wanted to. It was at Standing Bear Lake.

“I ended up being fourth place in my age group, so I didn’t get an award.”

*See Halverson, Page 3*

# Halverson: Qualifying for Boston topped his 2020 feats

*Continued from Page 2*

That's when he decided to boost his running game with a 10K — one where he wouldn't miss the turnaround. He picked Papillion's Half Marathon 10K. That didn't start well.

"I went to put my bib pins on," he said, "and I had no race pins."

He finished in 47:33, beating his friend's time, but didn't get an age-group award. More determined, Halverson entered another 10K and picked up his first award: third in his age group.

"People were cheering and clapping," he said. "I thought that was cool. I won something. I got that award in my hand."

He wanted more after that.

"I started working harder with my training and running," he said, "trying to get better and better."

During that time, he was trying to erase the painful memories of 2018, when "I hit rock bottom."

"My dad passed away, and I was going through a separation around that same week," Halverson said. "I didn't run that much, which kind of sucked."

Through family and friends, he got back into it and found some running groups to assist his rebound.

"It helped me get back," he said, calling it a form of therapy. "I wasn't great at it, but I thought I was good at it. But I kept running."

He entered the ORC's 2018 Heartland Marathon as a pacer at the last minute.

"A friend of mine was a pacer," Halverson said. "It was pretty fun. I think that was the only year of good weather."

He also was a pacer the next year when a freak storm caused the marathon to be canceled after the start. He well remembers that day.

"I was running with this girl," he said. "She had a goal, and I was going to help her get that goal. I felt really bad that it was canceled."

**"It (2020) was a great year for me.**

**Every race I had a top-three finish. I got engaged, I PR'd a lot of races, and I qualified for Boston. I feel bad saying that, because a lot of people had bad years."**

— Craig Halverson



After his down-in-the-dumps 2018, things changed in 2020 when he found a new running partner, Sarah Neubert.

"She really helped push me at the beginning of the year," he said. "That motivated me to go out there and work harder. I tried to impress her, because she's hard to impress."

When COVID-19 hit full force, he wasn't sure how many races — if any — would be available. But, somehow, it turned out to be a banner year for Halverson.

He was able to qualify for the Boston Marathon — partly because his running partner, Sarah, (now his fiancée) beat him to it.

"I never had the urge to do a marathon," Halverson said. "I was always a 10K or maybe half-marathon guy. I tried a couple in the past, but I didn't like the way I felt afterwards."

"There was no way I was going to let her go to Boston and for me to just watch her. I made qualifying a goal."

The couple did the Little Rock Marathon, where he missed the BQ standard by about a minute. Searching hard to find another race that wasn't canceled, they found the Main to Main near Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

"It was all on country roads, long and boring," he said. "They didn't have a lot of crowd support. It was just you and the farmland."

He finished in 2:57, thinking he won the race. But, because of wave starting, Halverson discovered he lost by two seconds but still qualified for Boston.

With that in his bank, Craig and Sarah entered the Brookings Marathon in South Dakota with the goal of just having fun. Running totally relaxed, he finished in a personal-best 2:50.

Another feather in his cap came again in South Dakota, the Sioux Falls Half Marathon. Halverson spotted an elite runner from Nebraska who previously beat him.

"I told myself I wasn't going to let him beat me this time," he said. "I beat him by about five minutes in 1:18."

Craig joined the ORC about five years ago hoping to be more involved with the Omaha running community.

"You meet so many cool people," he said. "It's fun when you go to races and they're cheering you on. I'll post on Facebook or Instagram, and people will comment."

Halverson won the 2020 Chiller Challenge in 29:38. His goal was to run a race every month of the year, but, thanks to the pandemic, it didn't happen.

Still, he placed second in the Peak 2 Peak 10-miler and was champ of The Bones Run. He also won the Heartland's 10K last September.

With the Boston Marathon postponed until the fall of 2021, Halverson isn't totally sure it will happen. But he looks back at a 2020 that he never expected to turn out as it did.

"It was a great year for me," he said. "Every race I had a top-three finish. I got engaged, I PR'd a lot of races, and I qualified for Boston. I feel bad saying that, because a lot of people had bad years."



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Follow the Club on Facebook,  
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# President's Message

We have reached the end of a year to forget, but one we will always remember. The Omaha Running Club puts on races, but we spent much of our time trying to analyze official COVID-19 restrictions and canceling events that we thought might not provide safety for participants.

