From its early days to the world’s largest 10K, we’re proud to be its title sponsor.

Celebrating the 50th running of the event that brings Atlanta together.
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Some of the stories in Peachtree Magazine have been condensed from versions that have previously appeared elsewhere. To read more and for additional stories about the people and history of the race, please visit Peachtree50.com.
Register at atlantatrackclub.org

Use Code PRR10 to take 10% off your registration

Register at atlantatrackclub.org
As the sun rises on Independence Day 2019, a convoy of trucks will be pulling back into their garages after ferrying supplies to the hundreds of workers who toiled through the night to set up the course. Tens of thousands of Dasani water bottles will be chilled and ready for drinking and dousing in Piedmont Park. The 60,000 finisher’s T-shirts will be sorted and ready for donning. A huge corps of volunteers will be at their stations. Hundreds of Atlanta’s finest will be standing ready to provide a fun and safe journey down Atlanta’s iconic Peachtree Road. And the Stars and Stripes will be flying above the 50th start line of Atlanta’s great Fourth of July tradition.

In short, the stage will be set and ready for 60,000 strong as they arrive at the corner of Lenox and Peachtree to celebrate this historic day in our city. They will come from near and far: While most hail from Atlanta, this year’s field also includes participants traveling to Running City USA from 49 states and 31 nations.

Atlanta Track Club staffers and race officials have been preparing tirelessly for this special day celebrating the Peachtree for well over a year. From the time you arrive at the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo through your MARTA trip home on race day, you’ll see, hear and feel the thread that runs through all 50 years of the race. Keep an ear open on the course for music covering popular tunes from the ’70’s through today (Three Dog Night, anyone?). Check out our throwback merchandise at the Expo. Watch the start line video board as you await your start time, as arguably the fastest 10K fields ever assembled in this country chase $50,000 in event-record bonuses. Join our recycling efforts as we divert up to 150,000 water bottles from landfills and turn this plastic into park benches. Save this special commemorative edition of Peachtree Magazine, and if you have some aspiring young runners in your family – register them for Anthem Peachtree Junior on July 3 so they can be part of both the celebration this year and the future of Running City USA.

The Peachtree is the only place to be on the Fourth of July in Atlanta. Whether this is your first time experiencing the Peachtree or you’re one of our 40-year plus veterans, I have no doubt you’ll be talking about the 50th for days, weeks and months ahead. Maybe even 50 years from now.

Rich Kenah

Race Director and Executive Director of Atlanta Track Club
GEAR UP WITH MIZUNO

FOR THE 50TH RUNNING OF THE AJC PEACHTREE ROAD RACE

Featuring the 2019 Patriotic Collection
Available in both Mens and Womens

PICTURED: KETURAH ORJI AND ABE ALVARADO OF ATLANTA TRACK CLUB
Visit the Mizuno Booth at the Peachtree Health and Fitness Expo July 2nd and 3rd to grab your red, white and blue gear!
“WHAT MAKES THE PEACHTREE SPECIAL IS, IT’S ATLANTA”

By Barbara Huebner

Clyde Partin Jr. was just 14 years old, and can’t remember why he and his father stopped by the cinder track at Emory University that day in June 1970. It probably wasn’t for anything important. But he does remember that when they arrived, he and Clyde Sr. were approached by Tim Singleton, who invited them to “a little race down Peachtree” on July 4.

As the AJC Peachtree Road Race celebrates its 50th Running on July 4, Partin – who along with his father is one of the “Original 110” finishers – is looking forward to “the great moment.” He is not alone: the AJC Peachtree Road Race – despite being run in the heat and humidity of summer in the South on a course whose most-famous feature is the ominously nicknamed Cardiac Hill – has grown to 60,000 participants, making it the largest road race in the United States and the largest 10K in the world.

“Even if people should’ve found something better to do with their Fourth of July mornings, they don’t seem to do it,” said Steve Hummer, who began writing for the Atlanta Journal Constitution in 1989. “It has become essential to observing the Fourth of July in Atlanta.”

As the milestone approaches, it’s a good time to pause and ask: What is it about “the Peachtree” that prompted then-Mayor Shirley Franklin to once call it the one thing Atlanta wouldn’t be the same without?

The race’s success involved good timing: It was born on the cusp of the 1970’s running boom, fueled by Frank Shorter’s 1972 Olympic gold medal in the marathon. It involved a little savvy: the AJC came on as sponsor in 1976, providing publicity and promotion at exactly the moment needed for the
race to take root. And it involved a little luck: Winning the first race was Jeff Galloway, a man who would later help bring in friends like Shorter, Bill Rodgers, Don Kardong and four-time Olympic gold medalist Lasse Viren to compete.

But it’s likely that the Peachtree became what it is today through something less tangible: The race and the city are, at heart, one and the same.

Said Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms after finishing last year’s race: “What makes the Peachtree special is, it’s Atlanta.”

“It’s the people,” agreed Galloway, who after winning the inaugural Peachtree went on to become a 1972 Olympian and author. “Atlanta has a long tradition of people wanting to work together for the common good and people wanting to come together with energy to make something good happen.”

“People want to work,” said Galloway, who has lived in Atlanta since he was 13. “They want to help you.”

The degree to which that’s true surprised even Rich Kenah when he moved to Atlanta from the Northeast to become executive director of Atlanta Track Club and race director of the Peachtree in 2014. No stranger to the fraught negotiations it sometimes takes with city officials to produce an event, Kenah found that negotiations on the Peachtree were so smooth that they could hardly be called negotiations.

“The Atlanta chief of police and his department, the city, (then-)Mayor Reed, the CEO of MARTA … without exception they all asked me what they could do to help continue the tradition of the race,” he recalled. “It struck me that they were communicating to me a genuine understanding that this event is our collective responsibility.”

The 2014 Peachtree was Kenah’s first, and he said it wasn’t until he stood watching the last person come across the finish line “that I began to understand what the event is and what it means for the city.”

A lot of that meaning can be traced back to Julia Emmons, who led Atlanta Track Club and the Peachtree for 22 years, from 1985 to 2006. From the first day of her tenure, Emmons decided her job was to pay attention to serving the community. She delegated total responsibility for the field of elite athletes – which routinely featured many of the best from across the globe – and focused entirely on the pack.

Or, rather, on a pair of representative runners she thought of as Dorothy and Frank.

“You can’t imagine 25,000 people, but you can imagine two people times 12,000,” she said. “If we change the water stops, how does that affect Dorothy and Frank? This is very real. Running Peachtree to them is a big deal.”

Former mayor Shirley Franklin wasn’t the prototype for Dorothy, but she might have been. “When I ran the race, I was just glad I could get from beginning to end,” she said. “I think

Continues on Page 9
Elite sports medicine. For every athlete.

Athletes aren’t just on the court or behind the plate. The morning joggers, bike commuters, and weekend hikers—they’re athletes too. We have the elite team of sports medicine experts to help whether you’ve rolled an ankle, your knees are slowing you down, or you’re looking to improve your personal best. Northside Sports Medicine is Atlanta’s trusted source for moving forward.
there are a healthy percentage of people out there just like me.”

In her first year at the helm, Emmons was asked afterward if she realized there had been crying children in the race. She ran every year thereafter, tending on foot to her flock.

“I care about each and every person in the race,” she said. “And if the children were crying, I wanted to know why.” Her findings helped lead to the establishment of Peachtree Junior, a separate event for younger children.

But when changes were needed, she realized, they needed to come in on little cat feet rather than those of a Tyrannosaurus Rex. She likened the Peachtree to a favorite summer lake: You don’t want it to look different on the surface, but for it to remain healthy and not grow stagnant it needs to be continually refreshing itself underwater.

It has to feel the same, she explained, even as it changes.

Although there have been tweaks to the start and finish, the run down Peachtree Street – the artery supplying lifeblood to both the city and the race – endures. Sam Massell, who was mayor of Atlanta when the race was founded in 1970 and served as the official starter in 1973, lives on Peachtree, so the event runs right by his house. He said he’s out there almost every year to cheer everyone on.

Now president of the Buckhead Coalition, Massell is in the perfect position to hear gripes about closing the key street to traffic. Except, there aren’t any.

“If the Peachtree reflects the city in its friendliness, energy and “can-do” attitude, it does so even more with its spirit of inclusion. It may be won by an Olympic medalist or world champion, and often is, but the real race does not belong to the swift.”

For one morning, cracked the AJC’s Hummer, “a community made up of transients come together as Atlantans for a few hours to sweat.”

Franklin, the former mayor, took a more serious view. “It’s on our main street and very few things happen on that street that are as joyous or inclusive,” she said. “Nobody worries about who you are or where you came from or how you got there.”

Or, as the two-word slogan on the current mayor’s 2018 race T-shirt proclaimed: One Atlanta. “Running down Peachtree and to have the world’s largest 10K, 60,000 people out here … nothing says Atlanta more,” said Bottoms. “And then to have the diversity, I would be surprised if you find that anywhere else in America.”

The city has gone through several periods of rebirth in its history, perhaps most recently as host city of the 1996 Olympics – around the time, said Kenah, he believes the Peachtree found its place.

“We know what the event is now much as Atlanta knows what it is as a city – a warm and in many ways welcoming place that has a small, hometown feel to it despite its size. At Peachtree, with 60,000 people, you know the name of the person who’s in charge of your wave,” he said. “It’s a place where, if for no other time, from 7 a.m. until 10:50 a.m. we’re all part of one race.”
LEADING THE WAY
Since the Peachtree began in 1970, nine people have held the title of Race Director.

1970-74: Tim Singleton
1975-76: Billy Daniel
1977-78: Bill Neace
1979: Bob Varsha
1980-82: Royce Hodge
1983: Bob Varsha
1984: Roy Benson
1985-2006: Julia Emmons
2007-2013: Tracey Russell
2014 - Rich Kenah
In July of 1969, Tim Singleton, the Georgia State University cross country coach and Dean of Men, drove three of his GSU runners – Billy Bracken, David Mathis and Bruce LaBudde – to the small Fort Benning Medal of Honor race in Fort Benning, Georgia, in his road-worn, blue Volkswagen Microbus. After LaBudde took first place for winning the “6-miler,” they returned with an oversized trophy. The car was cramped, the AC didn’t work and I-85 was completed only in sections. They had hours to drive until they got home, as did many of the other runners returning to Georgia. Bracken and Mathis were arguing. As usual, the argument degenerated into a discussion of future races, and Singleton asked, “Why do we have to go way down to Fort Benning when we can have our own Fourth of July race in Atlanta?”

One year later, Singleton, enamored with the Olympics and the metric system, created the Peachtree Road Race 10K, with every inch of it to be run on Peachtree Street. The big draw? Local runners had always wanted to race down the busy Atlanta thoroughfare. The city issued a parade permit ($25) for the July 4 race because the Braves were playing in San Diego, where they would win 2-1. The race began at 9:30 a.m. to coincide with the Independence Day parade – and because Singleton jumped into the lead car to stay ahead of the runners. By the finish, Galloway would win the men’s division and Gayle Barron the women’s. It was hot, so Galloway cooled down in the Equitable fountain, and others followed his example. Singleton grabbed a sock full of nickels and another filled with dimes and appointed GSU runner and friend Tommy Raynor as his director of transportation. Raynor’s job was to hand out 15 cents to runners to catch the MARTA bus back to their cars parked at the starting line. In all, 107 men and 3 women – known as the Original 110 – have completed just another Hotlanta race.

Terry Banker and Jack McFarland.

Or so they thought. Instead, what began as “just another Hotlanta race” is celebrating its 50th Running, its field of 60,000 making the AJC Peachtree Road Race the largest road race in the country and largest 10K in the world.

“For peachtree is kind of a lucky thing, really,” Tim Singleton told the AJC in 1999, on the event’s 30th Running. “I think it was a great idea. I guess I had it, but others influenced it. I had other ideas that didn’t turn out very good. But this one just seemed to strike a note for a lot of people.”

Come along as we examine how “kind of a lucky thing” became an Atlanta institution.
1971
Gayle Barron repeats as women's champion.
T-shirts make their debut, going to the first 125 finishers – meaning that 73 go home empty-handed.
Gov. Jimmy Carter serves as the race's Official Starter.
Quietly building off the success of its inaugural year, the field grows to 198 finishers.

1972
The field grows to 322, making Peachtree the largest road race in the Southeast, but spectators are still few and far between.
Lt. Gov. Lester Maddox takes over from Gov. Carter as Official Starter. He reportedly told runners, “Have a good time and remember, if you lose the race, it's your own damn fault.”

1973
Gayle Barron, who skipped the 1972 race, notches her third victory, as the crowd of spectators swells to several hundred.

522 runners finish under the time limit of 65 minutes, in temperatures that reach 87 degrees.

1974
The two frontrunners are directed the wrong way after missing the cooking-flour arrow on the pavement; by the time they recoup, they finish fifth and seventh. The Top 5 receive black-and-white TVS, and race director Tim Singleton feels bad about the error so gives one to Scott Eden, too, the 1972 champion who ended up seventh.
Wayne Roach is the first of 765 finishers, and is the last Atlanta resident to win for the men.

1975
Ed Leddy, an Irish Olympian, is the first non-American to win the race. Gayle Barron wins for the last time, and Tim Singleton directs his last Peachtree. There are 1,159 starters.

1976
The field grows to 2,350 as the Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution assume sponsorship and puts its muscle behind promoting the race.
A pair of U.S. marathoners on their way to the 1976 Olympics, Don Kardong and Bill Rodgers, battle it out. Kardong wins, 29:14 to 29:16. Gayle Barron, going for her sixth victory, collapses from the heat just before the finish.

1977
It’s a watershed year in the evolution of the Peachtree, as Jeff Galloway entices Frank Shorter, Bill Rodgers, Don Kardong and four-time Olympic gold medalist Lasse Viren of Finland to compete. Shorter wins the clash among four of the best distance runners in the world.
The field triples, to 6,500; 60 are taken to the hospital on the hot and humid day. The 80-degree start temperature remains in a six-way tie as hottest ever.
Runner’s World magazine names the Peachtree one of the Top 10 running events in the U.S.

1978
Bob Varsha becomes the first full-time race director, and the event finish is moved to Piedmont Park to accommodate the swelling number of runners.
Mary Decker is described in the AJC as “a pretty 19-year-old” as she runs – and wins – the first 10K race of her life. Winning the men's race is Mike Roche, a financial analyst best known for crashing over the final steeplechase barrier at the 1976 Olympic Trials but picking himself up and outleaning another runner to gain the final spot on the team.
“It was so hot and humid the week of the race that Medical Association of Atlanta asked for a postponement,” reads the entry in Karen Rosen’s “25 Years of the Peachtree.” It went on as planned, with the number of registered runners doubling to 12,000 and a medical team on duty for the first time.
Just after the finish line, photographer Chuck Rogers captures an image of exhausted runners seeking relief that became known as “The Battle of Atlanta,” it became a popular Nike poster and was even featured in Times Square.

1979
Race day registration is eliminated.
Craig Virgin wins the first of his three consecutive Peachtrees, leaping across the
line flashing “V for Victory.” His victory was immortalized in the Playboy headline, “25,000 Chase a Virgin Down Peachtree.”

1980
Jacqueline Gareau, who won the 1980 Boston Marathon once the infamous Rosie Ruiz was disqualified, collapses with just 500 meters to go, while in second place.

1981
Live on national television, Craig Virgin shatters the course record with his 28:03.4, which remains the fastest time ever run by an American at the Peachtree. For the women, New Zealand’s Allison Roe sandwiches in a win between her victories in the Boston and New York City marathons.

1982
With the race falling on a Sunday, church leaders and race organizers clash over road closures, with Mayor Andrew Young eventually helping arbitrate an agreement. The race time is moved up 30 minutes to get the roads re-opened earlier.

A wheelchair division is added; George Murray is the winner. There are no female entrants.

Prize money is awarded for the first time, with $5,000 to the winners. Anne Audain of New Zealand and Jon Sinclair take it home; Sinclair would be the last American man to win the race until 1991.

1983
In the closest finish to date, Michael Musyoki edges fellow Kenyan Joseph Nzau, 28:21.6 to 28:21.8. On the women’s side, the great Grete Waitz of Norway wins in 32:02 to shatter the course record, despite getting knocked down just after the start.

Candace Cable Brooks becomes the first woman to win the wheelchair division.

HOW WE GREW

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GO FAR BEYOND THE FINISH LINE.

OFFICIAL AIRLINE OF THE AJC PEACHTREE ROAD RACE

KEEP CLIMBING DELTA
1984
Filbert Bayi, the 1980 Olympic silver medalist in the steeplechase for Tanzania in town for an Olympic training program at Emory, decides at the last minute to run. He wins by 30 meters over South Africa’s Ashley Johnson.

The Shepherd Center assumes title sponsorship of the wheelchair division.

1985
Julia Emmons takes the helm as executive director of Atlanta Track Club and race director of the Peachtree.

TAC (The Athletics Congress), the sport’s national governing body, threatens to sanction the race if South African Ashley Johnson – a student at Western Kentucky University who was seeking U.S. citizenship – is allowed to run, citing its policy on apartheid.

Atlanta Track Club asks Johnson to voluntarily withdraw, but says it will defy TAC and not force him out. He decides not to compete.

Grete Waitz returns and wins again, in the exact same time as two years earlier.

1986
After TAC and Atlanta Track Club reach an agreement, Johnson runs but does not finish in the Top 10. Irishman John Doherty outsprints Michael Musyoki to break his course record, finishing in 27:56. Grete Waitz, running on an injured hamstring, defends her title.

1987
Twice a runner-up (1983, 1985), 38-year-old Joseph Nzau becomes Peachtree’s oldest winner thus far. American Lynn Jennings wins for the women in true Jennings fashion: sitting on her rival until unleashing a ferocious kick in the late going. At the 1992 Olympics, Jennings would become the first American woman to win a 10K medal when she earned the bronze behind the historic 1-2 finish of Ethiopia’s Derartu Tulu, the first black African woman to win Olympic gold, and white South African Elana Meyer, allowed to compete for the first time in the Games after the end of apartheid.

The first Peachtree Junior is held.
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NUTRITION FOR SUSTAINED ENERGY.

NOW TO SATISFY YOUR SWEET & SALTY CRAVINGS!
1988
Grete Waitz wins in what will be her last Peachtree appearance, making her five-for-five.

1989
Ibrahim Hussein, the 1988 Boston Marathon champion, wins his first major road 10K.
Drug testing was conducted at the Peachtree for the first time.
Americans Judi St. Hilaire and Cathy O’Brien finished 1-2 for the women.

1990
With 40,000 registered runners, winner Dionicio Ceron of Mexico crosses the finish line to win six minutes before the last participant even begins. Cathy O’Brien misses Grete Waitz’s course record by only two seconds.

1991
Ed Eyestone becomes the first American man to win the Peachtree since 1982.
Like O’Brien the year before, he represented Team USA in the marathon at the 1988 Olympics and would do so again in 1992.

1992
At the age of 39, American Francie Larrieu Smith, a five-time Olympian who would soon carry the U.S. flag in the Opening Ceremony in Barcelona, breaks Grete Waitz’s course record, winning in 31:49 after passing Olympic teammate Cathy O’Brien on Cardiac Hill. “Just keep going, old lady,” she told herself near the end.
The field grows to 45,000 entrants.

1993
Bill Thorn is the only runner from the Original 110 to start the race; he hasn’t missed one since.
Tragedy strikes for the first time since 1980 with the death of 40-year-old Charles Tutterrow of East Cobb, who collapsed midway. An autopsy showed that he died of a heart attack brought on by arteriosclerosis.

1994
In honor of the 25th Running, the race expands to 50,000 participants; it takes only two days to fill the 40,000 guaranteed spots, with the final 10,000 decided by lottery. “This is it,” says race director Julia Emmons. “This is about all we can handle.”

1995
The first T-shirt contest is won by Carl Wattenberg III.
Craig Blanchette wins the Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division for the sixth time, a record that will stand until 2017 as the most wins in any division at the Peachtree.

1996
With the first five miles of the course marked by a blue line for the upcoming Olympic Marathon, the Peachtree features its deepest elite field ever as about two dozen Olympians enter. They, and the rest of the field, are greeted by “Atlanta 1996” banners on light poles.
But it’s an athlete who arrived in Atlanta disappointed at not making the Kenya Olympic team who stuns everyone on this 65-degree day. Blistering his way to
a mind-boggling 27:04, Joseph Kimani demolishes the event record by 52 seconds. “It will stand for years,” said John Curtin, Peachtree’s elite athlete coordinator at the time. He was right: Kimani’s time is still the fastest 10K ever run on U.S. soil.

