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President's Message



"If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself." - Henry Ford

Hello wonderful Florida Striders!

What's Inside!

I hope this message finds you all in good health and high spirits. I want to take a moment to reflect on the progress we've made as a club and share a few things that we can all look forward to in the future.

First and foremost, I would like to say that with each board meeting I am more and more impressed with the enthusiasm and excitement that members are showing with respect to keeping a healthy balance between our club's traditions and upcoming changes. All of the brainstorming, communication, commitment and thoughtfulness that goes into making decisions for our club has been remarkable.

Our club's membership is growing steadily. It is truly heartening to see new names added to our membership roster and to see many new faces at weekly runs and races. When we reach out as existing members to let people know about the club's mission and run/walk opportunities we reflect our club's welcoming and inclusive atmosphere as well as contribute to the growing interest in running, walking, and socializing within our community. Keep inviting your friends, co-workers, and people that you meet. Getting people out there to move with other people is a great way to help them improve their lives!

If you haven't joined our Florida Striders Track Club Facebook page please do so. One of our goals is to update our current website and while we are working on that I encourage all of you to follow the page which will give you current information about training opportunities and other events. This is also a great way to learn more about the members in your club.

Our club's commitment to personal growth and improvement has never been stronger. We've had numerous members achieve their personal bests in various races from 1 mile runs to ultra-marathons. It has been exciting to see the encouragement given to runners of every level from new walkers/runners to those with decades of experience. We have a resourceful group including coaches who offer a wealth of information. Our running team has been finalized so look for the team in their red singlets at races. Let's keep cheering each other on as we continue to fulfill our mission of helping and inspiring others!

In order to foster an even greater sense of community within our club we will be adding social events and making the ones available more salient to our members. This is a process and I am looking forward to seeing you all as we add events. Our Facebook page is full of postings about training locations and opportunities.

I am looking forward to the fall with our annual "Jenny's Pennies" event on October 15th and the Florida Striders "Hog Jog 5k" on November 18th. Remember that social events and training events allow us to forge deeper connections with one another. These connections have always made our club so special and supportive.

Thank you to all who made the Florida Striders Track Club return to the Orange Park High School track successful! I am grateful to Mike Tibble, Bobby Wood, Dave Allen, and Bryan Boyer for their efforts to get our Wednesday night workouts up and running. I hope members will participate on Wednesdays at 6:30pm. Just show up as a current member and sign a release. This is just another example of working together and getting things done to move forward.

Let's continue to lace up our running shoes, push our boundaries, and support each other. When we do those things our community wins in a myriad of ways. I am very proud to be your president and a Florida Strider!

With Gratitude,

Joni

A Big Thank You to Our Partners in Running!



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Meet Your Board of Directors 2023-2024

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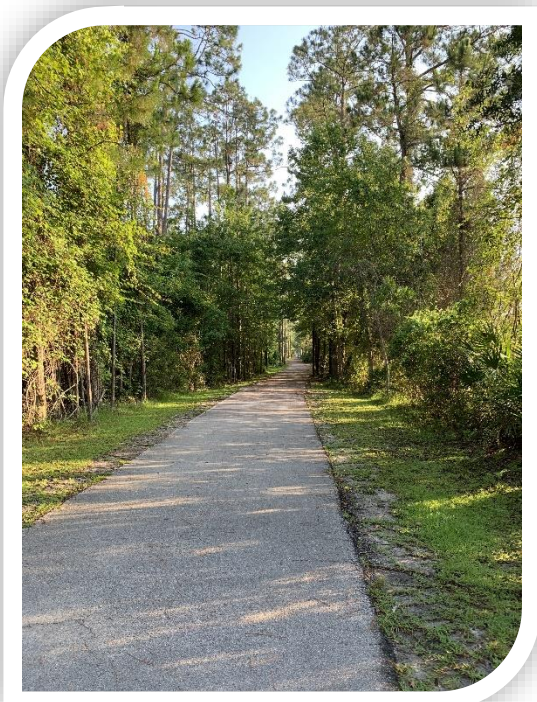
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Fleming Island: The Perfect Place for a Run/Walk

By S. Lee Johnston

Fleming Island is a gem of a running venue; especially for Jeff Galloway devotees like me who follow varying walk-run intervals during workouts. Galloway, who proved that runners often shave serious time on marathons by including intervals of walking during conditioning, would love this community. With a long “green tunnel” trail, winding sidewalks, and incredible wildlife, the area promises interesting and enjoyable outings. Local denizens include a host of eagles and hawks, alligators, deer, wild turkeys, and wild boar. The animals are a bonus!