Fortunately, we were able to hold several events that provided a safe environment for runners and volunteers alike. I am grateful for and extend a special thank you to each and every member of the ORC Board and our great advisors for their time and hard work to help our Club fulfill its mission of supporting the Omaha running and walking community.

But most of all, I am extremely grateful to all the volunteers who give their time and effort so freely all year as they are the ones who really keep us going. We could not do anything without you.

This was particularly true with our Heartland Marathon this year as our volunteers stepped forward and met the challenge of taking outstanding care of participants. John Hall continues his superb record of managing our volunteer function. My biggest regret for the year was not being able to hold our volunteer appreciation dinner due to COVID.

I am grateful as well for all the runners who turned out to support our events and gave us their mark of approval by their participation.

My sincere best wishes go to our members for a healthy and successful 2021. Thank you for supporting our Club. I look forward to seeing you at the Lake Manawa and LaPlatte winter series runs, and, hopefully, at the Chiller Challenge that, at this time, is scheduled for Feb. 7. We are working out

the details for the event, with final plans depending on the COVID-19 situation over the coming weeks. Check the ORC website for updates.

We are busy planning our usual list of events for 2021 even though the upcoming year is filled with uncertainty. The availability of two vaccines and promise of several more give us hope that the world will return to some semblance of normal.

Registration is open and we are moving forward with plans to hold our premier event, Omaha's HEARTLAND MARATHON on Sept. 26. It is not too early to begin planning your fall event. If you are interested in accurately measured and clearly marked courses, prompt and accurate results during the race, photo tagging and runner tracking, and race officials and volunteers who really care about your race experience, then we are the race for you. Go to [heartlandmarathon.org](http://heartlandmarathon.org).

And the best part? The proceeds stay right here in Omaha to facilitate the ORC's year-round mission to support the local running community.

Run safely, and Happy New Year everyone!



**Tom Whitaker**

**Mark your calendar: Feb. 7 for the ORC Chiller Challenge/Annual Meeting at Papillion Landing.  
Races begin at 11 a.m., followed by meeting.**

**Stay up to date by following the ORC on Facebook or go to  
[omaharun.org](http://omaharun.org).**

# Right at home as a runner or volunteer

Jose Badillo settles in as a Nebraskan who pitches in for many ORC events

**W**hen it came time to choose where he'd spend his post-retirement years, Jose Badillo determined Bellevue would be the perfect place. That's coming from someone who has seen his fair share of America and the world through occupations and his long running career.

He learned all about pulling up stakes early in life when his parents were migrant workers. Wherever there was a paycheck opportunity, that's where the family went. Originally from Texas, they lived as far north as Ohio and Michigan.

"That's where I first encountered snow," Badillo said. "I didn't want to live anywhere there was snow. I'm like Punxsutawney Phil. Anytime it gets below the mid-40s I'm indoors."

He did spend most of his younger years in Santa Rosa, Texas. He played all sports at Santa Rosa High School, including, of course, football. He also ran on the track team.

As a high school junior, he and other friends took their first step toward serving in the military.

"The girls at that time liked to see guys in uniform," he said, "so I joined the Army Reserve. And right after I graduated from high school I joined the Air Force."

That was the start of a 25-year career that took him to England (where he would meet the woman he'd marry) to many stateside bases for schooling. In 1972, he was transferred to Offutt Air Force Base. Two years later came a four-year tour in the Philippines.

The oldest of the three Badillo children was a high school senior while they lived there, and after graduation the family moved back to Bellevue. In 1982 he decided that was where he would retire.



**Jose Badillo was a runner in high school. Years later, he took the sport to the next level by running his first 26.2-mile race, the 1993 Marine Corps Marathon. He also includes three Boston Marathons and 10 London Marathons among his 44 overall.**

Badillo may have retired from the military, but he wasn't quitting work. He was offered a chance to work for NASA in Greenbelt, Md. That's where he spent the next 13 years. He also was assigned to the Johnson Space Center in Houston for a year.

"To me," he said. "That was exciting. The Air Force trained me and gave me more training. When I went to work for NASA I was ready for it thanks to the training I got from the Air Force."

While away from Bellevue all those years, the couple kept their home and rented it out. That made the move back when Jose retired (again) in 1995 easy.