1997

Joseph Kimani defends his title in what was then the second-fastest time ever, 27:43, remarkable in the heat and humidity compared to last year’s ideal conditions. With Kenya’s Hellen Kimaiyo-Kipkosgie winning again as well – after breaking the event record the year before, with her time of 30:52 – it’s the first time in the open division that both the men’s and women’s titles are successfully defended.

1998

The cap on race participants increases to 55,000. Each runner with a certified qualifying time of 49:59 or faster receives a ChampionChip, a new technology designed to be attached to a shoelace, as part of the race packet. The chips had to be returned after the race.

1999

Due to sewer construction inside Piedmont Park, the finish line is moved to 10th Street and Charles Allen Drive, where it remains.

Morocco’s Khalid Khannouchi, who would set a marathon world record later that fall, wins for the men; South Africa’s Elana Meyer Triumphs on the women’s side. Finishing behind Meyer, in ninth, is Derartu Tulu, who earned gold to Meyer’s silver in the 1992 Olympic Marathon.

2000

Lornah Kiplagat of Kenya wins her first Peachtree crown in 30:52, tying the 1996 course record of Hellen Kimaiyo-Kipkosgie. Alvin Gains, 38, collapses at around the 4-mile mark with what is described as a “cardiac situation;” the medical examiner’s office later cites hardening of the arteries. It was the third death in race history; there have been none since.

2001

For the first time, Peachtree applications could be downloaded online – although they still have to be printed and mailed in. Stacy Green directs her last race as coordinator of the Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division before Becky Washburn, who still serves in that role, takes over.

Defending champion Alene Emere gives Peachtree one of its strangest finishes when he becomes confused and celebrates victory about a quarter-mile short of the tape, coming to a stop. He quickly realizes his error, but is outkicked by John Korir for the win.

2002

A few months before the race, Don Plunkett presents the staff of Unit 21 at Crawford Long Hospital’s Carlyle Fraser Heart Center with his framed race T-shirt from the year before, when he was revived after suffering a massive heart attack during the race.

Local favorite Krige Schabort, looking forward to becoming a father for the first time, finally wins his first Peachtree after three runner-up finishes in the wheelchair division.

Lornah Kiplagat wins for the third-consecutive year; her time of 30:32 is only three seconds off the world record and still stands as the Peachtree event record.

2003

The race application features a “Not So Serious” box. Participants checking the box are placed in the last of nine start groups. Race organizers dubbed the group “Howard’s Heroes,” named after radio talk show host and consumer guru Clark Howard, who for years started at the back of the pack because “the Peachtree Road Race is about encouraging people who are not normally athletes to become physically fit.”

2004

The first AJC Peachtree Road Race overseas race is held in Baghdad, with about 250 military personnel taking part.

2005

In addition to Iraq, overseas races expand to Kuwait and Afghanistan.

Lornah Kiplagat returns for win No. 4, but this time representing the Netherlands after marrying Pieter Langerhorst.

Longtime Atlanta Track Club member Dr. David Martin receives the President’s Award for his contributions to the sport. Perhaps the leading expert on marathon and distance running in the world, Martin advised the U.S. Olympic Team for the 2004 Games, where Americans Meb Keflezighi and Deena Kastor both won medals to help reignite American marathoning. “Dr. Dave” died in February 2019 at the age of 78, after a decades-long battle with Parkinson’s disease.

2006

After 22 years at the helm – the longest of anyone in the Club’s history – Julia Emmons steps down as executive director of Atlanta Track Club and directs her last Peachtree.

Lornah Kiplagat wins her fifth (and last) Peachtree, tying her with Gayle Barron for most victories in the open division.

2007

Tracey Russell takes over for Julia Emmons, as the Peachtree hosts the USA Men’s 10 km Championships for the first time. Winning the title is Abdi Abdirahman, finishing second overall; Abdi made every U.S. Olympic team from 2000 to 2012.

In the Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division, Australian Kurt Fearnley finally wins after nine tries.

2008

Due to a drought, Piedmont Park is off limits. The finish line is temporarily moved to Juniper Street and Ponce de Leon Avenue.
2009
The Peachtree application process goes online for its 40th Running; system glitches prompt a two-hour registration delay and about 1,000 emails of complaint to Club. Race organizers work until midnight to reply to each one.

For the first time, every participant is electronically timed, via disposable tracking tags.

2010
The number of start waves expands from nine to 20.

An official number-transfer system is implemented for registrants who later find they can’t participate.

Ethiopia’s Gebre Gebremarian, the 2009 IAAF World Cross Country Champion, edges Kenya’s Peter Kirui in a photo finish; both are given the same time (27:56).

2011
The race cap increases to 60,000 and registration moves to all-lottery online, ending the first-come, first-served frenzy.

2012
An Event Alert System is implemented, with colored flags communicating alert levels, based primarily on weather conditions: low (green), moderate (yellow), high (red) and race cancelled (black).

2013
Tracey Russell resigns to become CEO of the L.A. Marathon, effective after she directs her last Peachtree.

Security is increased in the wake of the Boston Marathon bombings, and a moment of silence for those who were affected by the attack is held at the start of the race.

2014
Rich Kenah takes over as executive director of Atlanta Track Club and race director of the Peachtree.

The race hosts both the men’s and women’s USA 10km Championships for first time. Christo Landry wins the men’s title, and Amy Hastings (now Cragg) the women’s.

Meb Keflezighi, coming off an emotional Boston Marathon victory the year after the bombings that saw him become the first American man to win the race since 1983, starts last in the Peachtree and passes 22,870 participants in the first Kilometer Kids Charity Chase fund-raiser.

2015
In the inaugural Peachtree Cup, four all-star teams of elite athletes from around the world go head-to-head, with Team Africa narrowly defeating Team USA. Teams representing Europe and Asia rounded out the competition.

In the mass race, Ben Payne appears to celebrate a moment too soon, and is nipped at the line by winner Scott Overall.

Further back in the pack, the mass race is briefly halted by lightning.

2016
A 5K split time is offered for the first time.

Edna Kiplagat, a two-time IAAF World Marathon Champion, wins for the women; Team Air Force wins the “race within a race” among branches of the service in the Kilometer Kids Charity Chase.

2017
Tatyana McFadden wins the Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division for the seventh time, giving her the most wins of any athlete in any division in the history of the Peachtree. Leonard Korir and Aliphine Tuliamuk win the USA 10K titles.

2018
Rap star Jeezy runs with Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms to raise funds for, among other programs, Kilometer Kids. The USA 10K titles go to a pair of veterans: Stephanie Bruce, 34, takes home her first national title while five-time Olympian Bernard Lagat, at 43, becomes the oldest winner in Peachtree history.

2019
To celebrate its 50th Running, the AJC Peachtree Road Race announces that it will award bonuses of $50,000 for a course record in any division: men’s and women’s open and men’s and women’s wheelchair.

Sources: Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Atlanta Track Club archives; “25 Years of the Peachtree Road Race,” by Karen Rosen
It's hard to forget the moment you wrote your name in the<br>proverbial history books, even if you didn't know at the time that<br>you were making history. While the 110 runners who took part<br>in the inaugural Peachtree Road Race don't recall every detail of<br>that day, they do have stories from the race that offer a unique<br>perspective. From jumping in a fountain post-race to getting<br>stuck running behind a bus to finding a gun on the course, these<br>pioneers of Peachtree experienced a very different road race than<br>the one we run today.

By now, you've heard the big names: Tim Singleton, Jeff Galloway,<br>Gayle Barron, Bill Thorn. And we tell you more about all of<br>them on pages 50-57. But every member of the Original 110 is<br>an equally important part of the race's legacy. With just weeks to<br>go until the 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race, we<br>reached out to members of Atlanta's most exclusive sports club and<br>asked them to share their still-vivid memories of July 4, 1970.

I remember running with Jeff [Galloway] and Joel Majors<br>for the first part of the race before they pulled away. I ran the<br>remainder of the race by myself and focused on maintaining<br>a pace that would allow me to finish in the hot conditions.<br>There were parked cars to run around and traffic control was<br>pretty much nonexistent. The final couple of miles seemed like<br>it was uphill. I finished third behind Jeff and Joel. Actually,<br>that initial route was much more difficult with the uphill finish<br>compared to the finish after moving to Piedmont Park.

- Michael Caldwell (35:52, 3rd Place; 2nd 19-21 Division)

I remember that it was hot and sitting on the curb waiting for<br>the race to start. The course was very tough and I wasn't sure I<br>would survive getting up the Macy's hill before the finish. The<br>fountain at the end was a wonderful surprise. We had a great<br>time and had no idea it would become what it is today.

- Charlie Patterson (36:21, 4th Place; 2nd 22-29 Division)

I was a full-time evening student at Georgia State University<br>and our cross country coach was Tim Singleton. Mr. Singleton<br>started the race then drove to the finish line to coordinate the<br>finish. Runners had to stay in the right lane and we had about<br>five motorcycle cops to watch the traffic. I finished 16th and<br>received a case of Carling beer that was awarded to the top 20<br>finishers.

- Jack Moore (38:55, 16th Place; 9th 22-29 Division)

I saw a friend, Jon Ward; he was in a downtown fountain,<br>cooling off. He jumped out, said "Hey Stan wait up" and I<br>replied "Jon, It's a race." I knew the finish line was coming<br>up, but I wasn't sure where it was. The finish line was about<br>100 yards after a slight bend as you got close to the Equitable<br>Building. I got passed right there, I finished 22nd. I still have<br>my trophy for finishing 5th in the 18 and under division.

- Stan Hess (40:23, 22nd Place; 5th 18 & Under Division)
As I was running along within sight of the police officer, I saw what I thought was a cap pistol on the sidewalk. Thinking it might be funny to finish the race with a toy pistol stuck in my waist band, I ran over and scooped it up. To my great surprise, I found it to be a real weapon. Without breaking stride, I ran over to the police officer and handed him the item. Again without breaking stride, I headed down West Peachtree.

- Talley Kirkland (40:34, 23rd Place; 10th 22-29 Division)

I ran with Charles Rappold and Claude Crider. It was so hot that several of us jumped in a fountain to cool off somewhere midrace. In those days, there were no water stations so we took matters into our own hands! In the book ["25 Years of the Peachtree Road Race," by Karen Rosen], Claude says he passed me while I was in the fountain, but I must have later caught up because I finished 34th while he finished further back. We ran pretty fast but we were having fun, too. My photo also made it into the book – I’m the cute guy in the Atlanta Track Club shirt behind Tim Singleton as he hands the trophy to women’s winner Gayle Barron.

- Jonathan Ward (43:12, 34th Place; 9th 18 & Under Division)

As the trophies were handed out, the photographers wanted to get pictures and they chose the fountain as a good background. When they handed Gayle Barron the trophy for top female runner, we started shouting ‘Gayle, lean back, lean back!’ So a little confused, she did that just as the camera clicked. This opened up a gap, which revealed the runners in the fountain. So now we can all truthfully say that we have our picture in the Peachtree Road Race Hall of Fame. We were runners before running was cool.

- Claude Crider (46:57, 50th Place; 8th 19-21 Division)

We only had one lane of Peachtree Street and then somewhere about halfway I found myself following a bus. Anyway, I decided to go up on to the curb and pick up my speed to pass the bus so I could get away from the exhaust fumes.

- Tom Durham (47:02, 51st Place; 15th 18 & Under Division)

The first Peachtree was also my first race of any kind. I talked with Dean Singleton to ask his opinion as to whether I should try the race since I had never even jogged over four miles. He said that it would be a “piece of cake.” He lied! Everyone seemed to be an experienced runner and I was sure that I was in over my head. That thought was further enhanced when Jeff Galloway [the eventual winner] jogged into the lot and responded to the question “Where have you been?” by casually stating that he had checked out the course by “running to the finish line and back.” I thought “these people are crazy!” Looking around, I saw three women in running attire. My thought (remember this was 50 years ago) was “well, at least I can beat the women.” As it turned out, just as I was crossing the Downtown Connector at about the 5 ½ mile mark and facing what appeared to be an enormous climb to the finish, Gayle Barron pulled up beside me. I looked over and said, “Damn you, now I have to run this last hill.” My only Peachtree claim to fame is that I finished two steps ahead of Gayle, who went on to be great runner.

- Oliver Porter (48:56, 61st Place; 9th 30-34 Division)

I ran as long as I could, and then the heat got the best of me and I had to walk for a little bit, then run a little bit, then walk a little bit. I stopped at a Fire Station and they poured a hose over me to cool me off.

- Robert Jones (51:10, 74th Place; 12th 30-34 Division)

Continues on Page 23
GET OUT & RUN.
GET OUT & WIN.

To this year's runners, we've got your back.
The Home Depot Associates and their families are with you every step of the way.
That first race changed my life. I started seeing myself as a runner and athlete that could compete for a lifetime. I went on to run about 12 marathons, including two New York City marathons, and complete the Ironman at Lake Placid in 2005. Really none of that would have happened without that great experience at the first Peachtree.

- Sam Clement (53:37, 84th Place; 14th 30-34 Division)
I don't remember much about the start or the race itself. I do remember learning that my shiny new adidas Olympias were NOT running shoes and that big blisters hurt a lot. My mom followed along in the station wagon and even picked up some Fresca. It was disgusting but any liquid was good. Eventually I found the finish line, more through 13-year-old pigheadedness than through any preparation or training. Soaking my poor hot feet in the fountain afterwards felt wonderful.

- Ed Elrod (56:16, 91st Place; 22nd 18 & Under Division)
I was in 9th grade at Shamrock High School. Charles Harris was the assistant principal then. He had posted a notice about the race in the school locker room. I was on the track team so I thought I was in good shape, but I had no idea how long 10K was. I had to have my parents drive me down for the race as I was only 14. I found out that day that 10K is a very long way. I recall walking up most of the hills. My parents had an easy time watching me run as all the side streets were empty, so they could stop often and watch. I made it to the end, then into the fountain afterwards.

- Brad Rosselle (67:12, 108th Place; 28th 18 & Under Division)
If I had thought there would be 50 Peachtrees, I would have paid more attention to the first. I told Gayle I was thinking about running. She said I was crazy and that was the end of the conversation. We were joggers. Neither of us had ever run a road race. On race morning Gayle announced that she was running. I wasn't thrilled because I had to worry about myself finishing and now Gayle. When we got to the registration area, there was a good-sized crowd. It seemed like it at the time. As I expected, everyone I saw looked slim and fit. We met Tim at registration. I don't think he was expecting any female runners. The mayor and famous AJC sportswriter, Furman Bisher, were at the start. I thought, maybe this is a big deal. More to worry about. Gayle and I decided to run a comfortable pace. Just finish and not have to stop. About a mile from the finish, we passed a couple of the top finishers running the other way. That was a bit of a downer. A bit of excitement at the end because Gayle was the first female. We didn't know it at the time, but that was the start of an eight-year adventure that ended with her winning the female division of the Boston Marathon. I went on to direct more than 500 races, with at least one in all 50 states. Had we not run the first Peachtree, who knows how things might have turned out for us. Much differently, I expect.

- Ben Barron (49:33, 63rd Place; 15th 22-29 Division)

*Edited and condensed for clarity and space.
On July 4, the fastest fields in AJC Peachtree Road Race history will line up to mark the race's 50th Running. At stake is not only victory in this milestone year and a $10,000 first-place prize, but also a $50,000 bonus for breaking the event record. Which could very well fall, for both the men and women – but the task will not be easy.

The men's favorite, 19-year-old Rhonex Kipruto of Kenya, is already one of the fastest men ever at the distance, having run 27:08 to win the 2018 UAE Healthy Kidney 10K in New York City. That's the third-fastest 10K in history and the fastest 10K ever run on U.S. soil on a record-eligible course, as determined by international rules including net elevation drop.


Game on.

“My goal is to race well and go for the course record, weather permitting,” said Kipruto, whose 2019 season has so far included running the sixth-fastest 15K in history (41:53) on May 1 and the #1 time in the world this year for 10,000 meters on the track (26:50.16), crushing a strong field in the Stockholm Diamond League race on May 30, in less-than-ideal weather conditions.

Kipruto's rivals are expected to include countrymen Geoffrey Koech of Kenya, whose 27:18 was ranked #3 in the world in 2018, and Kennedy Kimutai, who ran 27:38 in March for the seventh-fastest time in the world this year; Gabriel Geay of Tanzania, the 2016 AJC Peachtree Road Race champion who is coming off recent 12K victories at the Alaska Airlines Bay to Breakers and Lilac Bloomsday Run; and his own brother, Bravin Kiptoo, the 2019 Under-20 African 10K champion.

The women's field is highlighted by two of the fastest distance runners in history: Brigid Kosgei and Fancy Chemutai, both of Kenya. They will be in quest of the 30:32 event record set by Lornah Kiplagat in 2002.

Kosgei, 25, won her first World Marathon Major last fall in Chicago and followed that up by dominating what some called the best women's marathon field ever assembled when she won London this spring in 2:18:20. In between, she claimed victory at the Aramco Houston Half Marathon in 1:05:50.

That Houston win came at the expense of Chemutai (2nd, 1:06:48), setting up a rematch here in Atlanta between the second-fastest half marathoner in history, Chemutai, and the fastest of 2019 in Kosgei.

Chemutai, 24, is also #2 all-time in the world for 10K, thanks to the 30:06 she notched en route in the 2017 Prague Half
EMILY SISSON: AMERICA’S NEWEST DISTANCE STAR

By Jay Holder

Emily Sisson is having a good year. On both the track and the roads, she has set personal bests that have rocketed her toward the top of the American all-times lists.

But it’s the prospect of success in a race next year that’s bringing her to the 2019 AJC Peachtree Road Race. Following a 2:23:08 debut at the Virgin Money London Marathon in April, Sisson has set her sights on making the Olympic team at that distance. To get to Tokyo, she’ll have to run through Atlanta in February of 2020 at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials – Marathon. While she knows the weather conditions on July 4 won’t be like those in late winter, Sisson is excited to at least get a taste of the terrain.

“I’m just curious to see what it is like racing in Atlanta,” said Sisson, the USA champion at 10K in 2016 and 5K last year, who finished ninth at 10,000 meters at the 2017 IAAF World Championships. “I hear it’s hilly and humid, so I want to experience it myself.”

Sisson’s 2019 has been nothing short of stellar. In January, she ran 1:07:30 at the Aramco Houston Half Marathon, just five seconds off the American record set there a year earlier by her training partner, Molly Huddle. In March, she clocked 30:49.57 for 10,000 meters on the track, a 36-second personal best that makes her the third-fastest American all-time at the distance, behind only Huddle and Shalane Flanagan. Then came London, where Sisson’s time was the second-fastest marathon debut ever by an American woman, just eight seconds off the debut mark of Jordan Hasay and making her the seventh-fastest American woman in history.

With a start to the year like that, some might be ready for a break from competition. But Sisson, a two-time NCAA champion and NCAA 5000-meter indoor record holder at Providence College, is eager to get back on the start line. She’ll run Peachtree, then prepare for the 10,000 meters at the Toyota USATF Outdoor Championships at the end of July with hopes of making Team USA for the 2019 World Championships in Doha. “The main goal this year was having a good half marathon and then having a good marathon debut,” said Sisson. “It’s a funny feeling, having your big goal happen in the first half of the year.”

For the past six weeks, Sisson has been training consistently at home in Scottsdale, Arizona, following a two week break after London. She said that Peachtree will be a true test of her fitness – the first of two high-profile 10,000-meter races in July, one on the roads and one on the track.

“I just get that little bit of extra excitement before a road race,” she said. “I still love racing on the track but for some reason every morning when I wake up and I have a road race I am just so excited and ready to go.”
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In what is likely the deepest field in the history of the Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division – and certainly one of the best wheelchair fields of any non-marathon ever – many of the most-decorated athletes in the sport will compete for their biggest payday ever, with a groundbreaking $50,000 event-record bonus on the line for both the men and women.

But just winning the race will be a challenge in itself.


Among them, they have won 11 of the past 17 editions of the Peachtree.

