

March 2017 *Wingfoot* Spotlight: Bling Matters By Tim Darnell

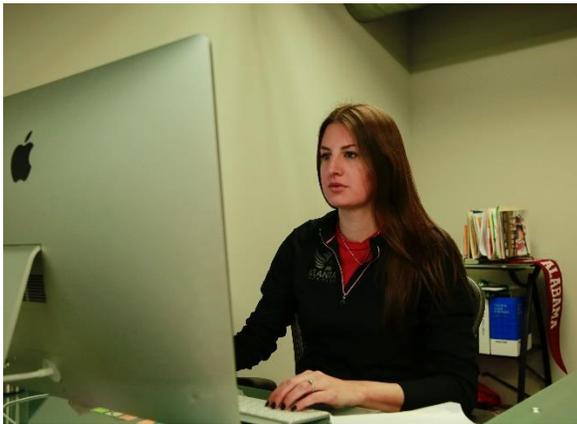
To many people, Dave Bloomquist is known as the king of bling.

And he's proud of it.

After 22 marathons, 43 half marathons and who-knows-how-many 5Ks and 10Ks, Bloomquist's medals are displayed across five racks in his office.

"I'm proud of my accomplishments and the medals I've accumulated," he says. "I'd probably participate in all of these races if medals weren't awarded, but I do value them. It's a point of pride from every single one on display."

Sure, T-shirts are fine and good, but for many Atlanta Track Club members, taking home a medal after a half or full marathon makes the accomplishment of finishing all the sweeter.



Leigh Moyer, Atlanta Track Club's creative manager, first began designing medals for the Club's events back in 2013.

"When I started at the Club, I worked in business development, handling sponsor relations and coordinating their race day activations," says Moyer, who has a Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design. Little did she know, her background would soon lead to a brand new role at the Club.

"Our marketing manager was working on the 2013 Thanksgiving Day Half Marathon medal designs with a new vendor. After going back and forth, she still wasn't satisfied with the art they had produced. I thought it might be fun to sketch out some ideas I had for the medal and show her for inspiration. She liked them so much that she challenged me to design the entire thing."

And the rest, as the cliché goes, is history.

"The thing that makes our medals special is that a graphic designer at a medal company isn't creating them," Moyer explains. "I truly put my heart and soul into

every medal I design, whether it's for a 5K or a race series. I read every post our participants make about our medals and take those words to heart to try and make it even better the following year.”

Accomplishments and Inspirations

Brandi Gilbert's favorite medal is her 2016 Publix Georgia Half Marathon, “because of the way the beautiful city of Atlanta is depicted.”

She also loves it “when race medals carry the theme of the location of the race or time of the year that the race is held. Another of my favorites is my 2015 Rock ‘n’ Roll Las Vegas Half Marathon medal, which is a slot machine that the 13.1 spins.”

Medals not only celebrate accomplishments, but also serve as inspiration when times get tough. Christy Nilsson started running four years ago and has accumulated a box full of 75 medals.



“Each medal has a memory tied to it,” she says. “Each one shows I’ve pushed myself to do something that takes effort, like an achievement.”

Nilsson's favorite piece of bling doesn't sit at home on a rack. “Two years ago, the Nike Women's race in Washington, DC, featured a medal that is a Tiffany necklace. I wear that medal almost daily, and I find myself touching it when things get tough. It's a runner's mentality that you can get through difficult times.”

“Unique designs are definitely something worth chasing after,” Gilbert says. “The majority of my race medals are on curtain rods in my living room. They are not only a great conversation point for those seeing my medal haul, but I see them every time I walk in.”

For Gilbert, each medal has a memory attached to it. “Sometimes I remember I've overcome some crazy challenges or have fond memories of accomplishing big goals. The ones that I love seeing the most are the ones that I have earned running alongside

my friends and family. Sometimes seeing that wall is the biggest kick in the butt to get my running shoes on and get out the door.”

Moyer’s process for designing her medals varies from event to event.

“Sometimes an idea comes to me right away, and sometimes it is a struggle to come up with something new and exciting,” she says. “I start by researching other race medals. What are people excited to share? I also read the post-race surveys from previous years to see people's feedback.

“I pull inspiration from the race itself too. For instance, the 2017 Publix Georgia Marathon & Half Marthon medals have bricks to represent the bricks of Centennial Olympic Park where they finish the race.”

Moyer is most proud of the medal for the 2016 Triple Peach Race Series presented by Mizuno.

“I’ve never seen a medal with a spinning back and I think it was a great surprise for those participants,” she says. “I randomly poll runners at our races to see how they feel about the medal and the reactions for that one were the best.

“Designing a medal for marathon finishers is particularly rewarding because of the hard work people put in to get to that finish line. The elation on their faces when they receive that medal is priceless to me.”

“A finisher medal means more to me than just being an awesome token to hang on my wall,” Gilbert says. “The medal is a representation of the journey. It’s about the journey over the past weeks, months, and years that got me to this finish line; the obstacles I overcame, the accomplishments, and the memories along the way.

“Race day is a victory lap of the hard work leading up to the start line, and a medal around your neck is the perfect token to remember those moments.”

Size Matters

Medals are a major motivation for Eileen Fannon. And she has 170 of them.

“It is true; size does matter,” Fannon says. She also appreciates a good theme and artwork, but says themes may not resonate with everyone at the same level.

“For example, I did a Christmas race last year. The medal was a gingerbread house. If it was a snowman or star, I would have liked it even better. But it does have a light feature that makes it pretty cool.”

Atlanta Track Club Coach Amy Begley was a 2008 U.S. Olympian in the 10,000m event in Beijing. She has a more unique perspective on medals and accomplishments than many.

Begley didn't earn a medal for her first road-racing prize; instead, she won a ribbon. "And it's one I have kept the longest, this big red ribbon that hangs in my office," she says. "It's a second-place age group ribbon from a Mother's Day five-miler. I was 10 years old and it was my first road race in our hometown around the park where we walked the dog.

"I have kept anything that took more effort, focus and time to achieve. My New York City Marathon medal is hanging on the shelf beside my bed. I made a special shelf for that trip because it meant so much to me."



Moyer says she doesn't have guidelines when designing medals for the Club.

"I've always been encouraged to think outside the box and push the limits to create something uniquely ours," she says. "I work closely with our medal vendors to be innovative and create something no one else is. I want our medals to be cohesive as a group, but each one different than the other."

While Bloomquist is most proud of his 2016 Boston Marathon medal, in which he raised more than \$9,000

for the Club's Kilometer Kids youth running program, one of his most memorable came from an annual Little Rock, Arkansas, marathon in 2015.

“The Little Rock parks and rec department takes a lot of pride for giving out the largest medals in the world,” he says. “Their medals are five pounds, and eight inches in diameter; they’re as big as a dinner plate.

“But in March 2015, there was a longshoreman’s strike in California, and nothing imported was getting through,” Bloomquist recalls. “So when we finished the race, we were given small plastic replicas of the medal.”

When the actual medals did arrive two months after the race, the department mailed each out-of-state recipient their reward. Bloomquist ran into the race director the next year, who told him their budget took a hit in postal costs.

“I can’t wear that medal for more than a minute or two,” he says. “It hurts my neck.”