It was soon after that Badillo first learned that Omaha had a running club. He liked what he learned, joined the ORC and began running with fellow members.

"In my younger years, I could run with the younger guys," he said. "We used to meet at Peak Performance on Saturdays and Sundays for runs."

Running wasn't something new to Badillo. The mile was his specialty as a high school senior. He embraced the distance events, but there weren't many chances to continue that while in the Air Force.

"I didn't run at all until I got out of the Air Force," he said. "Then some guy in Maryland tried to talk me into running a marathon. I asked the guy, 'How far is it?' He said 26 miles. I said, 'Never will I run 26 miles.'"

Badillo found out never to say never. While living in Houston in 1993, he registered for the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C. He remembers it well.

"When I was running, I thought I was running fast," he said, "then here came the Marines — all in uniform — and passed me. It was a platoon, running in formation and in full combat gear."

With his first marathon in the books, Badillo was told he needed to set a goal of qualifying for Boston.

"I didn't even know what Boston was," he said. "I belonged to the club back in Maryland and was told I qualified for Boston. I said, 'What does that mean?' That's how much I knew about marathon running."

He soon found out about the Boston Marathon, first qualifying in 1994. He also ran it the next two years. His final

***See Badillo, Page 6***



# Badillo: 44 marathons and Senior Games are highlights

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one in 1996 was the 100th running of the Boston Marathon, the world's largest. It was so large by then that Badillo decided he didn't care to run another one. He wasn't giving up on marathons, though.

"I decided to head somewhere else," he said. "I went to London. I ran London 10 times. My wife would say, 'You're spending \$2,000 just to go run in London?' It was fun."

With London staged in April, Badillo had to train during the winter.

"I had to do a lot of my running in February and March," he said. "It was awful."

On top of the 10 London Marathons, Badillo has 34 others on record. Included was the Air Force Marathon in Ohio, in which he participated five times.

"Another one that was really memorable was in San Antonio," he said. "I was at the start line, and I was sweating. I was thinking it was going to be a long day. And it really was."

As a member of the ORC for more than 20 years, Badillo has built a lot of friendships and witnessed some talented runners.

"The quality of runners that I came in contact with was impressive," he said. "We had some really, really good runners. Maybe my group is getting older."

Having recently turned 83, he admits that's true, but age hasn't stopped Badillo from participating in the Heartland Marathon. He's been part of the over-70 relay team since the inaugural event in 2015.

"I like the group, I really do," he said. "It's fun to run it, and it's fun to see other people watch us running — or act like we're running. Just because you're getting older doesn't mean you have to stop."

More than a runner, Badillo has been a volunteer for ORC events. He's won multiple Volunteer of the Year awards for doing that.



**Jose Badillo (far right) was one of the 2019 Volunteers of the Year. He's pictured with fellow winner Tom Stagon, left, and ORC volunteer coordinator John Hall. (Photo by Joe Drugmand.)**

"You get to talk to a lot of people, and you can give them a lot of encouragement during races," he said. "That's what we as volunteers should do. We should help them. It's a nice feeling, because we know what it's like as runners."

"New people who join the Club, before they start running, should do one stint as a volunteer, just to see what it's all about."

John Hall, the ORC's volunteer coordinator, calls Badillo special.

"He promotes running, volunteering and the ORC," Hall said. "During the 2019-20 running season, Jose volunteered 14 times. During the 2020-21 shortened season, he has volunteered six times so far. In addition, when the ORC photographer is unavailable for an event, Jose has offered to take pictures for the Club. He enjoys cheering on our runners as they transverse the course."

Aside from the ORC events, Badillo has been active in the National Senior Games. For the past three Games, he's run the 1,500 — his high school specialty. He participated in the ones held in Pittsburgh, Houston and, most recently, Albuquerque, N.M. He's already setting his sights for the 2021 Games in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

He's had good success at the Senior Games, having placed second in the 1,500 each of his past three outings. Not bad for someone who turned 83 the day after the calendar turned to 2021.

With the many miles he has logged, Badillo is no different than other runners when it comes to injuries. Most have been minor, and he hasn't had to undergo surgery from running.

"I keep a log of things that I do and things I did wrong that was contributing to any injuries that I'm experiencing," he said. "I only went to a doctor one time, and that was for a foot neuroma that was bothering me really bad."