Romanchuk, 20, last year came within two seconds of Saul Mendoza’s course record (see accompanying story) but will likely face a tough challenge from Hug, who dominated the World Marathon Majors for the past several years until Romanchuk’s breakthrough last fall in Chicago.

Hug, known as the “Silver Bullet” for his distinctive helmet, is the 2016 Paralympic gold medalist and the marathon. Now 33, Hug set a marathon world best of 1:18:03 when he won Boston in 2017 and holds the world record at 10,000 meters on the track.

In their most recent marathon meeting, Romanchuk held off Hug, 1:33:38 to 1:33:42, for a win in London last April that doubled as the 2019 World Para Athletics Marathon Championships. It was Romanchuk’s first world title.

Among the other contenders for the men’s title on July 4 are van Dyk, a 10-time winner of the Boston Marathon who competed there this spring for the 20th time; Cassidy, whose 1:18:25 Boston victory in 2012 stood as the world best until Hug broke it five years later; George, who won Chicago in 2014 and London a year later; and Schabort, a two-time Paralympic medalist and two-time winner in New York.

On the women’s side, it could be a three-way battle to the tape among Susannah Scaroni and Tatyana McFadden of the U.S. and Manuela Schar of Switzerland – who among them have won every Peachtree going back to 2010, the year after Edith Hunkeler set the course record of 22:09.97.

Susannah Scaroni of the U.S., a 2016 Paralympian, returns to defend her title, and on paper she may be the favorite to break Hunkeler’s mark – her winning time last year, 22:49.05, is the second-fastest in Peachtree history.

The 28-year-old had the best year of her career in 2018, with her victory here topping runner-up marathon finishes in both Boston and Berlin. Then on June 8 this year, she clocked a world-best road 10K time of 22:22 in winning the NYRR New York Mini 10K.

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With her victory at last year’s Peachtree, Scaroni handed Tatyana McFadden her first defeat in eight appearances here, but that doesn’t mean McFadden had a poor race. On the contrary, her runner-up time of 22:53.12 was the third-fastest time in race history, faster than any of her seven Peachtree victories.

McFadden, 30, who has the most victories here of any athlete in any division, is the most successful women’s wheelchair athlete in history with her string of four consecutive Grand Slams in winning the Boston, London, Chicago and New York Marathons between 2013 and 2016 (see More Legends of Peachtree, page 61).

Schar, who set the marathon world record last year when she won Berlin in 1:36:53, has dominated the World Marathon Majors since early 2017. She won both Boston and London this spring, and with the latter also became the 2019 World Para Athletics Marathon Champion.

Photo: Paul Ward

WORLD’S BEST AT PEACHTREE

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“I’ve been in the sport since the mid-’90s and I’ve never seen anyone with his body type,” said Bleakney. The athlete’s long arms, the coach explained, allow him to push a larger-diameter hand ring, 17 ½ inches around instead of the usual 14 ½ or 15. So, he’s effectively able to apply force over a longer period of time on every stroke.

On July 4, Romanchuk will bring both his wingspan and ever-growing wealth of racing experience back to the Peachtree, where he will not only chase the course record but also try to become the first man to three-peat in the wheelchair division since George Murray, who won the first four races (1982-85) after the division was launched.

“It’ll be very interesting,” he said.

$50,000 X 4 = $200,000 IN EVENT-RECORD BONUSES

By Jay Holder

Winners of the AJC Peachtree Road Race this year could have a payday deserving of fireworks: Up to $200,000 in bonus prize money will be awarded to athletes who break an event record. Any male or female winner of the footrace or Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division who tops the best times in their division will be awarded a $50,000 bonus in celebration of the 50th Running.

A prize purse totaling $140,000 across all four divisions is also offered. The addition of the bonus likely makes the Peachtree the most lucrative 10K race in the United States, and for the wheelchair athletes it almost certainly offers the opportunity for the biggest single payday ever in a road race of any distance anywhere in the world.

“At first I wondered if there was a missing decimal point,” said Daniel Romanchuk upon learning that he could potentially earn an extra $50,000 if he breaks the tape in record time.

“The AJC Peachtree Road Race has historically been a trailblazer in the world of elite road racing. From the addition of drug testing to official prize money, the event has led the way,” said Rich Kenah, executive director of Atlanta Track Club and race director of the AJC Peachtree Road Race. “At its 50th Running, we’re excited to break still more new ground.”

Becky Washburn, MS, wellness manager at Shepherd Center, called this “a historic year. $50,000 is the highest bonus for a single event in wheelchair racing, and it sets a precedent for equality” between the elite runners and wheelchair athletes.

The most recent event record was set in 2009, when Edith Hunkeler won the women’s wheelchair division in 22:09.97. Saul Mendoza set the men’s record of 18:38.06 back in 2004. “Much respect to Atlanta Track Club and Shepherd Center for being pioneers in elevating recognition of our sport to a whole new level,” said the 20-year-old Romanchuk.

Seven-time Peachtree wheelchair champion Tatyana McFadden added, “I am beyond excited that Peachtree took the commitment of promoting equality. This is a huge step, and it really says something.”

The current event records for the footrace are some of the strongest in international road racing. Joseph Kimani’s winning time of 27:04 in 1996 is still the fastest 10K road race ever run on U.S. soil. And no one at the Peachtree has come closer than 19 seconds to Lornah Kiplagat’s winning time of 30:32, set in 2002.

“It’s a great idea. It’s also an honor,” said Kiplagat. “Such a huge bonus clearly shows that this is a special record and it will be extremely tough to break it. But I hope someone does, because records are there to be broken.”
Jean Turner and Laura Youngblood don’t know each other. As they run this year’s AJC Peachtree Road Race, their paths may not even cross. Serious runners, neither expects this July 4 to bring their fastest time on the course.

But even as these two women take their first strides in the 50th Running of Atlanta’s iconic race, they will have already won. This past year, Turner and Youngblood both faced down a common foe, and they have outpaced it. Not so many months ago, running in this year’s Peachtree seemed like a distant dream. Instead, it is their victory lap.

Both Turner, 55, and Youngblood, 42, are running the Peachtree despite months of battling cancer.

“This year’s Peachtree Road Race will be my first race post-chemo – kind of like my official coming-out party on the pavement!” said Turner, an Army Nurse Corps officer, who lives in McDonough.

Long dedicated to health and fitness, Turner discovered her love of distance running during a 13-month deployment to Iraq in 2006 to 2007. She ran her first Peachtree when she returned home from that tour of duty.

Her last Peachtree was in 2016, after returning home from a tour in South Korea. But the New York City native, mother of three and grandmother of seven whose email address includes the description “Ms. Fitfox50beyond,” had her world rocked when a malignant spot was detected on her left lung last summer. The tumor was successfully removed. But Turner, a certified health coach whose career has included educating many others about self-care, still had to undergo chemotherapy, which started in August. Through it, she continued to work out and even ran three 5Ks.

Youngblood – a California native who moved to Atlanta in 1999 – was all set to run last year’s Peachtree. She was literally on her way to the race, driving to the MARTA station from her Newnan home last July 4 when she started to feel too dizzy to continue.

She’d had bouts of dizziness in the days before, too. After weeks of tests, the healthy, fit and avid runner got a shocker of a diagnosis – metastatic breast cancer. It was in her brain and bones. Youngblood, a health scientist with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, underwent weeks of whole brain radiation and also began endocrine and targeted therapy.

Just a few months before this Peachtree, she got welcome news: While she can’t be considered cured, she learned in April that there was no longer evidence of cancer in the scans her doctors ran. She is continuing on medication, but that’s OK.
"I am so thrilled to be participating in the 2019 Peachtree Road Race!" Youngblood said. "This is my opportunity to reclaim the race that cancer took from me last year."

Neither woman is a quitter by anyone’s definition.

Turner had already been a nurse for 15 years when, at 43, she joined the Army. At first a reservist, she decided to switch to active duty after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Growing up in Queens, her first job out of high school was at the World Trade Center. When those planes crashed into the towers, Turner recalled thinking, "I can’t believe what you did to my hometown." Active duty, she said, “was my way of doing more.”

When she was shipped over to Iraq in 2006, her “battle buddy” – Army talk for roommate – turned her on to running. The two made it into a six-day-a-week habit, even though it meant getting up at 4:30 a.m. to run before the mercury climbed well past 100 degrees.

"It’s true about the endorphins," Turner said, chuckling. "That just got me hooked on distance running."

The Peachtree was her first distance race after coming home. It, too, was a celebration.

"It was memorable because I was celebrating returning back from combat, because you see a lot," Turner said.

Over the next several years, she ran two more Peachtrees and took a series of “runcations” – vacations built around running events in cities like San Francisco, Savannah, New York City and Jacksonville, to name a few.

In August 2017, a spot was detected on her lower left lung. She kept going and hoped for the best.

But after months of tests and monitoring by her healthcare providers, Turner was told last July 5 that the spot on her lung they’d been watching was in fact malignant.

"At first I was shocked because I did all the right things – eat right, exercise, try to manage stress," Turner said.

But she wasn’t about to fold.

“Through this journey towards recovery, there have been many tears shed by both of us, but never, ever did the word ‘surrender’ enter her vocabulary or mindset," said her husband, James Turner, who retired from the Army after 29 years. "My wife from the day of finding that she had cancer has waged war against this disease."

About two weeks after the cancer was diagnosed, she had surgery to remove the tumor and some lymph nodes around her lungs. In August, she started chemotherapy.

“That first treatment knocked me for a loop," Turner said. She ended up in the hospital for two days.

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2019

The Year Of COFFEE
But all that running and attention to fitness over the years paid off. Even her doctor remarked on the strength of her heart.

And Turner was determined to not let that go. With her chemo treatments spaced about three weeks apart, she kept going with interval training – running two or three minutes, walking a minute, and running again.

Last October, she actually ran a 5K with her husband beside her for support. After that, with winter coming, she got herself a treadmill to work out at home. As spring neared, she set her sights on the Publix Atlanta 5K in March.

But by then, she was feeling the cumulative effect of the chemo. Again, she had James running with her, as backup in case the Atlanta hills proved too strenuous.

“I had to go slow. I didn’t try to run the hills,” she admitted. “I walked them.”

The warrior in her bristled, but Turner the nurse knew enough to persevere

“I was frustrated because I’m a runner. At the same time, I had to do it,” she said. “I knew had to keep up some level of exercise.”

By May, though, Turner felt ready to go it solo again in the Atlanta Memorial Day 5K Classic, honoring America’s veterans. The day after was her final chemo session.

Turner plans to run this year’s Peachtree on her own, too. James – who has been inspired by his wife to become more of a runner – will be cheering her on from the sidelines.

“It is a celebration for me because I’m celebrating a miracle,” Turner said.

Laura Youngblood did her best to keep moving, too, despite the fatigue of treatment and the weight of her diagnosis. The whole-brain radiation seemed to all but kill her appetite and zap her energy. One minute of running at a time was all she could manage, so she alternated – one minute walking, one minute running. Her hair fell out. Even after the radiation was done, the fatigue persisted for months. She would run one week, then have to take the next week off. And, too, there were the inevitable thoughts that became unwelcome guests in her head.

“When I was first diagnosed, and especially when you’re diagnosed from the start with metastatic cancer, you’re like, ‘What does this mean for me? How long do I have?’” Youngblood said.

But the scientist and choir member said she comes from a long line of family members with an offbeat – “sick” is the word she used – sense of humor. That helped, as did the support of her husband, family and friends. So did her conviction that it was pointless to worry and mope when she could still do something she loved. Like running.

Youngblood’s sense of humor, as well as her zest for simply moving forward every day, show through on her Instagram page, where she chronicles her journey under the handle running_with_curls (subtitled “Currently running without curls, due to cancer treatment, but I hope they will grow back soon!”) using hashtags that include #runningwithcancer and #newnormal.

And come this July 4, she is looking forward to running in the Peachtree, curls or no curls.

“It’s my favorite race. I love it,” she said. “It’s so much fun.”

Still, she knows her speed won’t be anything like what used to be. That’s disappointing, she admitted.

“My best time for the Peachtree was I think 57 minutes and some change,” Youngblood said. “I am not going to be anywhere near that this time.”

But she also has another way of looking at it.

“I’ll have the freedom to stop and enjoy aspects of the Peachtree that I don’t usually get to,” Youngblood said.

This time, she said, she will be able to check out all those interesting characters along the route, shoot some photographs, and linger and enjoy the sights and sounds of her much-loved Peachtree, not to mention her life.

“I think,” she said, “I’ll have the freedom to really enjoy the journey.”
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In American folklore, Betsy Ross and Uncle Sam were never romantically connected. Ross, a real historic figure who sewed the first American flag, and Uncle Sam, a fictional character created to drum up patriotism during the War of 1812, would have missed each other by a generation. Not to mention one of them not being a real person.

But they’re a husband-and-wife team in Atlanta every July 4, when “Betsy and Sam” are “Paula and Reg,” who proudly hold the finish-line tape for the four winners of the world’s largest 10K.

The first Sam-and-Betsy team appeared in 1982, but decided it wasn’t for them. So race volunteers Joanne and Neal Stubblefield reached out to their friend Paula, who was game. “I just loved it,” Paula said. Since it takes two to hold the tape, she recruited her then-husband to suit up as Uncle Sam.

A Peachtree tradition was born.

Paula, the 64-year-old chief legal counsel for the Centers for Disease Control, is 35 years into the job. Her husband of three years, Reg, is the Peachtree’s fourth Uncle Sam. A retired pharmacist and CPA, he never expected to play such a big part in the Peachtree, but when he started dating Paula seven years ago it was part of the deal.

“I was not all in,” said Reg, 61. “But I was willing to give it a try, and I enjoyed it. I am definitely all in now.”

Living in Midtown, they are up at 5 a.m. on July 4 to put on their costumes, pulling them from dry-cleaning bags. (This year, their routine will start a day earlier: Sam and Betsy will be part of Anthem Peachtree Junior for the first time.) Reg dons his bowtie while watching a YouTube video, because he forgets how to tie it. He picks a different one every year. Paula brushes up on her Betsy Ross facts so she can answer any questions. Her favorite bit of trivia is that Ross changed the original six-point star on the flag to five points because it was simpler to sew.

They arrive at Piedmont Park before sunrise, posing for selfies (“We never say no,” said Paula) and finally making their way to volunteer check-in and finding the finish line coordinator to get a rundown of the day. The script at the finish line is tightly orchestrated and everything has to happen as planned. The slightest slip-up could become an embarrassment on national television.

“They know exactly what they’re doing,” said Caryn Lamphier, a volunteer coordinator at Atlanta Track Club.

First across the line are the wheelchair racers, topping 30 miles an hour as they fly down 10th Street. “Sometimes finding the female [among the male wheelchair racers] is still a bit of a challenge because of the speed,” said Paula. “They’re crouched forward. Most years we get her, but some years we decide that there’s a safety issue there.”

Then, the footrace. “I will tell you, when the runners come up over that hill, and you’ve got the helicopters above, and you can hear the cheer of the crowd – it’s so moving,” said Paula.

Even after the final winner breaks the tape, the Barnes’ smiles don’t stop, as they stick around to congratulate the masses. It’s slow and sweaty going as the Barnes make their way through The Meadow in those heavy costumes back to their car, with hundreds more photo requests.

But neither is complaining. “We enjoy it because we enjoy each other. We enjoy people and people enjoy us because they can see us enjoying each other,” said Reg. “We’re celebrities for about 24 hours once a year, and then we go back to our usual lives.”
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On July 4, the 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race will fill the streets of Atlanta with history. For thousands of participants who have been part of its transformation from humble road race to world’s largest 10K, this edition will be about the celebration of the last 50 years of running in Atlanta. Legends will make their way down Peachtree, and the race will rightfully honor those who have turned the race into an iconic local tradition.

Right next to them, however, will be the future: a new generation of young runners who are taking in the experience for the first time, seeing the traditions and hearing the old stories and getting ready to spread the gospel of the Peachtree as the race starts the journey toward its 100th year.

The story of Randal Smith and Rowan Stephens embodies that cycle – one generation passing a love of running and the significance of the Peachtree down to the next.

Smith, a history teacher at Terry Parker High School in Jacksonville, Florida, has been hard at work on that mission over the past three years. A lifelong runner, Smith is part of a group of teachers from high schools across Jacksonville that work together to manage “Marathon High,” a program for students to train for a half marathon. Noncompetitive in nature, Marathon High works to develop a love of running and community.

Perhaps no one in the program has embraced that credo quite like rising sophomore Rowan Stephens.

“I have never seen a child willing to get up at 4 a.m. 6 a.m. to run,” Rowan’s mother, Taylor Stephens, said. “She found that she loved it – she loved to run.”

After starting the program last October, Rowan quickly became enamored of the possibilities and progressed quickly. She took on the Winter Beach Run (5-Mile) on Jacksonville Beach in January, finished the Donna Half Marathon in February, and then ran the Gate River Run (15K) in March.

“I know a lot of people think it’s way too hard to do,” Rowan said of the half marathon. “And it was difficult when I got to the end, but it was something I had never done before and was happy and excited for it.”

As she looked for other ways to continue her running journey, Rowan overheard Smith mention his desire to be part of the 50th Running this year – he had yet to cross the Peachtree off his bucket list. Naturally, Rowan – whose family moved to Florida from LaGrange just three years ago – asked if she could do it, too. Her parents were concerned about the 14-year-old racing alone in a crowd of 60,000, so Smith offered to run with her.

There still was one hurdle, of course. Taylor recalls reminding her daughter that she might not get chosen in the lottery, but that Rowan would have none of it: “I am going to get it; this is what I want to do.”

Rowan was right. And when they got in, her parents immediately signed up to volunteer at the race, where they will help staff a fluid station. As the Peachtree celebrates its 50th Running, the Stephens family and Smith will be celebrating their first, bringing their community up from Florida to be a part of the tradition.

“It makes me feel like my parents and everyone is just confident in me for doing it,” she said. “They’re really happy for me to be doing something that is exciting to me.”

More than 13,000 participants will be taking part for the first time, so Rowan won’t be the only first-timer out there. Of the newcomers, 4,500 are under the age of 18 – getting a running start toward Peachtree’s 100th.
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Jeff Vance knows, perhaps as well as anyone, what it is to be a couch potato. Of course, he didn’t exactly choose that lifestyle for himself. For the past two years, Vance – a Cumming resident who has end-stage renal disease and has been on the kidney transplant list in Georgia since 2014 – has been tethered to five-day-a-week hemodialysis treatments, each lasting four hours, administered by his wife, Melanie.

Still, this spring, he added a different type of regimen to his life: Though he had practically no previous experience as a runner, he started training for the AJC Peachtree Road Race after some nudging from his younger sister, Sarah Vance Knetchel, who has done the race perhaps 15 times. “She just said, ‘It’s the 50th year for the race, and you’re gonna be 50. Why don’t you run it?’” said Vance, who will celebrate the milestone birthday on September 17. “I said, ‘Alright, if we can get a ticket through the lottery, I’ll do it.’ And fortunately or unfortunately – however you want to look at it – I got a number and I started to run.” Vance was diagnosed with kidney disease almost five years ago, in September 2014. Until now, the extent of his physical activity as a dialysis patient involved “some pushups here and there” and walking the dog maybe a mile at most, though more often than not it was just down the street and back.

But within six weeks of heading out for his first run, he was up to about three days and 15 miles a week. By mid-May, he was at a point where he could typically go about two miles before having to take a walk break.

Vance said that running with his disease has definitely been an interesting journey. The dialysis treatments zap his energy, he said, and “some days it’s a chore to get up and run.” He also has to be extra vigilant about his hydration, especially in the Georgia heat, because he’s only technically supposed to drink 1½ liters of fluids per day. And, because his condition requires him to eat a very low-potassium diet, cramping can be an issue.

But he said it’s a small price to pay for the overall mental and physical benefits he’s been getting from running; he’s feeling nearly as energized, generally, as he did back when he was doing a boot camp-style fitness class three or four days a week several years before he got sick.

As far as the Peachtree goes, Vance’s primary goal for the Fourth is just to finish – hopefully alongside (or not too far behind) his sister; his son, Tyler; and his 72-year-old father, Phil. Meanwhile, he’s got a much bigger goal he’d like to check off the list to celebrate his 50th: a new kidney.

