

Running Clubs: Fun and Fellowship in Speed Shoes



Up From Loneliness

Hash House Hijinks

By Stephen Clapp

RUNNERS are typecast as the loners of sport but you couldn't prove it by the D.C. Harriers, the Beltway Striders, the Capitol Hill Pacers, or Health's Angels.

These clubs, and others like them in the Washington area, prove there is more to running than solitary exercise or grim competition. Like softball and bowling teams, running clubs provide social ties around a favorite sport, minus only the expensive facilities so many sports require.

Running clubs have long been operating in the Washington area, but never in the number and variety of the past few years.

Veteran members of the D.C. Road Runners, the umbrella organization that has sponsored weekly races in the area since 1961, recall outfits like the National Capitol All-Stars and the Northern Virginia Track Club which were operating when only the very talented or eccentric continued running after college.

The Road Runners of that era were few enough to have club-like intimacy, but the club has since grown to more than 1,000 members and taken on the trappings of a sophisticated organization, including political factions (pro-AAU and anti-AAU).

Most running clubs, however, are deliberately small. The members know each other, and they run the gamut from national-class competitors to middle-aged hobbyists. While the clubs may send teams to local and out-of-town races, sharing the joy of running—whether a friendly inter-club race or a leisurely group run—is usually more important than trophies.

See CLUBS, G10, Col.1

FROM time to time, decent law-abiding Washingtonians are startled from their torpor by a band of mad characters jogging through the neighborhood crying "Checking!" and "On! On!", peering down alleys, scaring the dogs and otherwise disturbing the peace.

It is the Hash House Harriers working up a thirst. Easily the most colorful of Washington-area running clubs, the Hash describes itself as an "international sporting society for gentlemen" which perpetuates the ancient English pastime of hare and hounds.

On Monday evenings during warm weather, and Saturday afternoons the rest of the year, Hashman set off through woods, fields, suburban subdivisions or whatever as a pack of "hounds" in pursuit of the "hare," who carries a bag of flour and marks the trail with bag prints as he goes. The six or seven-mile trail is complicated by a series of flour-marked x's or "checks" designed to throw the pursuers off course.

On reaching a checkmark, the hounds fan out in all directions yelling "Checking!" until someone picks up the trail again, whereupon a resounding chorus of "On! On!" signals the renewed pursuit.

Clever checks are considered essential to a successful Hash; they bring an element of luck and skill to an otherwise predictable cross-country race. The checks also enable less-talented runners to catch up with the leaders. In fact, the most highly-prized skill of a hare is the ability to lay "back checks," detours so clever that strong runners are tricked into pursuing false leads while the laggards find themselves near the proper trail.

See HASH, G10, Col.1

The Workaday Life of the Tennis Pro

By Eric Siegel

ALMOST every hacker longs secretly to be a tennis pro. And why not? To be outside in the fresh air all day, playing the game you love for \$16 an hour and up, nurturing future top-flight players who'll take time to thank you by name in post-match interviews on national TV—that must be the life.

But is it the life of a tennis pro? Not exactly. You would more likely find yourself giving your seventh one-hour lesson on a steamy summer afternoon to an overweight, inattentive middle-aged housewife who has never before donned tennis shoes, let alone held a racket; or playing family counselor to a distraught mother between hints on improving her backhand; or feeling the stony silence of your student's husband who is certain you are calling to set up a tryst.

Allie Ritzenberg remembers the struggle to get pupils when he first started teaching a quarter of a century ago.

"We'd go down and we'd teach at

the 'Y' and we'd teach at the Jewish Community Center and everywhere," he says. "People were paying \$1.50 a lesson and they'd want blood. There might have been 20 people in the class and each one wanted to know why you weren't paying more attention to them and what your qualifications were for teaching. For a buck and a half!"

Ritzenberg, of course, no longer has to struggle for pupils. As the teaching pro at St. Albans, where some of the city's most influential people play, Ritzenberg has people lining up to pay him \$32 an hour for lessons.

"Nobody, ever, is as demanding now" as in those group lessons 25 years ago, Ritzenberg says. "Now, if you want to, you discuss politics and you talk. And if you get around to tennis you do tennis."

While Ritzenberg's own success has made life more pleasant, it has also created its own special demands. "When you've been in the business a long time, you get calls on every-

thing," he says. "Someone wants advice about a court, someone else wants advice about a tennis investment. . . I've even had people call up and say, 'I'm doing a crossword puzzle and there's a question here on tennis. . .'"

Ritzenberg's job encompasses much more than just teaching tennis. On any given day it may range from choosing an architect to design the pro shop to selecting the prizes for the annual club tournament. Still, he gives as many as seven hours of lessons a day, beginning as early as 6:30 a.m.

Ritzenberg says the major challenges for a pro is bringing out the best in his students.

"Four years ago, Gene McCarthy was taking a lesson," Ritzenberg says, "and he said, 'You know you should be the vice president. A tennis pro should be the vice president because he makes you look much better than you really are.'"

"Anybody can teach a talented per-

son," Ritzenberg adds. "The real challenge is to take people who are not talented and make good tennis players out of them."

