

Senior Moments

I know I am not alone in feeling that we are finally rounding the curve in the pandemic, and the revival of racing events is coming back with a vengeance. Fewer and fewer races on Atlanta's event schedule are showing as **Virtual Only** or **Cancelled**, and more and more are taking place live, with responsible social distancing and appropriate caution still a requirement, as it should be. Even Peachtree is back as a live event this year, so most other larger planned events will certainly follow suit.

As more and more races dot the landscape, it appears to me that while the world was sheltering in place, there was a fitness movement taking place behind the scenes which is now coming out of the woodwork and spilling openly into the streets. And I am noticing a trend which, as the Five Star Senior Ambassador, delights me to no end. More and more older runners seem to be showing up at races than ever before, and I'm thrilled to see it.

Five Star has always been very generous in the older age groups, recognizing Masters (40+), Grand Masters (50+) and Senior Masters (60+) three deep overall as well as first three in each 5 year age group. Of course, this doesn't guarantee that all you have to do is show up to earn a medal. You still have to do the work and walk/run the race. But it does significantly increase your chances.

Another trend I am noticing in the older age groups as that as more people participate, the competition is getting increasingly more challenging and the fields are getting deeper. There have been a couple of races just in the past month that have really driven this point home.

I recently ran the Life Path 8K in Braselton, on a fairly challenging course on a warm day. I knew before the race started that there were going to be some fast times in the older age groups. But when all was said and done, the results were pretty stunning. 13 of the top 15 overall finishers were over 40, and a full half of the top 10 were over 60. There was a total of 27 finishers in the race, and I was 24 out of 27. It was a very humbling experience, and the admiration I have for these special runners is through the roof. I know how hard I work to be where I am, and to see what these runners can accomplish earns nothing but respect from me.

Place	Bib	Name	Age	Gender	City	State	Chip Time	Pace	Age Percentage
1	3920	Jesus Reyes-Camacho	21	M	Gainesville	GA	29:16	5:54	71.6
2	3943	Salvador Tapia	31	M	Braselton	GA	31:12	6:17	67.2
3	3911	Casey Hannan	61	M	Atlanta	GA	31:26	6:20	82.8
4	3909	Michael Anderson	63	M	Tucker	GA	32:24	6:32	81.8
5	3910	Kirk Larson	69	M	Atlanta	GA	33:30	6:45	83.8
6	3905	Mariska Van Rooden	42	F	Buford	GA	33:56	6:50	73.2
7	3922	Nicholas Schlenker	40	M	Braselton	GA	34:03	6:51	64.2
8	3912	Jack Haire	62	M	Gainesville	GA	36:30	7:21	72.0
9	3867	Richard Smith	57	M	Oakwood	GA	37:30	7:33	67.0
10	3908	Jerry Learned	72	M	Gainesville	GA	37:46	7:36	76.9
11	3904	Norman Wenger	53	M	ALPHARETTA	GA	38:00	7:39	63.9
12	3892	Troy Clark	46	M	Hoschtton	GA	38:12	7:41	59.9
13	3944	Karen Hinson	59	F	Alto	GA	40:03	8:04	74.2
14	3891	Brian Bassham	46	M	Braselton	GA	40:39	8:11	56.3
15	3919	Guillermo Escamilla	46	M	Gainesville	GA	40:58	8:15	55.9

This past weekend, on Saturday, I ran the Five Star Sneaky Feet 5K on a fast course at Etowah River Park in Canton. I made it a point of visiting runners I didn't recognize before the race. One gentleman I met was Robert Mainor Jr. This was his first race back after being away from the racing scene for quite a while. I really enjoyed talking with him before the race. I found out quickly

Bib	Name	Age	Gender	Age Group	City	State
752	Robert Mainor Jr.	65	Male	M65-69	Mableton	GA
751	Steven Leibbrandt	69	Male	M65-69	Roswell	GA
759	Michael Selman	65	Male	M65-69	Cumming	GA

that he was in my age group, and also found out that he was a really good runner. I also had a nice visit with Steve Leibbrandt, who is a regular at many Five Star events, but whom I hadn't visited with for quite a while. They both beat me, and I couldn't have been happier for both of them. Another person I chatted with was Bruce Engelmann, who had recently moved to the Atlanta area from Rhode Island for a job relocation, and is looking forward to engaging in the Atlanta racing scene. He ended up winning the 60-64 age group. I hope to see him again soon.

Two days later, I ran the Memorial Day 5K, as part of a 5K/10K series. What gave me the most satisfaction at this race was seeing so many 60 and over runners attending the race. In the men's 5K, there were 10 runners just in the 60-64 age group. And in the Women's 60-64 age group, there were 8. These are great numbers. Even the 70+ age groups were well represented. There were 4 finishers in the men's 70-74 age group, and 3 in the 75-79 age group. The ever present Fox Ferrel was the senior runner for the men at the ripe age of 80. By the way, he still does Triathlons too. For the women, there were 8 finishers in the 60-64 age group, and even 4 finishers in the women's 70-74 age group. These numbers are outstanding.

For those of you who are still young, consider a couple of things that I hold important. First, running is for a lifetime. It is truly a marathon, not a sprint. You will be where us elder statesmen are some day if you just run smart and listen to your body, and no matter how many times you get knocked down, you have to keep getting back up. There isn't a single one of us seniors who hasn't had serious bouts and doubts over the year, but the key is to never give up and keep fighting back. I still remember when I started running when I was 26 years old how much I admired to older runners who had been running for 20, 30, and even 40 years or more. I never dreamed that I would some day be one of them, but now that I have 39 years of this running life under my belt, I have almost 40 years of running experiences to look back on. I wouldn't trade all the ups and downs for anything.

The other lesson I've learned is that running is its own reward. It becomes a central fiber of who you are, and it touches every other aspect of your life like Midas, because everything it touches turns to gold. Medals and podium finishes are nice, but they are nothing like the running experience itself, and the opportunity to meet others who share the passion and the comradery.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me directly with any comments or feedback on any of my monthly essays at durunruner@yahoo.com

My 12 month history of my monthly essays can be found here. <https://www.fivestarnet.com/michael-selm>

Have a great month of running.

Michael