In fact, part of what has kept him motivated to run is the prospect of that new lease on his life. “If I can make it a habit and keep it going, then I won’t have as hard a time when I’m on the anti-rejection drugs,” he said. “I also figure the healthier I am, the better I’m gonna take that kidney and the surgery, the faster I’ll heal, the faster I’ll be off the big anti-rejection drugs, because the expense is huge.” And if all the stars align, perhaps Vance will achieve both his goals at the Peachtree.

“I’m thinking about having a shirt made – an ‘I-need-a-kidney’ kind of thing, with my patient number and the phone number to Piedmont [Atlanta Hospital],” he said. “That would be a great 50th birthday gift.”
They are two Georgia-born men, an ex-Marine and an ex-minister, a runner and a walker, united across the past 25 years by their love of the AJC Peachtree Road Race without even knowing each other.

One of them ran the 25th edition of the Peachtree, in 1994, and hasn’t missed a single one since then. The other ran the race on that same Fourth of July and hasn’t yet returned.

Both are planning to be in this year’s historic 50th Running of Atlanta’s signature footrace. Doug Hinton will extend his improbable streak to 26 in a row, trying to break an hour (he hasn’t yet) and finish ahead of his son (he always has). Ray Bobo, a natural-born evangelist for the Peachtree, will bring a new convert to the race, just as he did years ago.

They are a couple of unlikely tradition keepers.

These days, there may be no bigger fan of the Peachtree than Hinton, 52, a native of Conyers who now lives in Ocala, Florida, where he works as a civil engineer and land surveyor. However, when he entered the race for the first time a quarter
century ago, he wasn’t a serious runner, covering “maybe six miles in a week” – and that was only because the Marine Corps Reserves required the completion of a three-mile run.

“I saw it was the 25th year and thought I might as well do it,” Hinton said of the 1994 race. “I had known about (the Peachtree) for 10 years. In high school, a couple of my friends ran it with their dads.”

Over time, Hinton kept gaining entry through the race’s lottery and kept showing up. Some years, he was in shape on race day. In other years, he went months without running and had to crash out a six-week training program to get sort of ready.

“He has been through many stages of being prepared and not so prepared for the race,” Hinton’s wife, Cindy, said diplomatically.

In 2014, the Hintons moved to Florida to help care for Cindy’s mother, and that easily could have ended the Peachtree streak. But Doug’s son, Reed, now 22, insisted that father and son run the race together, so they did.

Then, just short of his 50th birthday in January 2017, Doug Hinton took inventory of his health. He was not pleased.

“I was slightly overweight, had a sedentary life and had pre-hypertension,” he said. “Living in a community where the average age was slightly younger than dirt, the difference was noticeable between the people who maintained an active lifestyle and those who didn’t.

“I want to be on the positive side when I get to be the age of dirt.”

The result of that assessment was a commitment to getting and staying in shape that has made Hinton a dedicated runner, even though he insists that he doesn’t log “the heavy miles that a lot of people do.”

He has been all over Florida for events, doing half marathons in Key West, Jacksonville and Daytona Beach and other big runs in Clermont and Tampa. He has been known to scout for races to run while on vacation, as he did recently in advance of a trip to the Bahamas. He once drove 10 hours to a mud run at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

“Doug always has to have a race on the calendar,” Cindy said.

At the opposite end of the racing spectrum is Bobo, 72, an Atlanta native who hasn’t participated in any running events since the 1994 Peachtree. He also ran two previous Peachtrees, in 1979 and 1981, when he worked in advertising at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and was part of a small employee running team created to boost interest in the race.

By 1994, Bobo had changed careers and was the pastor of a church in Heidelberg, Mississippi. He talked a younger parishioner, Bryan Jones, into coming back with him for the 25th Running.

“We drove over the day before the race in a mobile home,” Bobo recalled. “Back in those days, they let people park [for the race] in Lenox Square.

“He sort of let me set the pace. I told him, ‘Don’t run ahead at the start. All of these people will be sitting on the curb after a mile.’ At Mile 5, I asked him if he had any kick left. He said he did, he got in front of me and he made us a path to the finish line.”

Although he was accustomed to running five miles a day back then, Bobo thought that might be his final Peachtree. But after retiring and moving to Canton, he started thinking about the 50th – and about a reunion with Jones for the occasion. Jones bowed out, so instead Bobo will bring Ross Ritter, the pastor of Bobo’s church in Canton.

“He’s a runner, a lean machine, and he has never done the Peachtree,” Bobo said of Ritter.

Because of nagging knee discomfort, Bobo gave up running about 15 years ago and switched to walking. Often you can find him on a 1.25-mile loop at Cherokee County Veterans Park, doing five miles in about two hours. He said that he and his wife, Wanda, who will help as a volunteer with T-shirt distribution at the finish line this year, try to walk at least two miles daily.

“I started running in college when Dr. Kenneth Cooper came to lecture on aerobics,” Bobo said. “He said the best forms of aerobic activity were swimming and running.

“Everything inside me wants to run, so when I get in view of the finish line (at the Peachtree), I might try to jog a little.”

The shine of Atlanta’s summer classic hasn’t faded at all for either Hinton or Bobo.

“At my first one, I remember the atmosphere was amazing, the route was lined with spectators cheering you on,” said Hinton, who has saved all 25 of his Peachtree T-shirts and corresponding bibs. “I tell people it’s less of a race than a social event. I’ll keep doing it for as long as I can. I’d like to do it someday with my grandsons (now ages 5 and 3).

“The Peachtree Road Race is the main race that got me started and the only one that I want to run every year.”

Bobo said the Peachtree fills him with pride in his hometown. He is making his way back, after all this time, because there’s nothing like it.

“I remember the people in Midtown coming out to watch,” he said. “It’s kind of like a parade. Atlanta is home to me.”
SHE’S HIP TO PEACHTREE’S ALLURE

If you had your last dollar to bet, you’d be safe putting it on spritely Mira Bergen to be out there Fourth of July morning, ready to take to the road to do her beloved Peachtree.

“It’s like I literally have tears in my eyes almost the whole way because it’s so emotional for me,” Bergen said. “I just see this mass of humanity in the city that I love, and it’s just so connecting.”

It’s almost like she can’t wait until the next year, and the next and all the Peachtrees to come.

“I want to be participating when I’m 100 years old,” Bergen said. “Not until I’m 100. When I’m 100.”

- Rita Giordano

“MADDOX STRONG” BREAKS NEW GROUND

In his over 40 years at St. Pius X Catholic High School – 30 of them as the Atlanta area school’s beloved athletic director – Mark Kelly helped shape the careers of countless young athletes. To him, it wasn’t a job. “It was a labor of love.”

But as proud as he is of that tenure, last year’s Peachtree was an experience apart: Kelly, of Tucker, ran it with his oldest grandson, Jackson Kelly, who is now a sixth grader. He chokes up just talking about it.

“It was just one of the highlights of my life,” Kelly said.

This year, there will be another.

Grandfather; grandson, now 11; and 23 other people will run the Peachtree as Maddox Strong, a team that has pulled together to raise funds for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society in the name of Maddox Kelly, another Kelly grandson and Jackson’s 5-year-old brother, who is battling leukemia.

Two months away from the Peachtree, the Maddox Strong team had already far surpassed its $500 per member fund-raising goal and it’s still going. It stands as an achievement for both the people who love a brave, bright-eyed little boy and for those who want to see Atlanta’s iconic race, at its half-century
mark, become an even-bigger force for good.

"Each year, we want to make it better, and we want to grow its impact," said Rich Kenah, executive director of Atlanta Track Club.

Through a recent reorganization, the Club created a standalone development department. Its mission is to not only raise funds for the Club's youth activities, like Kilometer Kids, but also to support other health-minded community efforts.

Marathons have long served as fund-raising vehicles as well as athletic achievements. To Kenah, there was no reason a 10K, especially one as much of a community institution as the Peachtree, shouldn't step up to a greater role.

So when Kelly approached him about his hope to raise cancer-fighting funds through this year's Peachtree, Kenah said he saw "a great opportunity" – both to help kids like Maddox and also expand to the role and reach of the largest 10K in the world going forward.

Kelly, himself a cancer survivor, and his team are looking forward to this Peachtree like no other.

"They've got to find a cure for this disease. I know that's not going to happen in my lifetime, but I am convinced that can happen in Maddox's lifetime," said Kelly, 67, grandfather of nine. "And when they find it, I want him to be able to say, 'You know what? My family and friends helped them to find it.'"

That includes his Peachtree family, too.

- Rita Giordano

"I FELT A REAL STRONG BURST OF ENERGY"

Peachtree 2007 may have been a dozen years ago, but for Marcus Powell the memory of that race is as clear as yesterday.

His mother, Carrie Lou Sutton Powell, a hard-working, church-going woman who raised 12 children, was gravely ill with cancer. Her doctors said she didn't have much time. Marcus, her youngest, planned to go visit her right after the race. In the last 50 meters, the going had gotten tough. And then, out of nowhere, a feeling of strength washed over him.

"I felt a real strong burst of energy," said Powell, now 42. "As I ran that last 50 meters, I knew my mom had passed. She came over me as I was running and gave me that energy – her energy, to let me finish strong."

When he checked his phone after the race, he had a text waiting from one his brothers: Their mother had died.

That burst of staying power was one of many gifts Carrie Lou Sutton Powell gave her children over their lifetimes, said her youngest.

"My mom instilled great values in all her kids," said Powell. "My mom always taught me whatever you do, be good at it … whatever you do, you can conquer anything if you put your mind to it."

Powell, an aircraft loading agent with Delta Airlines and a divinity school graduate who lives in Union City, credits his mother's teachings and her example for his own strong work ethic, punctuality and drive.

"My mom is my inspiration," Powell said.

Of course, life moved on for all Carrie Lou's offspring, her youngest child included. After a gap, Powell – a volunteer assistant coach at Morehouse and All-American out of Albany State – ran the Peachtree again in 2016. And he is planning to run again this year. Afterward, some 200 family members will gather, as they do yearly, to celebrate Carrie Lou Sutton Powell's life and legacy.

"We have a week of fellowship in honor of our mom," Powell said.

But on the morning of July 4, the 12th anniversary of her passing, he intends to show his family's matriarch his enduring love in a special, Atlanta kind of way:

"I am running the Peachtree Road Race in honor of my mother."

- Rita Giordano

FOR THIS COUPLE, A STANDING DATE TO RUN

Back in 1998, husband and wife Armistead and Hannah Burwell were still just dating when the Georgia girl invited her Michigan-born beau to celebrate Independence Day, Atlanta-style.

"I was an out-of-towner, and she knew that I liked to run," Armistead recalled. "So she said, 'Hey, we should do this event called the Peachtree Road Race.' And that's how we both got started."

Every year since, the East Cobb couple – they wed July 10, 1999 - and Hannah's family have upheld a decades-long tradition of glorious Fourth of July festivities kicked off by running the Peachtree.

"Her dad ran it early in the '70s," Armistead said. "They lived
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right in Buckhead. They’d walk from their house to Peachtree Road and watch the runners.”

In their early years as a family, Armistead and Hannah brought their kids – as babies, then toddlers, and on up – over to the home of Hannah’s parents. The couple ran the race, the grandparents would bring the little ones to watch, and the whole family plus friends would gather together for brunch.

They still do. Sure, the couple missed a couple years running here and there. There were a couple of knee surgeries. One year, Hannah was nearing the end of a pregnancy and opted to sit out the race. But for Armistead, who now manages a steel fabrication facility, and Hannah, head of a high school English department, the Peachtree has been both a standing date and, as the years rolled on, a family affair.

This year, the post-Peachtree brunch will be at a restaurant on the course. For the actual race, the couple’s 13-year-old son John, 13, will watch the race with relatives. Representing the family on the course will be a posse of six, including the couple’s daughter Sarah, 16. Just a sophomore at Walton High School, she placed third this spring in the state 7A championships at 3200 meters.

And of course, there will be Armistead, now 48, and Hannah, 47, keeping the July 4 tradition they started as a young couple all those years ago.

“The Peachtree,” said Armistead, “is as much a part of our marriage as our anniversary.”

This year, by the way, is their 20th. Cheers!

- Rita Giordano

HER CORNER WON’T BE QUITE THE SAME

Very rarely in the past 40 years has Elizabeth Bentley Watson been absent from her favorite spot along the Peachtree course, the corner of Peachtree and Beverly Road, a short drive from her house. “Betty,” an Atlanta native, would arrive early, stay late and cheer vigorously, exhorting participants on tired legs to keep up the good work with shouts of “Way to go!” and “You can do it!”

“It was a source of pride to be at the top of Cardiac Hill to cheer people on at the end of that push,” said her daughter-in-law, Preetha Nandi.

This year, runners will hear one fewer voice: Watson passed away on February 5, at the age of 61.

Spectators – especially longtime, dedicated spectators like Watson – are as woven into the fabric of the Peachtree as Betsy and Uncle Sam or Dean Candler’s blessings at Jesus Junction.

Some become famous: identical twins Ruby and Ruth Crawford, for instance, who for more than 30 years were fixtures in front of their church, in matching patriotic outfits with matching poodles.

“You don’t have to run, you don’t have to volunteer,” said Julia Emmons in 2006, after she darted over during her last race at Atlanta Track Club’s executive director to embrace Ruby, then in her late 80s. “You just have to show up. And they showed up every year for 30 years.”

Watson was at her corner for even longer. The Bentley family has watched the race at that spot since the late 1970s, heading over from 1649 Lady Marian Lane NE, the house in which Watson grew up. And, like the Peachtree this year, it’s a house with deep significance to the city: in April, the Collier-Perry-Bentley House marked its own milestone when it was added to the Georgia Register of Historic Places as one of the oldest documented houses in Atlanta.

“It was Christmas, Thanksgiving and the Peachtree Road Race as the main traditions of the family,” said Nandi, who has joined them for the past four editions of the race.

After the race, the family would adjourn to the house for brunch, usually involving classic Southern fare but always including a traditional flag cake with fresh cream, strawberries and blueberries.

Of course, Watson was much more than “just” a faithful Peachtree spectator. As a child, she traveled around Georgia with her father, Jimmy Bentley, who campaigned for office and was twice elected Comptroller General. She graduated with honors from Yale University in 1979, among the first generation of women to graduate from Yale College. In 1983 she earned a law degree from the University of Georgia, and afterwards served as a law clerk before joining the firm Hurt, Richardson, Garner, Todd & Cadenhead in Atlanta. She married Wade Watson in 1986 (they would go on to have two sons, Hamp and Jordan) and in 1989 pursued her passion for serving those in need when she began working as an attorney at the Georgia Mental Health Institute, a psychiatric hospital, and then served as an attorney for the state in what is now known as the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. She retired in 2017.

But on July 4, she will be remembered for her love of cheering at the Peachtree – sometimes especially for friends or family members or runners in elaborate patriotic costumes, but always for everyone.

“Betty was always the one who would get up especially early to watch the elite runners,” remembered Nandi. “She’d take a few chairs, snacks, some water and get to her corner.”

- Barbara Huebner
Atlanta Track Club would like to thank all the people and organizations that make the 2019 AJC Peachtree Road Race possible.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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A PEACH OF A RUNNING STREAK

For each participant in the Peachtree, the day will mean something a little different. It might mark a first 10K, the culmination of a running career or a 10th straight year of participation. For Jeff Priegnitz, it is expected to mark 1,000 days on the run.

The streak is more than 1,000 days in the making, however. Earlier this decade, the Hattiesburg, Mississippi, man ran his first miles on a treadmill as part of a weight-loss challenge with a friend. As he shed pounds – dropping from 250 to 170 – he realized that he actually enjoyed the activity more than he expected and “got hooked on running.”

Priegnitz started racing, dropping his times, and eventually started running marathons. But it wasn’t until 2015 that he began his first streak. Running at least three miles every day, Priegnitz got his run in for 429 straight days through the spring of 2016, before a car accident left him with small fractures in his neck.

“They wouldn’t let me run for four weeks,” Priegnitz lamented. That October saw the start of a new streak for Priegnitz, now 60. He passed his earlier benchmark of 429 days, and has kept the streak alive into this summer.

As he took stock of the streak, Priegnitz realized that the 1,000th day would fall on July 4, 2019. “I wanted to do something special,” he said. “There are a few Fourth of July races around, but nothing as big as the Peachtree.” And then there’s a chance for him to visit his new grandbaby – his first – in Kennesaw.

So as he takes his first steps off the starting line on July 4, Priegnitz will be marking a couple milestones of his own.

- Marcus Budline

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON 50: HOLDING OFF ON CELEBRATION ...

With the chance to be part of the 50th Running festivities, Rachel Gervin is even more interested than usual in running the Peachtree this year. But ask her about her own 50th birthday – which will come later this year, on Dec. 30 – and the Decatur attorney will tell you, matter-of-factly, that there will be no party.

“I’m gonna wait and celebrate my 51st birthday instead,” she said. “I haven’t told that many people that. But both my mom and my brother had really big 50th birthday parties, and then they didn’t live to see 51. So, I’m going to approach my 50th birthday like any other day, I think.”

Gervin has run the Peachtree three times, each with her best friend, Fontina Rashid; but this year she plans to go it alone while thinking about her mother, Larmon Buckner (who died at age 50 in 1995, after a battle with scleroderma, an autoimmune rheumatic disease) and her older brother, Robert Buckner (who died at age 50 of a heart attack in 2015).

And though this particular jaunt might be tinged with sadness, Gervin said there is still reason to celebrate: the freedom her good health gives her to run races like this.

“I used to think of 50 as being kind of old, but now that I’m 49 ½ , I think of it as quite young – and I have so many more things I want to do. So while the turning 50 haunts me ... it definitely also motivates me.”

- Théoden Janes

... AND THROWING HER OWN PEACHTREE PARTY

When Carol Rickaby turned 50 on June 24, her schedule was just too hectic for a big get-together.

Instead, encouraged by her children, the Peachtree Corners resident has invited a group of about 30 friends and family members to either run Peachtree or spectate – including her parents, veterans of the event who in their late 70s will be pinning bibs onto their shirts for the first time in more than a decade.

“I just think it’s neat that the race and I are turning 50 at the same time,” says Rickaby, who has run Peachtree five times since college. “It’s me throwing my own party into the biggest party for Atlanta in the summer, for sure.”

- Théoden Janes
“Tim did it all. Tim was the heart and soul of the Atlanta Track Club, and the Atlanta Track Club was Tim Singleton.”

– HAWTHORNE WESLEY

TIM SINGLETON:
THE MAN WITH THE VISION

By Terry Banker and Jack McFarland

Picture this: It’s the late 1960s, and you see a guy running down the street. He’s wearing cut-off football pants over his muscular legs, a sleeveless shirt and a train conductor’s hat. If it’s cold, he’s wearing garden gloves. If he sees you running, he comes over and introduces himself.

“He was a runner with a happy vibe, and people wanted to be around him,” Tim Singleton, Jr., said of his father.

Enough so that he persuaded about 150 of them to come out on a hot July 4 morning in 1970 to run the first Peachtree Road Race. Just 67 minutes and 15 seconds later, the last of the 110 finishers crossed the line, putting themselves and race founder Tim Singleton into the history books.

Born in Atlanta on December 22, 1936, Timothy Moore Singleton grew up in a competitive family, thanks partly to his older brother, Gary Jr., but mostly to his father, an aggressive “AAA” baseball player. Tim started running at the age of 5, and by junior high he outpaced his competition. He played summer baseball and worked in a cotton mill in South Carolina, where they took him off the line to play baseball for the mill team. It was during these formative years that Tim began to gravitate toward mentors and leaders, the educated and the inspirational. The lessons he learned would guide him for the rest of his life.

At Druid Hills High School, Tim grew into the athlete all boys wished they could be. At 5 feet, 11 inches and 175 pounds, he excelled in four sports. In football he was a halfback/tailback; in basketball, his “sticky” defense helped the team in back-to-back state championships; in baseball, he led the team in batting; and in track, he captained the team under legendary coach George Muse, who became Tim’s mentor and taught him discipline and precision by knocking bottle caps off hurdles with his shorts as he sailed over them. Tim’s dedication to hard work earned him a state record in the 110-meter hurdles.

Sports, however, were not his only strength, and his high school resume would foreshadow his future. Tim performed in the drama club, sang in the school musical and in his church choir; he was elected class president, won the Librarian Award and the Atlanta Journal Cup for being the best all-around student in his senior class. Singleton attributed his scholastic success to his love of reading, a gift from his mother, Mary.