With miles of connecting sidewalks and paved trails, interrupted only by the dividing line of County Road 220, the area offers endless combinations of distance, direction changes, and respectable ascents and descents. Like bookends, the bridges at Doctors Inlet and Black Creek are connected by the Black Creek Trail which runs parallel to Highway 17 north and south for the entirety of the “island.” The elevation gain at the northern bridge, with its protective barrier for runners and cyclists, can be challenging when conditions are right. The trail, a landmark that includes a mile-long raised wooden boardwalk near the Pace Island community and eight miles of paved bike/walk path, provides a surprisingly quiet and natural experience while passing multiple churches, a Walmart Supercenter, large apartment complexes, and Baptist Clay Hospital, a new facility with its own one-mile walk/run loop that connects to the trail and the sidewalks.



At the southern end of the Black Creek Trail, across from the Margaret’s Walk community and just north of the bridge, is a trailhead with free public parking, restrooms, and mountain bike trails. As a local, I use the parking area as a half-way point for a 10-mile course that commences near my home near Whitey’s Fish Camp on the west end of the island.

Having a restroom at the starting and ending points is great. What is better is the number of convenient places that will allow you to take a break, to put your feet up, and maybe to drink something cold. For me, I drink only water when doing five miles or less. However, on a 10- to 20-mile calorie-killing walk/run, I don't hesitate to break at the Starbucks, Jeremiah's (for a small gelato), or even at the Publix grocery stores on Highway 17 (Hibernia) and C.R. 220. Like the county library on Towne Center Boulevard, all are accessible via connecting sidewalks on any chosen route.

In Eagle Harbor, on the north side of C.R. 220, a favorite leg of my long course requires a walk along River Road. Interestingly, and despite the number of homes along that stretch of the river, only a few cars or golf carts will pass you. This is notable as no sidewalks exist along that section of the road. The reward for that stretch -- if you move from east to west -- is a public park with a dock and pay-to-play paddle board rental station. A covered picnic area there makes for a great duck-in haven if rain becomes an issue.

Other convenient shelters or duck-in points include: the Clay County Headquarters library, the soccer and lacrosse fields next to the library (with restrooms), covered bus stops throughout Eagle Harbor, the covered entrance at the Barco-Newton YMCA, covered walks at Thunderbolt and Fleming Island Elementary Schools (on weekends), and the Black Creek trailhead facility. Seasoned run-walk athletes know that dozens of additional havens exist there when you carry some cash. As a courtesy, I buy something small like a bottle of water or mints if I need to take shelter in a Walgreen's or CVS, for example. In Fleming Island, the possibilities are myriad.

The island's only downside is the busy intersection at Hwy. 17 and C.R. 220. Despite its pedestrian priority buttons, crossing at that light is just too dangerous. While that is certainly doable, you might instead opt to cross the county road about a quarter of a mile west of that intersection, using the highway divider in front of the Home Depot entrance or at the next light beside Chili's restaurant. That detour adds some distance and time. It also promises that you will be safe and happy.



From Stride to Struggle: The Journey of Healing and Return By Sox Sarah Whitin

In the realm of athletics, setbacks often come uninvited in the form of injuries. But from these challenges emerges a quiet strength, a reminder that every stumble can lead to a triumphant return. While everyone's situation is unique, many athletes go through similar experiences. We've interviewed recovered individuals of various sports to remind any struggling readers that they are not alone.

When these athletes were first hurt they felt depressed, scared, or even lost. One Division I Athlete said, *"When I realized I wasn't able to train and compete, I immediately noticed I was more anxious and stressed than normal."* The athletes described feeling isolated, feeling left out from the team, or not being able to find the same sense of accomplishment they had previously relied on. All the athletes felt there was something major missing in their day-to-day life: their best time to focus, their time to escape and leave their out-of-sport struggles behind, their encouraging coaches, and their friendly teammates. Most described feeling *"wrong not training when everyone else was"*.