"He said, 'We might have to do surgery.' I said, 'OK, Doc.' I never went back. I came home and researched it. I found the remedy by myself — rest, biking and walking."

Badillo often was asked how he could keep running with minor injuries.

"I'm just careful," he said. "When I'm injured, I don't run. It's proved that you can be away from running for two weeks, and it may take you two or three days to catch up from what you were doing. You won't lose anything."

It's clear he hasn't lost much.

# Looking into a murky 2021 crystal ball

By John Fey

As we said goodbye to 2020, we also hoped to see the light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel. Looks like we'll be waiting some more — hopefully not too much longer — for that to happen.

Yes, news of the vaccine was encouraging, but, as we've quickly learned, it's not going to be an overnight cure. We'll have to continue to heed the advice to continue living as safely as possible while hoping our "shot in the arm" comes soon.

We all desired to see a closer to normal life by now, but that clearly hasn't been the case. Does that mean we have to put our lives on hold, especially when it comes to exercise? Absolutely not. Last March, I took my cardiologist's advice to drop 20 pounds (not quite there yet), and I logged more than 1,500 walking miles the final 10 months of 2020.



The startling spread of COVID-19 caused major headaches for race organizers across the country. Many events, including those directed by the ORC, were canceled. The 2020 Chiller Challenge on Super Bowl Sunday was run on an unseasonably warm day with 164 finishers.

Little did we know how quickly life would change the following weeks. Though the Heartland Marathon was months down the road, organizers faced the real possibility that the event might be canceled. Happily, Omaha health officials gave the ORC the OK to move forward — with safety measures and adjustments built in. And, as a bonus, the weather cooperated.

More good news came when the Lake Wehrspann 10K, Go Girl 5K and The Bones Run took place to the delight of those who registered. It was more proof that races can be staged under the guidelines outlined by health officials. Many other area races weren't as fortunate.

So, we all wonder, what does 2021 look like for road races? Nobody, especially race organizers, can say for sure.

Club president Tom Whitaker isn't optimistic about a quick return to life as we knew it before COVID-19.

"I don't think we will be back to normal this year," he said. "So many unknowns make it hard to do more than hope for the best, lay solid plans and carry them out if possible at the time events occur."

"But it is obvious even with lower turnouts that people want to run events. Event organizers are going to have to plan on tighter budgets and smaller turnouts."

Alan Higley, who provides the timing for many ORC events (including the Chiller Challenge) agreed with the Club president.

"While smaller events may struggle financially due to decreased sponsorships, they are typically easier to put on from a COVID-19 standpoint as long as you can conform to the directed health measures," he said. "I do not see a return to larger events for at least two years."

Let's hope it's a quick two years.

## Here are top ways to stay visible while running

For runners/walkers, being seen is essential to staying safe. Every year thousands are injured by drivers who don't see them. Here's how to stay as visible as possible:

» **Get the vest.** A safety vest is a must for every runner. You should probably have more than one because you will inevitably lose one or forget it when you want to go for a run. Safety vests are made from super reflective material and often have light strips or LED lights sewn into the fabric.

» **Run during the day.** Not surprisingly, most accidents involving runners occur at night or early in the morning. That's when the visibility is the lowest, so it makes sense those would be the most dangerous times for runners to get in

their daily miles. Try switching to a daytime run when the visibility is the best in order to stay visible and stay safe when you're running.

» **Light yourself up.** You can have some fun and stay visible at the same time when you add light reflective and LED lit accessories to your running outfit. Headbands, bracelets, necklaces, belts and even anklets in neon-glowing colors that reflect light can be added to any outfit to boost your visibility. Try wearing a miner's head lamp, too, for increased visibility.

» **Run in pairs.** Pairing up will make you more visible and lower the chances that you'll be involved in an accident when running. Ask a friend or a neighbor to join you, especially if you like to go out

in the evening. An alternative at work is to get a colleague to join you on your lunch break.

» **Wear the right gear.** You don't need special clothing or gear to run, but it does help boost your visibility. Performance clothing that's made for runners has bright neon colors, reflective patches, and other built-in style elements that will help boost visibility while also helping your running performance. Investing in some high-quality gear designed to help you stay safe and visible is a good idea for any runner. If your usual running routes include busy streets, you should be doing everything you can to stay visible — including wearing runner's performance clothing.

— Submitted by Rachel Gaffney

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# OMAHA RUNNING CLUB

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