Once at Georgia Tech, Singleton played tailback for college football hall of famer Bobby Dodd; captained the track team; and in 1959 won the Southeastern AAU hurdle championship. While his first love was always football, knee injuries and concussions sidelined those pursuits. Later, while earning a master’s degree, he discovered a running routine he would follow for much of his life: 11 miles a day for five days a week with a long run on Saturday.

GSU recognized Singleton’s influence on others and promoted him to cross-country coach and Dean of Men.

During this time, Tim discovered that there were few organized races for runners after they left college. He joined the Atlanta Striders club and encouraged a merger with the
Metro Atlanta Track Coaches Association in the autumn of 1964. Thus did Singleton, along with Hawthorne Wesley, Buddy Fowlkes, John Dunkleberg, Eddie Clack, Ken Winn and Bill Duckworth, form Atlanta Track Club, a place for runners of all abilities to connect and continue racing.

In July 1967, Singleton became Atlanta Track Club’s race director, a position he would hold until 1972 when he formed a race committee that he would chair until his departure in 1975. As a macro-manager, Tim was known to make assignments and then give the committee members autonomy. This led to additional successful races such as the Decatur-DeKalb 4-Miler and the annual Prediction Run. As the Peachtree Road Race became popular, Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell and other local leaders became convinced they could rely on the Club to help Atlanta discover its new identity as a running city.

As Singleton grew older, he realized he could no longer compete with younger runners. To compensate, he created new race categories. “Fountain of Youth” for runners over 30. “Clydesdale” for runners over 250 pounds. Every race Singleton designed was meant to challenge runners of all ages and abilities and to encourage love of the sport. To him, the Peachtree Road Race was never about the number of participants, prizes or even the legendary T-shirt. To Singleton, all of the races he created were for the people who ran them.

In 2015, Atlanta Track Club named its large conference room the Singleton Room.

Singleton’s success at the University of Houston-Clear Lake led to his eventual homecoming as professor of business and Lee Anderson Chair of Business Management at North Georgia College in Dahlonega, Georgia, where he and his wife, Martha, retired. It was only then that Tim slowed down, though he continued to sing with his church choir.

“Before Tim left for Houston, he told us that no one person could achieve what all of us could achieve together, but we disagreed. Tim did it all. Tim was the heart and soul of the Atlanta Track Club, and the Atlanta Track Club was Tim Singleton.”

- Hawthorne Wesley, ATC founding father
BILL THORN: READY TO RUN FOR THE 50TH TIME, AND COUNTING

By Barbara Huebner

It's not even 5:30 a.m., but the buzz has started. As the MARTA train from College Park heads toward the start line, word is spreading quickly: the guy who runs every year is on here. The only one who’s never missed a race.

"People will come up randomly and say 'Great job!'" said Bill Thorn’s granddaughter, Kenzie Bayman, who has run the AJC Peachtree Road Race with him for the past 14 years or so.

It’s a milestone that finds no small degree of good fortune running alongside decades of health and fitness. Even the great Johnny Kelley, who completed the Boston Marathon 58 times from 1928-1992 and in 2000 was named “Runner of the Century” by Runner’s World magazine, missed a year.

Over the past half century, neither an ankle sprain, a heel gash nor prostate cancer has kept him home. “All I know,” said the 88-year-old from Tyrone, “is that none of this was ever planned from the beginning.”

On July 4, Thorn expects to cross the finish line for the 50th time – along with 16 family members, spanning four generations.

Growing up in Alabama when coal mining was a prime industry – with the air so full of soot that he recalls clumps the size of golf balls needing to be swept off the porch – Thorn worked for a bit in a steel mill, where he looked around and realized, “‘Boy, that could be you, right there the rest of your life.’ Those are the things that would drive you if you want to be driven.”

In 1954, the same year he graduated from college and married his wife, Patty, he moved to Atlanta for the start of what would be a 64-year coaching career. Thorn retired this spring from Landmark Christian School in Fairburn, where he led his boys’ and girl’s track-and-field and cross country teams to 38 Class A state championships since 1995 – including the boys’ title this year – and where the stadium of the school he co-founded already bears his name.

“When you talk to Bill about his Peachtree streak, his eyes light up,” said Rich Kenah, executive director of Atlanta Track Club and race director of the Peachtree. “His 49-year attendance record is clearly a source of pride for him. It seems so appropriate that one of the most accomplished coaches in state history is the one person who has had the mental focus, physical stamina and emotional commitment to find the Peachtree finish line each and every year.”

Despite playing a variety of sports in high school and college, Thorn didn’t become a runner until the late 1960s, when he picked up a new book by Dr. Kenneth Cooper titled “Aerobics.” At first he would run between the classes he was teaching Monday to Friday, but found it hard to restart after two days off so looked around for something on weekends.

Once he discovered road races, he quickly fell into a small-but-dedicated crowd that included Tim Singleton. One day, Singleton told him about this new Fourth of July race he was starting up.

Thorn’s sons, Bill Jr. and Terry, ran that first race with him. Bill Jr., 59 now, ran for the next few years as well, but as a teenager his interest turned elsewhere. He’s not surprised that his father’s never did.

“He has a way of doing things and does not change it unless he thinks it’s for the better,” said Bill Jr.

Has Thorn decided whether the landmark 50th Peachtree will be his last?

“Oh no, no,” he said. “I don’t know what I’ll be able to do [in the future]. The only time I’ll know is when I get to that point. I’m just trying to accomplish one thing at a time.”
Rarely a day went by in her 22 years as director that Julia Emmons didn’t think about the AJC Peachtree Road Race. As if taking a photo from 20,000 feet, she contemplated it as a whole; as if running alongside her mythical Dorothy and Frank, she considered it from the ground up. So passionately focused was she that in the weeks leading up to the Peachtree, you could be standing in her office and she wouldn’t even notice you were there.

More than a dozen years after retiring from the helm in 2006 as the longest-serving race director in the history of the Peachtree, Emmons – who usually spends July 4 at a family home in Vermont, the better to give her successors their own lane – will be back in the thick of things to celebrate the 50th Running. Now 77, Emmons plans to walk the race with Bill Thorn and some of the other Original 110s.

A year or two after moving to Atlanta in 1968, the running novice was persuaded to do her first Atlanta Track Club race, and never forgot the respect she was paid despite finishing last. Emmons joined the Club, and in 1972 would finish second in her Peachtree debut. She would go on to run 20 marathons, with a personal best time of 2:59:26.

By the mid-1980s, Emmons was on the Club’s Board of Directors when she stepped up to serve as interim executive director. After several other candidates reportedly rejected offers, the “interim” was dropped and the Emory University associate professor of library science and management became the first woman to lead the organization and, by extension, direct its signature race.

“Tim Singleton and dozens of other volunteers had the vision for Peachtree,” said Rich Kenah, the current executive director of Atlanta Track club and race director of the Peachtree, “but it was Julia who nurtured it from adolescence into adulthood and an event that reflects all of Atlanta.”

“It was the first time in my life that I had a job I absolutely adored,” said Emmons.

The daughter of a diplomat, Emmons lived all over the world as a child and had learned how to get along everywhere. So as race director she got out into the city and its diverse communities and constituencies. If she heard that someone was angry about something, she paid a visit to find out why and what she could do about it.

Still, she said recently, if she had to make an enemy to protect the race, she would do it.

“I was like a lioness protecting her cubs sometimes,” said the 5-foot, 2-inch, 98-pound force.

During Emmons’ tenure, the Peachtree grew from 25,000 participants to 55,000. The first leap, from 25,000 to 40,000, came in 1990 when race organizers realized they were turning away as many runners as they were accepting.

With the help of longtime friend and assistant Penny Kaiser, Emmons created imaginary characters – Dorothy and Frank – who helped her to envision the experience of a back-of-the-pack runner at the Peachtree. That visualization helped turn the Peachtree into an event beloved by everyone from elite runners to casual walkers.

“Julia is not a detail person at all,” said Kaiser. “Dorothy and Frank made her see the details because their experience IS the details. They were her model for every aspect of directing the race.”

In her way, Emmons WAS Dorothy, finishing last around that reservoir but being made to feel as if she belonged.

“She wanted to return that [feeling],” said Janet Monk, now the Club’s manager of special projects. “If you’re last, we’ll take as good care of you as the frontrunners.”
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Jeff Galloway’s father raised him to have a strong sense of responsibility. That’s why Galloway arrived early for the first Peachtree Road Race in 1970. He figured race director Tim Singleton could use some help. Galloway pulled into the Sears parking lot off Peachtree Street about 90 minutes before the 10 a.m. start.

But Singleton had everything under control, so Galloway sought out Joel Majors, who he had been coaching at Georgia Tech. They jogged a bit and conspired about how they would run the race.

The plan – to stick together for several miles – didn’t last long. Strong and fit from months of 70-mile training weeks after a stint in the Navy, Galloway cruised almost effortlessly to the front. He ran alone most of the way, winning in 32:21.6, with Majors 50 seconds back. But it wasn’t as easy as it looked. “The old course was tougher than today’s, and there was no shade, no breeze, no water stops, no sprinklers and no mile times,” Galloway said. “I struggled up the last hill. All I could think about was finding a way to cool off. Fortunately, there was a fountain at the Equitable building. I went right in, and had a great soak.”

Then he ran another six miles back to his car in the Sears parking lot, which wouldn’t have been difficult except for the huge trophy he unexpectedly received at the awards ceremony. Peachtree wasn’t Galloway’s first significant victory in Atlanta. He was just 18 in December 1963 when he won the inaugural Atlanta Marathon, on a tough 10-lap route around Chastain Park in 2:57:21. Not bad for a chubby, nonathletic kid who had only begun running four years earlier.

Two years after winning the 1970 Peachtree, Galloway made the U.S. Olympic team for the 1972 Munich Olympic Games at 10,000 meters.

In 1973, Galloway opened his first Phidippides running store in Atlanta. From 1975 through 1977, he served as a co-director of Peachtree, and succeeded in his task of enticing elite runners who would burnish the event’s reputation.

Sometime in the mid-1970s, Galloway had the “ah-ha” moment that helped change the culture and practice of running. Troubled by recurring injuries, he realized he could stay healthy and pain-free if he took walking breaks during his runs. Since then, he has promoted the Walk-Run-Walk method through 31 books, 53 worldwide Galloway Training Groups and a series of weekend clinics and camps.

His father became one of his most ardent followers. At 50, Elliott Galloway took stock of the extra 65 pounds he was carrying and decided to start running. He lasted the distance between two telephone poles, then had to quit. But he returned a day or two later, following his son’s prescription of slow, gradual adaptation. It worked. Elliott lost the weight and ran 50 marathons – including the 100th Boston Marathon, with Jeff by his side.

Elliott also ran 34 consecutive Peachtrees before dropping out of the race on July 4, 2008, at age 87. He went home, napped, and decided to complete the distance in his neighborhood. He tripped, fell hard and suffered a brain hemorrhage that led to his death. “Whether encouraging others or solving problems, my dad inspired me to never give up and to always help others,” Jeff wrote in a moving memorial essay. “I want to be like him, when I grow up.”

Now 73, Galloway is still running – or, rather, walk-run-walking – strong. Most mornings, he goes out for 40 to 60 minutes. He also completes 10 to 12 marathons a year at a comfortable 5:00 to 5:40. At the 50th Peachtree, Jeff and his wife, Barbara, will run together, letting their two sons (and their wives) set a faster pace, then head over to the Phidippides store at Ansley Mall to lead a celebration for the Atlanta running community.
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LEGENDS OF PEACHTREE

GAYLE BARRON: “IF YOU’RE DOING IT, SO AM I”

By Amby Burfoot

In a time not long ago, Southern girls were raised according to a strict code. It dictated that they should ooze charm, dress nice, smile prettily and make everyone else feel important and comfortable while standing quietly in the background. A Southern girl’s world was small, constrained. She didn’t set high goals, she didn’t aim for the spotlight and she certainly didn’t sweat.

Gayle Barron grew up in this time, learned the code and absorbed its most important lessons. Yet somehow – and who can say exactly how or why – she also broke free.

Barron, an Atlanta native, won the first Peachtree Road Race in 1970, and then four of the next five. She never stopped smiling or putting ribbons in her hair, a Southern girl to the core. Yet, she also showed that you could break free from the past and its restrictive code to become an athlete, inspiration, leader and woman of the world.

While attending the University of Georgia, Barron saw – and joined – a guy she saw running the stadium stairs. They eventually married. One morning over breakfast, Ben Barron told Gayle, then 25, that he was reading a story in the newspaper about the new race in town – something called the Peachtree 10K. “I think I’ll run it,” he said casually.

“That’s ridiculous,” Gayle responded. “You can’t run six miles.”

“I think I can,” Ben said. “I’ll just slow down and take it easy.”

“Well, if you’re doing it, so am I,” said Gayle, scarcely believing the words that tumbled out of her mouth.

It was the first road race for both of them. Gayle passed the 3-mile mark, entering unknown territory, as the temperature kept climbing. “I didn’t feel so good,” she said. “I told Ben I wasn’t sure I could finish. He told me to calm down, to keep running slow and to walk if I needed.”

And that’s how they got to the finish, with Gayle placing 62nd overall, making her, for all time, the first woman winner of the Peachtree Road Race. Barron received her trophy from Tim Singleton, the race organizer. Striding atop the wood base was the metallic running figure of a man.

This didn’t happen by chance. With regular encouragement from Singleton, who became a mentor and coach, Barron agreed to join his small (and previously all-male) training group. After a while, Singleton told Barron that she was a natural marathoner, and should focus on the 26.2-mile distance. She would go on to win the 1978 Boston Marathon.

After her competitive career, Barron coached thousands of Atlanta-area runners through various nonprofits, including her own Team Spirit, which raised funds for the Aflac Cancer Center. She was inducted into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in 2003 and the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame in 2007.

Now 73, she lives in Hoschton, about 50 miles northeast of Atlanta, and works out on a Max Trainer and Pilates machine whenever possible. She remembers Peachtree as “my big hometown race and always very important to me. Plus it was a great place to see old friends.”

And her legacy? “I don’t pat myself on the back much,” said Barron. “I’m so impressed by today’s women runners and happy for any role I might have played to inspire them. Mostly, I’m proud that I didn’t let others get to me and discourage me.”
HAWTHORNE WESLEY

Nearly 55 years after the first meeting of Atlanta Track Club, on November 4, 1964, Hawthorne Wesley is still actively involved with the Club – the only one of the 25 or so people at the historic gathering who can claim that distinction.

Back in the early 1960s, Wesley said, the Metro Atlanta Track Coaches Association and the Atlanta Striders had a joint feud with the governing – and often authoritarian – Amateur Athletic Union over money generated by a track meet organized by the local running organizations. “So we got mad,” said Wesley, a member of the Striders, “and the two groups got together and we formed the Atlanta Track Club.”

Wesley was a member of the first Board of Directors, serving as chairman of the awards committee, and stayed on the board until 1985, serving as president in 1968. He also edited Wingfoot Magazine.

When Tim Singleton founded the AJC Peachtree Road Race in 1970, Wesley joined on as the finish line timer, a job he would fill until 2014. In the early days, timing was a primitive science. Wesley recalled that a Delta employee would open the airline’s ticketing center, which was then located at the starting line, so that a Peachtree volunteer could use the phone inside to call a pay phone at the finish. When the starting gun fired, the volunteer would tell the person standing 6.2 miles away at the pay phone to start the clock. At the same time, Wesley would take off in a car with his stopwatch running. He’d be standing there at the finish line by the time runners arrived to shout out their official finishing times.

Even as technology progressed, Wesley continued to hop in a car and speed down the course to get to the finish line with his stopwatch, necessary for any official records. He clicked “stop” when Joseph Kimani ran 27:04 to set the Peachtree course record in 1996. He clicked “stop” when Lornah Kiplagat set the women’s course record of 30:32 in 2002.

In perhaps his most-lasting legacy, Wesley took charge of Atlanta Track Club’s ceremony to honor high school athletes in 1964 and held that role for 50 years, officially retiring in 2014 but still in the front row every year at the Club’s All-Metro banquet.

– Jay Holder

GRETE WAITZ

When Grete Waitz made her AJC Peachtree Road Race debut in 1983, she had already won the New York City Marathon four times. She would end her career with an unfathomable nine victories there, and it is the race with which her name is entwined despite being a five-time World Cross Country Champion and multiple world record-holder on the track. Just as the race changed her life – she had been about to retire when she was first lured to New York in 1978 – she changed the sport, helping reset the standard for how women were perceived as competitors.

“Grete was an incredibly gentle person,” said Bob Varsha, who directed the Peachtree that year. “But she was fierce in combat.”

Waitz would become a four-time Peachtree winner, but considering how the first race started it’s a little surprising that the Norwegian national hero ever came back at all. According to a recap in “25 Years of the Peachtree Road Race,” Waitz had to be yanked to her feet after being knocked down in the crush of men. “I almost stopped,” she said afterward. “I about started to cry.” Instead, she caught up to the other women a mile or so later, and made her move on the hills to a course-record 32:02 victory.

In 1984, Waitz was busy winning a silver medal in the first women’s Olympic Marathon, but she returned to Peachtree in 1985 to win in the identical time of 32:02. The next year, she competed with an injured hamstring so painful that she ran the last quarter mile with her eyes closed; it was her closest Peachtree win – by just eight seconds, in 32:12 – but a win nonetheless. In 1988, she ran and won her last Peachtree, in 32:10. Four appearances, four victories, many hearts.

“She was immensely popular here,” according to Julia Emmons, longtime race director.

In 1991, Waitz was named female runner of the quarter century by Runner’s World magazine.

After being diagnosed with cancer in 2005, Waitz launched AKTIV Against Cancer after discovering how much better she felt during her treatment when she exercised. Since its founding, the nonprofit organization has donated over $14 million to make physical activity part of cancer treatment.

Waitz died in April 2011.

– Barbara Huebner
In the summer of 1978, Craig Virgin was plying his trade – 5000 and 10,000 meters on the track – on the European circuit. The day after a seventh-place effort in Stockholm, he picked up a copy of the International Herald Tribune and was stunned by a headline news story. It chronicled a July 4 race in Atlanta the day before, won by fellow U.S. trackster Mike Roche. The story claimed that the 10K had attracted more than 12,000 participants. Virgin was amazed: he hadn't realized the size of the running boom taking hold across America. But he was always looking to show his stuff on the grandest, most important stages. That's what brought him to Atlanta the following July 4 for the 1979 Peachtree. Roche, the defending champion, returned as well, and the two dueled over the first 5K, swapping the lead several times. Coming off Cardiac Hill, Virgin accelerated on the downhill and grabbed the front position for good. He leapt across the finish line in Piedmont Park, making a “V for victory” sign, in 28:30.5, a course record. The photo was so electrifying that adidas used it in advertising campaigns for more than a year.

“Man, you've got a 3:52 miler right behind you. What are you going to do?”, Virgin recalls thinking. “I'm not sure I can maintain the pace today.”

Virgin won Peachtree again in 1980, and returned in 1981 seeking a three-peat. From the moment he walked out of his hotel that morning, he knew it would be a special day. Years later, he'd refer to a “perfect storm” of conditions: Excellent weather; a fast, deep field; someone (Ric Rojas) who took the pace out hard; and the extra excitement of competing in an event televised nationally by Turner Broadcasting Systems.

The early pace was fast: they went through the mile in 4:21. The tempo barely slowed in the second mile, a 4:22, as Adrian Leek took the point position from Rojas. “Man, this is different,” Virgin remembers thinking. “I'm not sure I can maintain the pace today.”

Just past Mile 4, Virgin surged to the front. It was time to give it everything he had. Only problem: Rod Dixon was doing the same. Virgin recalls thinking, “Man, you’ve got a 3:52 miler behind you. What are you going to do?”

Once inside Piedmont Park, Virgin accelerated at every curve in the road. He knew Dixon would briefly lose sight of him on the twists and turns, making each a perfect opportunity to open a gap.

The strategy worked. Virgin opened up a seven-second advantage on Dixon, breaking the tape in 28:04, a course record and still the fastest time ever run by an American man here. Leek placed third in 28:24, also under the prior record. “It was a historic, epic race in American and Peachtree race history,” said Virgin.