But as time passed, the story began to change. *"You will learn to find ways to fill that void."* *"What helped me the most while I was recovering was finding distraction and keeping myself busy with school and finding people in the same situation as me"*. Another DI track star explained that they went on a quest to find other hobbies that interested them, in turn learning more about themselves. One runner even states that they began to look forward to physical therapy.

While it's common to feel nervous about returning to your team or your sport, all the athletes had splendid experiences. A local athlete said they felt they had the same positive role in the team atmosphere as they had months prior. Another felt a wave of a relief when *"my teammates were just as excited that I was back as I was. They told me I had no reason to feel shame. Injuries happen to all of us."* One stated, *"Being back gave me a different perspective and helped me find a new appreciation for the opportunities I was given through the sport. It helped me to be a better athlete and teammate. I found new ways to acknowledge my successes and accomplishments and push myself harder to be better every day."*

The interviewees shared some words of wisdom for someone going through a similar situation:

“Try and make the most of the time away. Use it to focus on other fun stuff and don’t dwell on what you lost. You’ll come back eventually” - A Division I Track/Cross Country Athlete

“Don’t rush it. It’s better to go to physical therapy for a couple months than continue to practice and then never be able to do your sport again” - Local Clay County Track/Cross Country Athlete

“I learned to find appreciation in what I have and not take my opportunities for granted. I found new ways to appreciate what my body is capable of and how I can take care of it to become better each and every day. What I would tell people in a similar situation who have an injury is to find people who lift you up and surround yourself in a positive environment. Don’t let yourself down and remind yourself what your body is capable of and the love for the sport that you have. That will motivate you to come back stronger than before.” - Alumna of University of Miami Women’s Rowing

“In the end I was a better athlete for what I went through. I was more dedicated than before now. I had unlocked a new definition of hard work that paid off tremendously.” - Local High School Athlete of First Coast Rowing Club

Clay County Elementary P.E. Teachers Inservice lunch



Track Workout on Wednesdays 6:30PM at Orange Park High School.

Open to all current members.
Please see the
Florida Striders Track Club Facebook page
for more information.



Announcing the Florida Striders 2023/2024 Running Team

We are pleased to announce the team members for the 2023/2024 Running Team! This team represents the Striders in running events on the roads, trails, and track. They are great ambassadors for our club in the running community.

Adam Cross	Randy Arend	Bill Darfler	Bernie Powers
Graham Myers	Matthew Stratton	Rebecca Stratton	Jean Schubert
Joni Neidigh	Kira Roberts	Jennifer Szala	Steve Beard
Kim Lundy	Leslie Hart	Patrick McEachin	Eve Schlotthauer
Emma Schlotthauer	Shelly Allen	Heather Thompson	Becky Wood
Barbara Knox	Savannah Rae		

We are pleased to welcome our 3 newest members: Becky, Barbara, and Savannah!



MEMBERSHIP

Welcome and thank you to our new and returning members!

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Betty Araujo
Cruser Barnes
Nick Deal
Stuart Johnston
Michael Martinez
Bob Oconnor
Marie-Claire Rowlinson
Dave Whitin

Cruser Barnes
Kai Boyce
Virgen Dominguez
Tracy Johnston
James May
John Rafalski
Paul Smith
Richard Windmann

Lilinoe Barnes
Marlene Boyce
John Gilman
Charley King
Patrick McEachin
Allison Reagan
Morgan Wade

Charles Barnes
Liane Daniels
Daniel Herrera
Amy Landin
Geoffery Mullings
Amy Robinson
Matt Walther



Jenny's Pennies

We celebrate our anniversary each year on a Saturday in October. This year we will celebrate on Sunday, October 15, 2023, at 7:30 am at Clarke HousePark located at 1039 Kingsley Avenue, Orange Park, Florida.

Please join us as we run, eat, and socialize. This is a potluck event and a great tradition. Thank you to Jenny Allen (pictured here with her son who is one of our board members Dave Allen) for starting this wonderful event.

Stay tuned for more history and pictures from Jenny's Pennies!