"People learn in different ways. Some learn through their intellect. Then it's a matter of being articulate as well as knowing the game. Others learn strictly through imitation. Therefore, you have to have a game which they can copy."

"I always said if a player wasn't a very fine tennis player that it must be my fault. Since then, I've learned there are people with neuroses and psychoses and all kinds of hangups who fight you and might not try what you're telling them to do."

Pauline Betz Addie is the area's best known woman teaching pro. Once the winner of Wimbledon, thrice the winner of Forest Hills, author and lecturer, she has been teaching tennis for some 30 years. And, like Ritzenberg, she finds the life has changed since she started.

"All of us—and by all of us I mean

everybody in my age group—used to think nothing about knocking off 20 lessons in a day," she says. "But now we're older or richer or something. We don't teach nearly as much."

Then, too, she says, "Once you get a reputation as a teacher, people think if they don't improve it's their fault. And usually it is. Usually it's because they haven't worked on it."

Now, Addie teaches four to five hours a day in winter, seven days a week; somewhat fewer in summer, when she runs her children's tennis camp at Sidwell Friends.

"The first thing I ask anybody who's taking a lesson is, 'Do you want to work on anything in particular?'" she says. "Then I ask, 'What is your objective in taking lessons?'"

"I had a fellow who said he just wanted to get worse more slowly. He knew he was getting old and getting worse and he just wanted to decelerate the process."

See TENNIS, G10, Col.1

Inside Today's Section

- Water Skiing Without Towboats.....G11
- C. Boyd Pfeiffer Says Goodbye.....G11
- Tennis Tips From Billie Jean King.....G11
- This Week's Roster Of Participant Events...G12

JUMP FOR JOY!!!

The Fastest Rope in the West (Probably)

By Denis Collins

HE DOESN'T want to dwell on it, not with so many more important things to say. But Bobby Hinds, 49, will continue to regard himself as the speed rope jumping champion of the United States. Even if some 12-year-old kid did win the official title last January in Bloomer, Wis.

"He did 59 revolutions (in 10 seconds) and I did 61," said the 6-foot, 225-pound Hinds, who was disqualified for taking just one jump for every two skips of his rope. The judges further ruled that his rope, the Lifeline, had an unfair weight advantage because of its construction.

The Lifeline is something Hinds will dwell on. A nine-foot length of nylon cord strung with plastic links, it looks like a strand of beaded curtain from some Singapore opium den. It sells for \$4.95. That includes an instruction booklet in case you forgot how to jump.

"It's virtually indestructible . . . perfectly balanced and has no lag time," said Hinds from the depths of the

suite in the Washington Hilton where he was hyping his product this week.

"The handles have been specially designed to give you that true ball bearing effect." And the weight of the plastic vertebrae along the rope allows you to "jump outside in a gale." Those burdened with more conventional jump ropes apparently cannot jump during gales.

If you gave up jumping rope when the clothesline frayed and you forgot the 25th verse of "Put the piggy in the well," Hinds' Lifeline may seem needlessly sophisticated. But Hinds is selling health as well as jump ropes, hoping the two will form a symbiotic link.

"It's the greatest cardiovascular exercise known today," he said, whipping off a breathless series of cross-jumps, double crossovers and something called "the matador" until his rope whanged the overhead light fixture. He cited an article in *Research Quarterly* that says jumping rope for 10 minutes is equivalent to jogging for half an hour.

"I do this because I really believe in it. If you've got something to say, you've got to get people to listen."

Hinds is a master at getting people to listen. Since developing the Lifeline in his basement three years ago, Hinds has been on the Johnny Carson Show, on *To Tell the Truth* and on *Bozo the Clown* ("that's a biggie in Wisconsin").

He's had a dozen newspaper features written about him, Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis., once praised him in the *Congressional Record*, and he's now on the back of every box of Wheaties sold in the U.S.A.

That's quite a bit of exposure for a big guy skipping rope. He's been so successful, he says, because he knows how to sell ("In 1973 I was the largest writer of life insurance in the United States") and because he knows the kinds of angles that appeal to the media, "things they can hang a story on."

Two weeks ago in Chicago, Hinds took on all jumpers along State Street, giving away Lifelines to anybody who could stay with him for two minutes. He got Bobby Riggs to bet, and lose, \$100 in a handicapped rope jumping contest with the bet donated to the Heart Fund.

But his best "selling gimmick" is a

life story that sounds like it was written for Marlon Brando.

A wayward youth, Hinds was sent up river when he was caught aiding in armed robbery at 13. But he learned to box in the slammer and it gave him new purpose.

Golden Gloves championships followed, he says, and he went on to the University of Wisconsin where he was twice NCAA runnerup as a boxer. He taught art for a short time, then went on to success in the insurance business and finally invented his Lifeline.

This week he was sharing a suite with a Chicago group called Sales Motivation, which was representing Hinds' jump rope along with substances called "Deamon Deb", "Cocrema" and four, or five other Beauty products.

"They think I've got a hot item," said Hinds of the Sales Motivation people. "But there are a lot of people trying to copy this rope. Those guys in Taiwan . . . they respect nothing."

"But they've got a cheap product. Mine is a good one. Who knows, I might make millions."