— Amby Burfoot

In early 1996, Joseph Kimani looked like a good bet to make the Kenyan Olympic team. But midway through the Kenyan Trials 10,000-meter race, he developed a side stitch and faded to sixth. So long, Atlanta? Not by a long shot.

Instead, Kimani made an earlier trip, for the July 4 AJC Peachtree Road Race. “I wouldn't say he was angry or seeking redemption,” remembers his manager, Tom Ratcliffe. “He was a quiet, unassuming guy. But he got it in his mind that he wouldn't be denied at Peachtree, and might even go for a new record.”

He exceeded his own and everyone else's expectations, winning in what remains the fastest time ever on American soil. Kimani broke the tape in 27:04, an incredible 52 seconds under the previous course record and, up to that point, the fastest 10K ever run in the world.

“It will stand for years,” John Curtin, then the elite athlete coordinator, accurately predicted. More than two decades later, no one has bettered Kimani’s time, and the second-fastest Peachtree performer (Sammy Kitwara, 27:22, 2009) stands a full 18 seconds behind him. Kimani also won the 1997 Peachtree, in 27:43 – still the fifth-fastest win at Peachtree.

Good weather helped all the runners in 1996, with Simon Rono finishing second in 27:48. But it took more than relatively cool, dry conditions to power Kimani’s run. It took talent and guts. Kimani ran the last 5 miles alone, after Rono took a spill. “He fell down, so I decided to go,” Kimani said post-race. He covered the second, third and fourth miles at 4:14 pace.

Waiting at the finish line, Ratcliffe listened in awe to the splits. But he wasn't shocked. “Joseph's greatest strength was his ability, his mentality, to go to the front,” Ratcliffe noted. “That's where he always wanted to be.” After breaking the tape, Kimani commented briefly to the press: “The weather was very good today, and the course was very flat.”

Apparently when you reach a certain speed, the hills just disappear. But Kimani’s otherworldly performances remain. He also still has the event record for the Boilermaker 15K and owns the second-fastest time ever recorded on the super-competitive New Balance Falmouth Road Race 7-mile race course. He notched that time five weeks after his stellar Peachtree.

“If you take a look at non-marathon success over the history of U.S. road races, Kimani is unequaled,” said Ratcliffe. “He’s number 1 on the list.”

Tragically, Kimani died of pneumonia in Kenya in 2012, at the age of 40.

— Amby Burfoot
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LORNHAH KIPLAGAT

On July 4, 2000, the Lornah Kiplagat Era began. “I remember that it was in Atlanta that I saw fireworks for the first time in my life,” Kiplagat wrote in an email recently, and at the first Peachtree of the new millennium she set off a few of her own in what was almost certainly the most-decorated women’s field ever assembled in Atlanta outside of the 1996 Olympics.

Four miles into the race, she was so far ahead that she considered slowing down to make the race more of a contest. Instead, she hurled on to set the event record in 30:52, more than 45 seconds ahead of second place – which went to none other than Derartu Tulu, the 1992 Olympic gold medalist at 10,000 meters. Among the other women Kiplagat vanquished that day were Catherine Ndereba, who would go on to win two Olympic silver medals and four Boston Marathons, and Fatuma Roba, the 1996 Olympic gold medalist and three-time Boston winner.

Kiplagat would win easily in 2001, too, before a 2002 three-peat saw her run with the lead men for the first mile on her way to breaking that event record by 20 seconds with a win in 30:32, a mark that still stands. “This was the perfect one,” she said afterward, evaluating her race.

In 2003, Lornah was derailed in her quest to become the first runner in the open division, male or female, to win four in a row by Susan Chepkemei. After missing the 2004 Peachtree to compete at 10,000 meters in her first Olympics – her only absence in a 10-year span from 1997-2006 – Lornah returned to win again in 2005 and 2006.

“Peachtree is a monument … something you have to run, and once you run you will always want to come back,” she said. “There was always a ‘family’ feeling.”

Although 2006 was Kiplagat’s final Peachtree, the next year she won the World Cross Country Championships and set a world record in the half marathon – before competing in two more Olympics.

After marrying Pieter Langerhorst, Lornah in 2003 became a citizen of the Netherlands, but a big piece of her heart remains in Kenya. She and Langerhorst founded and still manage the High Altitude Training Centre in Iten, launched to help young Kenyan women but since expanded to serve runners of all abilities.

Asked what she considers her greatest contribution to the sport, she said: “That it is now normal for women to run in Kenya. I am proud I was part of this and I am still fighting for equal rights.”

– Barbara Huebner

TATYANA McFADDEN

When Tatyana McFadden returns to the AJC Peachtree Road Race this year, she will be looking to add to her legacy: Her seventh victory in 2017 gives her the most wins for any elite athlete in the 49-year history of the race, breaking a tie with the legendary Craig Blanchette.

And, after seven months of racing in the equivalent of running shoes that are the wrong size, the 17-time Paralympic medalist is looking to just get back to normal.

Making history is nothing new to McFadden. In 2013, she became the first athlete to win the Grand Slam of London, Boston, Chicago and New York marathons in the same calendar year – before going on to do so the next three years, as well. Then just weeks after that seventh Peachtree win, she made still more by becoming the first athlete in history to win four gold medals at the World Para Athletics Championships, where she took gold at 200, 400, 800 and 1500 meters.

Facing down adversity is nothing new, either: Her 2017 summer was all the more remarkable in that she had missed most of the early season after career-threatening blood clots required several surgeries.

In April 2018, McFadden rounded out her comeback by winning the Boston Marathon for the fifth time, overcoming lashing rain and wind for her 23rd World Marathon Majors (WMM) victory.

Then, the fall of 2018 brought a new challenge: Two days before McFadden was set to compete in the BMW Berlin Marathon in September, her custom racing chair broke. Racing the next six WMM races in borrowed chairs, she has finished ninth, eighth and – remarkably – second four times, including a runner-up finish in Boston this year despite flipping on wet train tracks around Mile 6.

But McFadden will finally be back in her own, new ride for the Peachtree, after taking it for a successful spin at 5000 meters on the track at the Grand Prix Notwill in Switzerland in late May, not only winning gold but setting an American record.

“We love coming to Peachtree,” McFadden has often said, and the Peachtree loves her back. In her eight appearances here since 2010, she has won all but one – finishing second last year to training partner Susannah Scaroni.

“Peachtree was one of the races that really pushed the envelope on inclusion,” said Becky Washburn, manager of the Shepherd Center’s wellness program and elite athlete coordinator of the wheelchair race. “And Tatyana has been able to get that message out. She’s always been very supportive of Peachtree and what it means as far as equality in the sport. I’ll always appreciate her commitment.”

– Barbara Huebner
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Maria Birdseye

Records show that more than 27,000 women finished the AJC Peachtree Road Race in 2018. At the inaugural running in 1970, there were three – only one of whom plans to run the 50th.

“May husband and I were driving, and the radio came on and said there would be a road race to celebrate the Fourth,” Maria Birdseye recalled. “He was a runner, a quarter-miler who was fast, and he said, ‘We could try that.’ But I had never run six miles. I didn’t have a sense of how far that was.”

It was twice as far she’d ever run before. In the race, she was in front of Lew as they neared the finish. “He said, ‘Wait a minute,’ and raced past me,” Birdseye said. “He didn’t want to be beaten by a woman.” Maria finished 88th overall – ahead of 22 men.

They’ve been divorced for more than 30 years, but Lew will come from Oregon to run this Peachtree. Five years ago, the two walked the race together.

Birdseye, 76, estimates that she has done about 25 of the 49 Peachtrees. And on March 26 of this year, she celebrated a 41-year streak of running or walking at least one mile a day, and often more.

“Initially, it was a ruse to get my husband to watch the kids, just to have a little time to myself,” Birdseye said.

The streak has survived at least half a dozen addresses in metro Atlanta, Birdseye’s career as an award-winning middle school science teacher, trips to far-off places. It kept going through strep throat and one occasion when Birdseye ran with sweats pulled over flannel pajamas. “Too lazy to get dressed,” she explained.

It nearly ended in 1983, on the day the son of a close friend died; she remembered the streak at about 10 that night and went out to run, crying the whole way.

The streak has also survived Parkinson’s disease, with which she was diagnosed nearly 10 years ago. In fact, Birdseye’s regular walking routine in her Decatur neighborhood has helped her manage the illness, according to Kirstin Darby, one of her two daughters.

“All the doctors say exercise is the best thing you can do [for Parkinson’s],” said Darby. “And they say she’s in great shape.”

The streak also includes participation in the Olympic torch relay in 1996, when Atlanta hosted the Summer Games.

Birdseye has held on to her four trophies from the Peachtree, for third place (1970), second (1971), fourth (1972) and fifth (1974). They are visually unremarkable, but priceless keepsakes nonetheless from an event she reveres like no other.

– Doug Carroll

Bob Varsha

It’s not an overstatement to say that the AJC Peachtree Road Race changed Bob Varsha’s life. He can trace his successful broadcasting career, longevity as an Atlanta resident, circle of friends, even his 35-year marriage back to the race.

Varsha was the first paid employee of Atlanta Track Club, hired by the volunteer Board of Directors in 1978 to be race director of the Peachtree. Now 68, he came to Atlanta in 1973 to attend law school at Emory University; after a standout running career at Dartmouth College, he was prepared to focus on the law. Then Varsha discovered Atlanta Track Club and its training partners. He finished 11th in the 1974 Peachtree and 6th in 1975. In 1976, Varsha finished 6th in the 1976 Olympic Team Trials – Marathon in 2:15:50.

Citing the 1,159 starters in the 1975 Peachtree, Varsha decided it was “no fun being in a crowd like that” and began to volunteer instead. The Club, as Varsha puts it, was “still just a cardboard box with a checkbook and a bunch of cones in the back of somebody’s car.” One year he tore up shopping bags at the start line to use as race numbers for the larger-than-expected crowd. He recalled that in 1977, after the race drew 6,500 runners instead of the 2,350 the year before, “we knew we needed to get organized.”

Varsha was chosen to lead the charge for the 1979 race, figuring that he could direct it while training for the 1980 Olympic Trials. The Club established its first office, and Varsha hired two secretaries to help give shape to what he called the “amorphous mass” that was the Peachtree, putting together the puzzle pieces provided by the many expert volunteers.

Varsha was still a good runner, but his elite days were over. He did not, as it turns out, have time to train for the 1980 Trials. He thought his race directing days were over, too: Varsha left the Club in 1980 to go back to the law.

But in 1981 the Peachtree came calling again, when Atlanta-based TBS, planning a national broadcast, asked Varsha to be in the announcing booth – despite having no TV experience. Weeks later, the network asked him to audition for a part-time news and sports job, and he soon became a full-time sportscaster. Varsha is best known as a motorsports broadcaster, which he still is today.

When his successor resigned in February of 1983, Varsha was brought in to pinch hit, and he still volunteers. The Long Island transplant still lives in the same Atlanta neighborhood where he landed in 1973, and married a woman he met through two guys down the hall from that first office. All because of the Peachtree.

– Jay Holder
Jeremy Maddox sat outside the Shepherd Center on July 4, 1998, not quite sure of what he was about to see. “All of a sudden” he recalled, “you feel this energy start to build.” Sirens broke the early-morning quiet. Cheers went up in the unseen distance. Then came “an amazing show. You see these racers who are absolutely flying up this hill, like it’s not even there.”

The hill was Cardiac. The event was the AJC Peachtree Road Race. The racers were leading the Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division.

And Maddox, just 16 years old and newly paralyzed from the waist down after a motocross accident, saw his future. As the athletes – maybe 14-time Paralympic gold medalist Franz Nietlispach, who won that year, or Krige Schabort, a six-time Paralympian who finished second – climbed that hill just past halfway into the race, Maddox thought: “Man, I want to do that.”

The Shepherd Center was founded in 1975 after another young man’s life was upended. Two years earlier, James Shepherd, then 22, was slammed to the ocean floor while bodysurfing off a beach in Rio de Janeiro, leaving him paralyzed from the neck down.

After five weeks in a Brazilian hospital, he was flown back home to an Atlanta hospital, his survival still in doubt. When his family learned of a rehabilitation facility in Colorado, his father flew out to visit and the decision was made: James would transfer.

“It was like you flipped a light switch: It was night and day,” recalled his father, Harold, in a Shepherd Center video. Six months later, James – with the aid of a crutch and leg brace – walked out of the facility.

After returning to Atlanta, Harold and his wife, Alana, dedicated themselves to launching a rehab center closer to home. Starting with six beds in an Atlanta hospital in August 1975, Shepherd Center opened its own facility in 1982 and is now among the most renowned in the world.

In addition to its 152 beds and dozens of other programs, Shepherd Center sponsors 11 sports teams, the largest such program in North America. Among them is the Shepherd Spinners, now coached by Schabort. Most of the 16 athletes in the Spinners are expected to compete in the 2019 Peachtree.

When Schabort, now 55, moved to the Atlanta area from his native South Africa in 1997, he began training with the Spinners. He has 11 Top 3 Peachtree finishes since 1998, including five victories. Last year, he won the masters division.

“I always try to spot someone I know – not really see, but listen for someone cheering,” said Schabort, of passing the Shepherd Center crowd, which can number 150-200 and hands sweatbands out to runners. “But very seldom do I hear my name because the crowd is so loud. It’s thrilling to go up there. It’s the hardest part of the race, but almost the most rewarding. There are people in hospital beds. It’s amazing what they do to get guys out there to see what’s possible.”

The amazement goes both ways. “You think you’re having difficulty getting up the hill,” said Jamie Shepherd, COO of the Shepherd Center and grandson of Harold. “Then you see the patients and know the battle they face on a daily basis, and you get up that hill pretty easily.”

Wheelchair athletes began competing in the Peachtree in 1978, as part of the overall field of runners – a photo in “25 Years of the Peachtree Road Race” near the start of the race shows pioneer Bob Hall, in what appears to be a standard everyday chair, carving out a spot for himself along the right-hand side of the road amid an incoming tide of runners.
Because of the perceived safety hazard, wheelchairs were banned in 1980 and 1981. "In a nutshell, they’re afraid we might be in the way," said wheelchair athlete and former Shepherd patient Terry Lee at the time.

"We were as worried as the track club was," recalled James Shepherd, now chairman of the Board of Directors, who said that even though Shepherd wasn’t officially involved at the time, “we wanted to help figure out how we could make it a safe venture.”

An agreement was reached, and in 1982 the race again accepted wheelchairs – and gave them their own start. That first year, the Georgia Wheelchair Association sponsored a field of 11 athletes. The legendary George Murray won in 27:38; there were no women entrants. The next year, Candace Cable Brooks became the first female winner, in 31:34.

In 1984, the Shepherd Center took over sponsorship. Since then, Murray and Brooks have been joined in the record books by nearly all of the top wheelchair athletes in the world, among them 10-time Boston Marathon winner Ernst van Dyk (the 2010 Peachtree winner) of South Africa; 13-time Paralympic medalist Kurt Fearnley (a three-time Peachtree winner) of Australia; eight-time Boston Marathon winner Jean Driscoll (five-time Peachtree winner); eight-time Paralympic medalist Edith Hunkeler (four-time Peachtree winner and course record holder) of Switzerland; and Tatyana McFadden, 17-time Paralympic medalist and the winningest athlete in any division in Peachtree history, with seven victories.

Last year, the Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division was won by Americans Daniel Romanchuk, who defended his title with a time of 18:40, and Susannah Scaroni in 22:50. Each won $5,000, part of a $42,000 total prize purse.

Unlike many champions, Scaroni has been competing in the Peachtree for more than half her life – now 28, she first raced here when she was just 11.

"Peachtree is such an iconic race for people in wheelchairs, because there’s so much support and especially because of Shepherd," said the two-time Paralympian, who grew up near Spokane, Washington. "As a kid, I was fortunate enough to be in a junior sports team program where my coach understood the importance of us getting exposure to pro wheelchair racers."

Paralyzed at the age of 5 after a car accident, Scaroni said she finds it especially meaningful to share a post-race brunch with patients at Shepherd after the awards ceremony.

“I went through rehab as well,” she said. “To see someone else excelling at life, doing something they love … I love to be able to share that. A lot of the reasons I’m an adult wheelchair racer is because of Peachtree.”

Last year, Peachtree featured seven divisions for wheelchair athletes: open men and women, masters, grandmasters, open quads, T1 quads (a classification for athletes with less upper-arm strength), push assist and juniors, with a total of 50 athletes competing the race. The field may be the largest in the country for a non-marathon.

“It’s so important for our patients to see this, to see the possibilities, and then take this back to their own communities,” said Becky Washburn, manager of Shepherd’s wellness program and its wheelchair race coordinator.

Jeremy Maddox not only saw the possibilities, he lived them. Six years after witnessing that first post-accident race from the sidewalk in front of Shepherd, Maddox competed in the Peachtree for the first time. One sport led to another, and in 2013 he was part of a 12-person U.S. team that won a gold medal in the World Disabled Waterski Championships.

Maddox has raced the Peachtree 10 times or so over the years, and plans to make the trip from his home in Rawton, near Athens, to do so again this year.

He’s still on the Shepherd Spinners team, and hoping for a Top 10 finish.
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For more than 30 years, Atlanta Track Club and the Piedmont Park Conservancy have been involved in a challenging quest to answer a confounding question: How can tens of thousands of people finish a race within a few hours of each other, get their post-race refreshments and then enjoy the park but not destroy it at the same time?

The answer has been an evolving formula of preparation, consideration and logistics.

Since 1978 the AJC Peachtree Road Race has finished in or around the park, and as the race has grown so have the operations required to manage it. At first, the Peachtree wound its way through the 14th Street gate and finished near the bathhouse. Runners would filter around the corner of the lake to chutes parallel to 10th Street and make one more ascent to get to the top of Oak Hill for the post-race celebration.

But after 20 years, the race grew too big. With 55,000 participants in 1998, the Club was forced to transition the post-race gathering into The Meadow.

That day served as a crucial tipping point: Seeing the additional space and relative ease with which the participants fit into The Meadow, then-executive director Julia Emmons moved the finish to 10th Street a year later.

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And that's where it's been ever since with one notable exception 11 years ago when, due to the drought conditions in 2008, Piedmont Park was unavailable and the entire finish operation – drinks, medical facilities and T-shirts – sprawled down Juniper Street.

Because of the unique relationship between the Peachtree and the park, Atlanta Track Club and the Piedmont Park Conservancy work together closely. For president and CEO Mark Banta, the most important piece is making sure they can manage the crowd and ensure that the softscape of the park is not damaged.

Additionally, Banta and the Conservancy make sure the grass is cut and properly irrigated just before the race and that the park is looking its greenest and fullest. The biggest concern, of course, is completely out of everyone's control: the weather.

“The techniques we use are very much dependent on the situation Mother Nature puts us in,” Banta said. For example, if the grounds become muddier, the park offsets that by increasing internal soil percolation rate and using protective flooring.

Perhaps counterintuitively, it's not rain but rather a serious lack of it that causes the most damage to the roots of the grass when it's stepped on and increases the aeration challenge afterward (hence making the park off-limits to the race in the drought year of 2008). The muddy year of 2015 was in fact the least damaging to the park, because all of the mud that was created actually worked to churn and aerate the grass.

Immediately after the race each year, the park makes a concerted effort to aerate and re-sod any area of The Meadow that suffers damage. Atlanta Track Club covers the costs, which typically range from $7,000 to $10,000. The park recovers in just a few weeks.

The relationship created by managing the Peachtree has also extended to a commitment from both the Conservancy and Atlanta Track Club to bolster each other's efforts and create a more-active Atlanta excited to experience the beauty of Piedmont Park.

Over the years, donations from the Club have facilitated building the Active Oval and adding drinking fountains throughout the park.
It’s the morning of the 2018 Anthem Peachtree Junior and Ray, wearing bib number 258, is preparing for his big race. First, he warms up in the Clif Wrapper Grab booth, then moves on to a miniature slackline. Next up is a lesson in how to toss a foam javelin before heading off to tackle – in his own unique way – the hurdles.

Ready for the main event, Ray lines up for the 50-meter dash and takes off, employing an arm motion more reminiscent of Michael Phelps than Usain Bolt. After crossing the finish line, he cools down on a playground slide.

“When I see Ray maneuver over, under and around the hurdles, I can’t help but smile,” said Rich Kenah, executive director of Atlanta Track Club, referring to the family YouTube video in which Ray stars. “I see a kid who will no doubt find ways to maneuver around any barrier that life throws in his way. It’s a great example of how I see Peachtree Junior as more than a kids’ race. It’s an introduction to the sport, but it’s also about kids and their parents learning that there are many creative ways to have fun through aerobic fitness. It’s one of my favorite events – the emotions the kids feel are so pure, so innocent.”

What quickly evolved into a celebration began three decades ago out of concern.

In 1985, Julia Emmons directed her first AJC Peachtree Road Race after taking the helm as executive director of Atlanta Track Club. Afterward, she received a letter from a woman who asked if she realized that many of the children running were in tears.

She hadn’t. The next year, she ran the race to investigate, and what she saw matched the letter. Small children were struggling in a sea of giant adults, who in turn had to dodge the little ones.

“Peachtree is to be a joyous event; it wasn’t for most of these kids,” wrote Emmons in the April 1987 issue of the Club’s Wingfoot magazine, in which she announced that the inaugural Peachtree Junior, a 3K for children 8-12 based on a similar kids’ race at the Bloomsday 12K in Spokane, Washington, would be held on May 30 of that year. (Concurrently, children under 10 would no longer be allowed to enter the Peachtree.)

Thus, 32 years ago, the kids got their own Peachtree, separate from the adults, where they would be center stage. At the 2019 Anthem Peachtree Junior – for which registration is open until June 30 – the children will move a step closer toward being part of the “grownup” Peachtree again, as the race moves to July 3 and ends at the same finish line as the next day’s AJC Peachtree Road Race.

“As we celebrate all things Peachtree in its 50th year, it seems only appropriate to give these kids the same finish line and T-shirt experience that the adults will enjoy the next day,” said Kenah.

The event will also be streamlined to a Mile (ages 6-14) and a Dash (ages 6 and under), in keeping with other Atlanta Track Club youth events. About 1,500 children are expected.

Back in that first year, 600 children took part in the 3K. After receiving their numbers, they assembled behind signs labeled with their ages. Organizers had expected the assembly process to take 20 minutes. It took two. “We had forgotten that kids are far better practiced at lining up than are adults,” Emmons wrote afterward.

By the second year, 1,200 kids took part. By 1995, about 2,500 youngsters – divided into age groups – were running the 1.86 miles. Schools were conducting training programs even before Kilometer Kids was launched in 2007.

Back then, and for most of the race’s history until recently, times were not kept and winners were neither announced nor recorded.
“We didn’t call it a race,” said Penny Kaiser, for many years the technical director. “We called it a run.”

Of course, not every kid was convinced. Jeff Glenn ran his first Peachtree Junior in the early 1990s.

“I always pictured it like a race that you could win,” recalled Glenn, now 33. “I’d start out at a dead sprint with the other kids who thought they would win, trying as long as I could to stay up front. I remember the nervous anticipation of waiting for the gun to go off.”

On July 4, young Jeff would help his mother at the Mile 4 water station, waiting for dad Gary to run past. When Jeff became old enough to run the Peachtree, mom lost her assistant. His father, now 64, still runs it every year, and Glenn does, too, when he’s in town.

Soon, Peachtree Junior may be enticing the next generation. “I have a 14-month-old now,” said Glenn. “Maybe when the time comes, we’ll get him to run.”

Honoring his personal motto of “run to win,” Meb accepted Atlanta Track Club’s invitation to run Peachtree that year in quest of a different sort of victory – raising money for Kilometer Kids by starting last and asking fans to support his charge to the front of the pack through donations.

The first wave of the Peachtree went off at 7:30 a.m. that year. The men Meb usually competed against – and often beat – were running down Peachtree while Meb was 21 start waves back, waiting. One hour and 45 minutes later, surrounded by cameras and a formation of runners assigned to clear traffic, Meb’s race would finally get underway.

When he began to pass the masses, the support crew sounded the alert. “Meb coming through! Meb on the left! Meb on the right!” As he ran, Meb gave high-fives and plenty of trademark thumbs-up, offering words of encouragement to the runners and walkers he passed and sometimes a playful “Tag! You’re it!” as he slapped them on the back.

Spectators screamed “Go Meb!” and “USA! USA!” The crowd on 10th Street went wild as Meb made his way toward the finish line. Arm-in-arm with his support crew, Meb crossed the line in 38:58. He had passed 22,870 people – surpassing the goal of 22,500 – and his efforts had raised more than $30,000 for Kilometer Kids.

Five years and hundreds of races and appearances later, Meb fondly remembers one of his more-unorthodox runs and says fans still mention it when they meet him. “It was just awesome to enjoy the sport in a different way and for a cause that creates a better society like Kilometer Kids,” he said recently. “I was honored to be asked to do it.”

By Jay Holder

Kids have their big day at the Anthem Peachtree Junior, but that doesn’t mean they’re forgotten on July 4.

Every year, the AJC Peachtree Road Race offers Kilometer Kids Charity Numbers to raise funds for Atlanta Track Club’s signature youth program, launched in 2007 by the Club as a free, game-oriented running program designed to get kids under the age of 14 active. Starting with one location serving 38 children, Kilometer Kids has grown to more than 100 programs, reaching 8,000 kids.

And from 2014-2017, a spotlight was put on the program through the Kilometer Kids Charity Chase, with a series of fund-raisers that included a 48-hour treadmill challenge, a military relay and a magical run by Meb Keflezighi in what was likely the most-meaningful midpack place finish in Peachtree history.

In 2014, the 2004 Olympic silver medalist became the first American man to win the Boston Marathon in 31 years.

John Prevost, a member of Atlanta Track Club who has been volunteering at Peachtree Junior for at least 15 years, can’t hide the delight in his voice as he describes the scene at his water stop.

“I just love to see the kids, how they enjoy each other,” said Prevost, also a longtime Peachtree runner. “It’s just a fun time watching kids be happy.”
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After the Peachtree Road Race lost its title sponsor 43 years ago, Jim Kennedy was approached by Atlanta Track Club for help in finding a new one.

Kennedy, then the assistant to the president of Cox Enterprises, Inc., and now chairman, made a few calls, according to the book “25 Years of the Peachtree Road Race.” His entreaties went nowhere.

Then the proverbial light bulb went off. “Why doesn’t the newspaper sponsor it?” he wondered. “It doesn’t cost much and it’s a neat little thing.”

So he went to the publisher to suggest getting involved. “I don’t like car races,” growled the publisher.

No, said Kennedy. It’s running. “It’ll be a good thing for the city,” he told him. “Running is coming on.”

Thus did the Atlanta Journal-Constitution become the title sponsor of the AJC Peachtree Road Race in 1976, a year in which the race had approximately 2,250 finishers. That figure was more than double the year before, offering a hint of what was to come. Last year, 54,473 participants crossed the finish line on 10th Street, making Peachtree the largest road race in the country and the largest 10K in the world.

“Jim got it,” said Jeff Galloway, winner of the inaugural Peachtree in 1970 who later helped recruit elite athletes to the race. “He got it instantly. He believed the race could grow, and he was able to mobilize the resources of the AJC to make that happen. It made this thing bigger than life.”

But the AJC’s involvement in the race goes far beyond Kennedy: About 1,300 Cox employees are expected to run Peachtree this year alone.

For decades, the AJC printed the Peachtree entry form in a Sunday edition of the paper. Lottery entry is now online via the AJC website, overseen by an employee who has run the race every year going back to 2003.

“I just gravitated to it,” said Matt Sabath, senior manager for platforms and projects, of running. “It makes you feel good and gives you a chance to think things through.”

Indeed, physical fitness was at the forefront of the AJC’s original decision to sponsor the race. Kennedy told author Karen Rosen that the newspaper liked that “the average person who runs two miles a day can run and feel he’s accomplished something. What we want to do is build it into something that is big and good.”

Asked recently what he would have said back in 1976 if he’d been told the Peachtree would one day host 60,000 participants as it celebrates the 50th Running, Kennedy said via email: “I would have told them they were crazy. Back then, we were just trying to keep the race alive. After a few years and seeing the momentum building, I knew it would be a success and with great organizers, promoters and the commitment of the people in Atlanta, it was.

“Every time I see a Peachtree T-shirt, I feel a great deal of pride. The event has become such an important part of the Atlanta summer and for people who want to stay fit. It makes me very happy to have played a small role in the survival of the race.”
Congratulations to Atlanta Track Club for 50 glorious and inspiring years of the AJC Peachtree Road Race!

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It was mid-May in 2004 when the call came in to Atlanta Track Club: “Line 2; it’s Baghdad.”

The year before, Lt. Col. Robert Quint had run the AJC Peachtree Road Race, and loved it. Now, he was deployed in Iraq. He had read in Stars and Stripes about a half marathon in Indianapolis that offered a Memorial Day version over in Bosnia, and figured that he could round up 100 runners in Baghdad to do a 10K. So he picked up the phone and pitched the idea to the Club’s executive director, Julia Emmons.

The Overseas Division of the AJC Peachtree Road Race was off and running. The Peachtree had nine start groups at the time; suddenly it had another: Time Group 10 – Baghdad Division. The Club sent 150 bibs and finisher’s T-shirts, 30 volunteer shirts and a finish-line banner to Camp Victory. Despite his early skepticism at finding a measuring wheel (“We are in the middle of a war zone and American soldiers are dying here every day … measuring wheels are hard to come by,” he wrote in an email), Quint actually managed to locate one to lay out an accurate course.

So at 9:30 p.m. on July 3 – 5:30 a.m. July 4 in Baghdad, where it is already 85 degrees – race founder Tim Singleton stood on the start line at Lenox Square and yelled “Go!” into his cell phone. At Camp Victory, on a landline phone, Quint heard the command and gave the signal. Almost 250 military personnel (the Club had to send more T-shirts) took off on a measured 10K loop around a lake on the grounds of a former palace of Saddam Hussein.

Afterward, everyone signed in finish banner, which Quint would present to the Club the following September.

The overseas races aren’t the Peachtree’s only connection to the military. Often over the past dozen years, the race start has been marked by a flyover out of Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Marietta. From 2015-2017, in partnership with United Military Care, the race hosted a Military Team Division, with a competition among military branches that was also part of the Kilometer Kids Charity Chase. Last year, the race offered specially designed race bibs to all active-duty and retired
HIGHTECH SIGNS congratulates ATLANTA TRACK CLUB members, staff and volunteers in achieving this amazing milestone.
On the same day the Baghdad runners made their way in the predawn darkness in 2004, a lone Georgia man followed his own 10K route in Kuwait.

In 1980, Maj. Gen. (Ret.) William Johnson ran his first AJC Peachtree Road Race, and – having never missed a year – he already had his 2004 race number when he deployed to Camp Arifjan that June. He took his race packet with him, and on July 4 ran 6.2 miles. His wife sent a photo to Atlanta Track Club, which credited him with his finish, sent him a T-shirt and asked if he would organize a race there the next year.

After the successful 2004 overseas debut in Iraq, involvement expanded. In January of 2005, Kuwait came on board thanks to then-Brig. Gen. William Johnson, a long-time Peachtree runner (see accompanying story), Col. Tom MacKenzie had emailed the Club from Kabul, Afghanistan, requesting help in launching an overseas edition there. When the three countries were totaled up, there were more than 2,000 participants. Egypt and Qatar have also hosted races over the years. Yearly participation grew to about 3,000 before the number of troops deployed began to decrease.

After the first race in Baghdad, Emmons told the AJC that the Club would support it as long as there were American troops in Iraq. “Of course,” she said, “we all fervently hope it is the one and only time we have to do it.”

It wasn’t: Iraq was the site of overseas races until 2011, and this will be the 16th year the Peachtree goes overseas: military personnel stationed in Afghanistan, Kuwait and at an undisclosed location will help celebrate the 50th Running of a race back home. About 1,500 runners are expected.

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He wasn’t surprised when 1,000 runners signed up: Fort McPherson in Atlanta was the home of Gen. George Patton’s Third Army, and many Atlantans – already familiar with and missing the Peachtree – were deployed with the Third

Army forward in Kuwait. “It was a great way to bring a piece of Atlanta to the soldiers,” he said. They named their version “Patton’s Own Peachtree Road Race.”

And there was at least one more demographic in its favor, as well.

“When you’re in the military, physical training is always a big part of a soldier’s life,” he recalled. “Everybody’s running. The problem was moving people from different camps, because of security. We were in a war zone.”

When asked about his favorite part of that Kuwait race, Johnson said, “Just being able to pull it off. It took a lot of convincing. There’s concern about the temperature, the distance (the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center organized regular 5Ks, but not 10Ks) and security. There was concern about bringing everyone together and becoming a big target. We weren’t sure if we could pull it off until the very last minute.”

There was another security concern, as well. Johnson warned his runners: “Do NOT send pictures of these T-shirts until after the race. The design is a big secret.”

In 2007, wearing his dress uniform, Johnson stood at the Buckhead start line at 10 p.m. on July 3 and declared “on your mark, get set, go” into his cell phone. The next day, he was in his running clothes, keeping his Peachtree streak alive.

This year, he will be running the race for the 40th consecutive time.

“My goal is to run it until I’m 80 and then reassess the goal,” said the 69-year-old. “Now my goal is to run my age in minutes, so I get another minute every year.”
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To pull off the massive AJC Peachtree Road Race every year – advance planning, stuffing envelopes, counting T-shirts, helping at the start and finish lines, supporting the police officers who provide security, you name it – the race’s 38 staff members are aided by more than 3,500 volunteers.

Indeed, even the first Peachtree in 1970 had a robust volunteer force, with 11 volunteers aiding the Original 110 participants. Herb Benario was one of those 11.

“When Tim Singleton had the idea of putting on a race on the Fourth of July, he didn’t have very many people who he could ask for help. He asked me to be the timer, I think because I owned two stopwatches,” said Benario, who was a Club member for six decades.

Lisa Tanner, who was hired in 1996 to manage volunteers and is still the Club’s director of events, said what most amazes her is their pride.

“They see this as their race,” she said. “There is such an extreme amount of pride that each person has and brings to their position that they want to be a part of something great.”

Jack Abbott first ran the Peachtree in 1975, getting involved with volunteering not long afterward at the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo, until 20 years ago when the Club’s director called and asked if he would become the course director, making sure things run smoothly for participants along the race route. Abbott is also credited with the idea of flying a giant American flag over the start line, and then making it happen.

“I can’t even guess at how much time and hours I’ve spent,” he said of his duties. Abbott starts in the spring with a meeting or two, and by June he spends every day on the Peachtree.

Abbott’s still running, too, having finished his 44th consecutive Peachtree last year. He plans to retire from his course director duties after this July 4.

Over the years, volunteer assignments have changed with the times. When entries were still on paper, for instance, Katherine Welden – in her 80s now and still a volunteer – was among the crew chiefs supervising a team that spent a month entering them into the computer system after regular office hours. (Welden also ran the race 39 times.) And until the early 2000s, almost every sign, from corral markers to MARTA directions to “1 Bottle of Water Per Runner,” had to be hand-painted. For years, volunteer Katy Bryant spent hundreds of hours producing the signs.

Alex Nguyen is part of the newest wave of volunteers. She ran and volunteered at her first Peachtree last July. Nguyen helped participants get to the right place at the starting line. She is an introvert, so doing this work compelled her to open up and talk with people.

“When I volunteer, I am happier and I become more confident,” she said.

And, just like the people who return to complete the Peachtree year after year, volunteers have streaks. The Club tallies how many years each person volunteers, awarding a peach service pin every five-year anniversary. Volunteers wear these pins on their hats like a badge of honor.

After the last participant finishes the race and the Peachtree is over, some volunteers are so appreciative that they send gifts to the Club staff, but Tanner said it’s really the Club that can never do enough for them.

“Without them,” said Tanner, “we would cease to exist.”
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HOW CHURCHES CAME TO EMBRACE THE RACE

By Natalie Cabanas

With the AJC Peachtree Road Race always on the Fourth of July, it has fallen on a Sunday seven times in its 49-year history, but parishioners and pastors along the course rise early with the Peachtree's participants to serenade, cheer, support, and even bless the 60,000 runners regardless of the day of the week.

A little over two miles into the course, runners come upon what's known locally as Jesus Junction, the Buckhead intersection at Peachtree Road, East Wesley Road and Wesley Road where three churches firmly stand: Cathedral of Christ the King, Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church and the Cathedral of St. Philip.

There, they see Dean Sam Candler of the Cathedral of St. Philip blessing thousands of participants with holy water. "I've done this for so many years now, I'd say that 10-12,000 people deliberately swing over to our side of the course just to get their blessing," he said. "On the Fourth of July, God blesses America. I figure if I bless these people that come by, it's a great symbol of God blessing humanity."

Dean Candler also traditionally has given the invocation at the start line. Because of scheduling conflicts last year, Rev. Dr. Bill Harkins, a priest associate at St. Philip, filled in. His ties to the Peachtree run just as deep: Afterward, he ran the race, as he has done for over 40 years.

With at least eight churches along the course, each celebrates the Peachtree in its own way.

"For over 20 years, the Cathedral has been a pit stop for racers receiving blessings from Father Richard Morrow," said Jennifer Lewis, director of parish communications for Christ the King.

At Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church, you'll find parishioners manning a water stop. "We always have way more volunteers than we need because everyone just wants to be a part of all the excitement," said Jeff Miller, church administrator.

It's a far cry from 1982, when the race, which fell on a Sunday that year, was almost cancelled.

By that time, the race had grown to 25,000, so then-Race Director Royce Hodge sent a notice to churches alerting them that traffic would be back to normal by 9:30 a.m. Outrage followed.

Church leaders wanted the race moved a day earlier or later so it wouldn't disrupt their Sunday services, and appealed to race sponsors and asked government leaders to deny a race permit. Peachtree officials offered to start the race a half hour earlier; pastors said no. Citing the July 4 tradition as well as a cost of at least $12,000 to notify runners of a date change, race officials threatened to cancel the event. Mayor Andrew Young was called in to mediate.

A compromise was reached and a 15-minute, nondenominational sunrise service was held at 6 a.m. race morning. Years later, Mayor Young described the issue as "an Atlanta negotiation at its best."

Fast forward to 1993 and the race's 25th Running. Knowing it would fall on a Sunday, Julia Emmons, who in 1985 had become race director and executive director of Atlanta Track Club, worked proactively with the church community, visiting senior pastors to hear their concerns. She moved the race a half hour earlier, to 7:30 a.m., and assigned a special volunteer team to each church to ensure that trash was picked up promptly and parking lots opened up quickly after the race. She even invited church ministers to participate and be seeded in the first wave so they could run and make it to church on time.

"The lovely thing about it all was they couldn't have been nicer," she said. "The beautiful irony was they were not only not opposed to us, but they went out of their way for us."
CONGRATULATES
THE AJC PEACHTREE ROAD RACE
ON THEIR 50TH RUNNING
ATLANTA'S TEAMS ARE BIG FANS OF ATLANTA'S RACE

By Doug Carroll and Jay Holder

When it comes to supporting both the AJC Peachtree Road Race and Atlanta Track Club, the city’s professional sports teams bring their “A” games.

**Atlanta Braves:** While preparing to climb Cardiac Hill last year, Peachtree participants were greeted by a sign that read “Keep Cool and Chop On,” as Braves staff and season ticket-holders, volunteering at an aid station, cheered. When they neared the finish, the team’s Heavy Hitters drumline pounded out a rhythm to urge them on; after they crossed the line, mascot Blooper greeted them in Piedmont Park and posed with them for selfies.

Peachtree winners have also been invited to toss out the ceremonial first pitch several times in race’s history. This year, race participants received a ticket-discount offer to premium seats at the July 4 home game vs. the Philadelphia Phillies which sold out quickly. Participants are encouraged to wear their finisher’s shirt to the game. Perhaps that shirt will be designed by the Braves, who are entered in this year’s AJC Peachtree Road Race T-shirt contest.

Along with the club, the team also stages the annual Braves Country 5K presented by Mizuno in June.

**Atlanta Hawks:** The Hawks, who partner with the Club on the Atlanta Hawks Fast Break 5K presented by Sharecare at State Farm Arena in February, hosted AJC Peachtree Road Race Day at their game against the Minnesota Timberwolves on March 31. Fans could sign up either to volunteer for the race or enter the lottery to run. The Hawks also encouraged everyone in State Farm Arena to vote for Harry the Hawk’s design in the race’s T-shirt contest.

Former general manager Pete Babcock, the architect of the Hawks’ success in the 1990s, was an avid runner who ran the Peachtree.

**Atlanta Falcons:** Matt Haley, the Falcons’ manager of football communications, is a former collegiate runner who covered the Peachtree course in 34:12 in 2018 – which was good for an impressive finish of 66th overall. He has run the race five times since moving to Atlanta in 2010.

Arthur Blank, owner of the Falcons and the United, is a member of Atlanta Track Club, and the Falcons and United offer their state-of-the-art facility – which hosted Super Bowl LII in February – for the 50-yard-line finish of the Mercedes-Benz Stadium 5K/Walk Like MADD, in which both teams and Mothers Against Drunk Driving partner with the Club.

**Atlanta United FC:** In 2017, women’s winner Aliphine Tuliamuk hammered the golden spike at the United’s soccer game. (Before kickoff, someone is chosen to hammer the spike, a link to the city’s railroad history, three times as the crowd chants “A-T-L” in unison.)

This year, the United will be part of the Family Fitness Zone at the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo and offer a fan experience in The Meadow on race day. On July 7, race participants will have their accomplishment celebrated on the big screen at Mercedes-Benz Stadium as part of a special ticket offer to a match against the New York Red Bulls.
THE ATLANTA FALCONS

CONGRATULATE

THE AJC PEACHTREE

ROAD RACE

ON THEIR 50TH RUNNING

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• 18 months for the price of 12 months

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Benefits:
• FREE races as part of the Grand Prix Series presented by Piedmont Health Care
• Lowest price on all paid Atlanta Track Club events
• Exclusive member hat and keychain
• Guaranteed entry into the 2020 AJC Peachtree Road Race*
• Discounts at local run-specialty stores
• Exclusive member discounts and deals
• Subscription to Wingfoot Magazine

*Membership must be active by February 1, 2020

Photos: Paul Ward, Paul McPherson, Joaquin Lara, Dan McCauley, Jason Getz, Paul Kim, Warren Traws's
There is nothing more coveted. There is nothing more loved. There is nothing more hated. There is nothing more anticipated. The AJC Peachtree Road Race finisher’s shirt is annually the most discussed, debated and celebrated tradition of the world’s largest 10K.

And like almost everything else, how it was born and evolved is the stuff of Peachtree legend. “It happened by accident, but we honored the accident,” said Julia Emmons, executive director of Atlanta Track Club from 1985-2006.

Keeping the T-shirt design a secret started out as an accident, too – there was simply no reason to take them out of the containers in which they arrived until race day, hence few eyes were laid on them before that morning. But it felt like a secret, and as curiosity and anticipation built up over the years the Club began to embrace – and intensely guard – the tradition of not revealing the design until the first Peachtree finisher crosses the line.

Until 1995, the Club and the AJC designed the shirts – and they haven’t always been given to every finisher. Until the late 1970s, shirts were awarded until they ran out, giving the advantage to the fleet of foot. In fact, the only commonality between today’s finisher’s shirt and the original is its importance to the recipient.

“The shirt is sacred,” said Emmons.

In Atlanta Track Club’s archives, you’ll find hundreds of photos of people wearing their shirts in locations around the globe. You’ll find photos of quilts made from decades of collected shirts. On the walls of the Club’s office, you’ll find framed copies of each shirt signed by the elite athletes who competed in that year’s race.

Tim Singleton, the race’s founder, got the T-shirt idea after he ran the Boston Marathon in 1971 and saw shirts for sale. So, in Year 2, the first 250 finishers received a shirt. In the later part of the race’s inaugural decade, organizers implemented a T-shirt clock. Shirts were available only to those who crossed the finish line in under 55 minutes. When she took over the race, Emmons (who, by the way, hadn’t received one in 1971) made the decision to give every registered finisher a shirt.

From 1985 to 1994, Emmons and her small staff at Atlanta Track Club worked with the marketing department at the AJC to create the design, which wasn’t revealed until race day. Sometimes, the verdicts were widely shared. People loathed a sponsor logo on the back of the 1984 shirt (nothing ever appeared on the back of the shirt again), whereas the 1987 peach-colored shirt was a runaway hit.

Then came 1994, the 25th Running. Atlanta had been named host city of the 1996 Olympics. The city was celebrating sport, and its most well-known endurance event was taking center stage. “This was really the hot ticket,” said Emmons. “It was supposed to be the best T-shirt ever.”

While she admits she didn’t love the final product, she never expected the oncoming backlash. Angry Peachtree finishers picked up their phones and their pens to share their outrage with the overwhelmed employees of Atlanta Track Club – all three of them. “The phone rang off the hook for days if not weeks,” recalled Emmons. “They were furious at me. People said it ruined their lives.”

That September’s issue of Wingfoot Magazine published letters from disappointed runners. “There was one part of my day that dampened my spirits,” wrote Leonard Roy. “That was seeing ‘The Shirt.’ The peach in the center looks more like a pumpkin than a peach.”

Emmons recalls declaring: “That’s it. I’m not choosing it anymore.”

And thus the AJC Peachtree Road Race T-Shirt contest was launched. The first year, there were 751 submissions.

For the 50th Running, local celebrities and institutions with deep ties to the event were invited to collaborate with designers on a submission for the final designs. The decision was loved by many, hated by many and talked about by everyone. So were the designs when they were unveiled on March 1. A $5,000 donation will be made by Atlanta Track Club and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution to a nonprofit chosen by the winning designer or curator.

“In its 50th Running, we wanted to spread the word to as many people as possible about the Peachtree,” said Rich Kenah, Atlanta Track Club’s executive director. “By working with these Atlanta icons, the message of the shirt and the growing movement of health and wellness reaches new communities here in Running City USA.”

Love the designs or hate them, Atlanta Track Club will spend nearly $400,000 on shirts for the 60,000 expected finishers. And the shirt’s importance isn’t lost on the staff, none of whom will wear the finisher’s shirt. Why? They didn’t run the race.
THE 2019 T-SHIRT CONTESTANTS

**Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms**  
*One Atlanta*  
Nonprofit of Choice: Families First  

“The rich history of the AJC Peachtree Road Race extends far beyond the start and finish lines,” said the mayor, who runs the Peachtree every year. “It is my hope that our T-shirt design will celebrate the diversity of all Atlantans and mirror our goal of creating an inclusive and welcoming One Atlanta.”

**Atlanta Braves**  
*50 and Still Feelin’ Peachy*  
Nonprofit of Choice: Atlanta Braves Youth Baseball  

“It’s a huge honor if this is the design that’s chosen,” said Insung Kim, creative director for the Atlanta Braves. “Fifty years is a long time and I think it’s a great, significant marker for any event or any organization. The Braves are happy to be a part of it, especially since you’ve got an Atlanta icon with the AJC Peachtree Road Race and the Braves as another Atlanta icon.”

**Harry the Hawk**  
*Celebrating Every Step*  
Nonprofit of Choice: Atlanta Hawks Foundation  

“Being born and raised in the city of Atlanta, and being a huge fan of Atlanta Track Club ever since I was a baby bird, it would be a huge honor for my design to be chosen to represent our city, my organization and Atlanta Track Club,” said Harry the Hawk in a written statement (because he doesn’t talk). “The AJC Peachtree Road Race is such a great ‘True to Atlanta’ tradition, and I am excited about taking part in this summer’s race. Everyone knows I can dance and I can dunk, and now, they’ll know that I can draw. This design is inspired by the very first Peachtree Road Race and celebrates the proud, final step of crossing the finish line.”

**Jeff Galloway**  
*These Runners Made Peachtree the World’s Foremost 10K ... and inspired millions to join them*  
Nonprofits of Choice: Piedmont Park Conservancy and Back on My Feet  

“I know that I won’t win the Peachtree again,” said Galloway. “But it would be a highlight of my life to see 60,000 runners wearing the shirt design that portrays how the AJC Peachtree Road Race has inspired Atlanta and the world.”

The first winner of the Peachtree is also credited with putting the race on the national and international stage by inviting and encouraging his elite running friends to come compete. Galloway worked with longtime local illustrator Walter Cumming to bring his vision to life.

**Emily Giffin**  
*Lucky Bib*  
Nonprofit of Choice: City of Refuge  

“Like all families, mine enjoys many special traditions on the holidays,” said Giffin, a best-selling author. “But our favorite, by far, is running the AJC Peachtree Road Race on the Fourth of July in Atlanta, the best running community in the world!” Tina Tait, an Atlanta-based graphic designer who won the AJC Peachtree Road Race T-shirt contest in 2015, brought to life the concept of Giffin and her three children (Edward 15, George 15, and Harriet 11) – all runners. Just like the Peachtree, Tait turns 50 this year.
FINISHER’S T-SHIRTS THROUGH THE YEARS

1971-1973
1974-1975
1976
1977
1978
1979
1980
1981
1982
Along with “50 Years of the Peachtree presented by PNC Bank” (page 97) and a world-class triple jump and pole vault competition (facing page), here’s what you can’t miss at the 2019 Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo:

**The Tumbleator!**

In 1996, Joseph Kimani finished the Peachtree in 27:04, in 2002, Lornah Kiplagat ran 30:32. Both course records still stand. Now’s your chance to see how fast that really feels. (Hint: Fast.)

At the Expo, Atlanta Track Club will have The Tumbleator ready for you to try – and yes, it’s as cool as it sounds. This giant treadmill, set to course-record pace – 4:21 per mile for men and 4:53 per mile for women – and surrounded by foam pads will become a proving ground, as you try to stay on the Tumbleator for as long as you can.

**One Giant Shoe**

A race as massive as this deserves a shoe that fits – and Mizuno has built it. Get ready to experience the 10-foot-tall Mizuno Peachtree 50th Rider WAVEKNIT. Handcrafted by artist Stan Mullins of Athens, Georgia, the display is emblematic of the Peachtree – lots of fun and with a really big sole.

**Cash Cubes**

OK, dollar bills won’t be blowing around in Atlanta Track Club’s cash cube, but there’s a chance to win a whole lot more than a few George Washingtons. Head to the Club’s table, where if you post on your social media channels from the Expo you’ll get a chance to step inside and try to grab the “golden bib” blowing in the air. Anyone who does will receive a special, premium prize from the Club.

**And More …**

- Free samples from Waffle House, Coca-Cola and others, including sports nutrition-related food and beverage vendors.
- Official Peachtree merchandise, including commemorative shirts marking each decade of the race’s history
- The Family Fitness Zone, featuring a long jump, high jump, shot put and more for kids
- Activities and products from the Atlanta Hawks, Atlanta Braves, and many more of your favorite brands, companies and teams

**Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo**

Georgia World Congress Center, Exhibit Hall C1
- Tuesday, July 2 – 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Wednesday, July 3 – 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The Expo is free and open to the public. For more information about the Expo, visit peachtreeroadrace.org.
EXPO GOES TO NEW HEIGHTS AND LENGTHS

The world’s largest 10K now includes some of the world’s best field athletes, as U.S. Olympians Keturah Orji and Sandi Morris will chase big marks at the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo. To be held on a custom-built runway inside the Georgia World Congress Center on July 2 and 3, the USATF-sanctioned competition will feature Orji and Morris in the triple jump and pole vault, respectively.

Orji is an eight-time NCAA champion in the triple jump, the 2019 USATF Indoor Champion and part of Atlanta Track Club’s Elite team, while Morris won a silver medal in the 2016 Olympics and is the American record-holder and 2018 IAAF World Champion.

“When I signed with Atlanta Track Club, I didn’t think the AJC Peachtree Road Race would be on my schedule,” said Orji. “I jumped at the chance to be part of a triple jump competition at the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo and I’m looking forward to getting the crowd involved.”

Said Morris: “I am excited to be part of a new chapter in the history of the world’s largest 10K. I look forward to putting on a great pole vault show and hopefully help recruit some new fans of track and field.”

More than a dozen elite athletes will hop, skip and jump – and vault – over two days at the Expo. Orji will compete in the women’s triple jump on July 2, while Morris will compete in the women’s pole vault on July 3, with a men’s pole vault competition set to be held as well. Check atlantatrackclub.org for the final schedule.

After the event, Atlanta Track Club will donate the pole vault landing pad and the more than six tons of sand required to build the triple-jump pit to Atlanta Public Schools, with the pad going to Maynard-Jackson High School and the sand split among the Coretta Scott King Young Women’s Leadership Academy, the B.E.S.T. Academy and Lakewood Stadium.

“Though we call this Running City USA, we’re ready to also welcome some of the world’s top field athletes to Atlanta ahead of the 50th Running of the Peachtree, and excited to see records being chased both on and off the roads this July,” Atlanta Track Club’s executive director, Rich Kenah, said. “We look forward to showcasing these jumpers to the participants in the world’s largest 10K, and to providing the much-needed equipment to Atlanta Public Schools afterward.”
Don’t Throw Your Race Medal into a Shoebox

Place it in a Kudos Coaster Plus, a Race Medal Display Case that doubles as a coaster.

Your race medal goes in here!
On February 15, Atlanta Track Club unveiled a tribute that's 20 feet wide, 20 feet long, 8 feet high and 50 years deep. Since then, "50 Years of the Peachtree presented by PNC Bank" has been traveling around the city – from Lenox Square to Atlantic Station to Ponce City Market to the Atlanta History Center. And finally, to the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo, July 2 and 3 at the Georgia World Congress Center.

For one evening during its run at the history center, the exhibit even served as a backdrop for "The Next 110: The Foundation and Future of Running City USA," an event to kick off a search for the people and organizations who will guide the next 50 years of Running City USA and Atlanta Track Club's vision of a healthier and more-active Atlanta.

"I spent 15-20 minutes, going through every item, and learned a lot," said Mike Suco, vice president for the East Region of Coca Cola Bottling Company United and a triathlete, who viewed the exhibit that night. "I thought it was fantastic."

Among the highlights are rarely displayed artifacts, including the first winner's trophy, a pair of racing sneakers worn during that inaugural race in 1970, the first official finish-line tape and the first known finisher's T-shirt – all against a backdrop that features a milestone moment from each year of the event.

Also featured are the biographies of five people chosen as "icons" of the race: Bill Thorn, the only runner to complete every Peachtree; Bill Thorn, the only person to complete every Peachtree; Tim Singleton, the race founder; Jeff Galloway and Gayle Barron, winners of the inaugural race; and Julia Emmons, who retired in 2006 as the longest-serving Atlanta Track Club executive director and Peachtree race director.

Tying the whole thing together is an artifact that bridges the era from the photo darkroom to Instagram: an 8-foot-by 7-foot, three-dimensional "selfie sign" of the 50th Running logo.

While touring the exhibit at the Expo, visitors will learn the name of the last Atlanta resident to win the Peachtree, and be reminded that a future president was once the race's official starter. They will relive "The Battle of Atlanta" and roll their eyes at a double-entendre headline in Playboy magazine. They will leave knowing far more about the largest road race in the U.S. and largest 10K in the world than they knew when they arrived.

But they still won't know everything about a race that, over the course of its 49 years, has had more finishers than any road race in history.

"There's no way to truly represent 50 years of Peachtree in one place," said Rich Kenah, executive director of Atlanta Track Club and the Peachtree race director. "In any given year, we've got 60,000 stories."
Today, we acknowledge all the work you put in to get here.

In running and in life, there’s only one day you’re in control of: today. We’re proud to support Atlanta Track Club as they work to make it one to remember.
In 2019, Atlanta Track Club has committed to implementing green initiatives that reduce event waste, promote sustainable and responsible consumption, and support the local community of Atlanta. With the Club hosting nearly 150,000 participants annually – 60,000 of them at this year’s 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race – we realize the importance of taking steps to promote greater environmental responsibility within Running City USA.

At the beginning of the year, a first-ever Sustainability Committee was formed and given the task of ensuring the Club develops and executes policies and procedures that reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability in our daily operation and across all of our events and programs, including the Peachtree. Now known as the Club’s “Green Initiative,” here’s what we’re doing and how you can support our efforts on July 4.

Among Atlanta Track Club’s goals for the 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race:

- Reduce the Club’s environmental footprint by diverting at least 80 percent of plastic and aluminum waste from landfills
- Track and record measurements and statistics on waste diverted from the landfill
- Report on the Club’s success against pre-determined goals
- Produce 12 recycled-plastic park benches out of the plastic recycled on race day, which will then be presented as a gift to the Atlanta BeltLine and other organizations operating public spaces

What We Are Doing

- Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo: The Georgia World Congress Center, the home of the Expo, is the largest LEED certified convention center in the U.S. We are working with them to recycle Expo waste and will receive specific data on waste diverted from landfills.
- Recycling Centers on Race Day: For the first time, we will designate “Recycling Centers” in the finish area of Piedmont Park.
- Green Team Volunteers: Each recycling center will be manned by Green Team volunteers, dedicated to helping participants recycle. In green vests, they are there to assist with placing waste in the proper container.
- Member Area: Are you an Atlanta Track Club member? At the post-race member party in Park Tavern, take notice of our first-ever compost bins. Fruit peels, popsicle sticks and napkins can be thrown into these containers.

What You Can Do To Help

- Carpool: Participants are encouraged to carpool or use a rideshare company, such as Lyft, to get to and from the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo.
- Public Transportation: Atlanta Track Club partners with MARTA for the Expo and on race day.
  - Use the Vine City Station, a short walk (.4 miles) to Hall C1 at the Georgia World Congress Center, to get to and from the Expo.
  - MARTA will begin running at 4:30 a.m. on race day. Runners are encouraged to use the Lenox station for the start and the Midtown or Arts Center station for the finish.
- Recycle on Race Day, Know Before You Throw: The Dasani plastic water bottle you’ll receive once you cross the finish line is recyclable. A variety of Coca-Cola products in aluminum cans and Powerade drinks, also in plastic bottles, can all be thrown in the recycling receptacles.
- Compost in the Member Area: Be on the lookout for our compost bins and discard your waste properly.
- Refill Your Georgia Lottery Water Bottle: Thanks to one of our newest partners, Georgia Lottery, you will receive a refillable water bottle once you cross the finish line. Be sure to take full advantage of this and hydrate by visiting one of our refilling stations in The Meadow.
- Volunteer with the Green Team: Do you have a special interest in helping with the Club’s Green Initiative at the Peachtree or other events? Email volunteers@atlantatrackclub.org.
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Safety is Atlanta Track Club’s top priority. With the help of the City of Atlanta and various local, state and federal agencies, we’ve done extensive planning to ensure the safety of our participants, spectators, volunteers and partners.

Here, you will find information about some of our security measures, as well as simple things you can do to help make the historic 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race a great event.

- **Substantial law enforcement presence** will exist at the start, finish and post-event area, as well as along the course.
- **There will be clearly defined restricted areas** at the start and at the finish area in Piedmont Park. Additional fencing with designated entry and exit points will be in place around the post-event area. Anyone entering a restricted area with a backpack, bag, purse, etc. will be subject to search.
- **See something, say something.** Be vigilant. If you see something suspicious, contact the nearest police officer or call 911.

### Event Alert System

Event Alert System colored flags will be located at the start line, along the course at the fluid stations and in the finish area. The flags will communicate the specific alert level, which could range from low (green) to moderate (yellow) to high (red) to canceled (black) and are based primarily on weather conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALERT LEVEL</th>
<th>EVENT CONDITIONS</th>
<th>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EVENT CANCELLED</strong></td>
<td>Extreme conditions Event cancelled</td>
<td>Participation stopped/ follow official event instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
<td>Potentially Dangerous Conditions Follow Official Event Instructions</td>
<td>Slow down/ observe course changes/ follow official event instructions/ consider stopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODERATE</strong></td>
<td>Be Aware of Worsening Conditions</td>
<td>Slow down/ be prepared for worsening conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW</strong></td>
<td>Enjoy the Event</td>
<td>Enjoy the event/ be alert</td>
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**SAFETY & SECURITY**

**Event Alert System**

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**Alissa Palladino**
MS, RDN, LD, ACSM-CPT
Wingfoot Magazine's 'Ask A Dietitian' Columnist
Start Line
The AJC Peachtree Road Race starts in Buckhead at Lenox Square. Please visit peachtreeroadrace.org for more information. ABSOLUTELY NO BAGS will be allowed at the start line. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Getting There
MARTA: Participants and spectators are strongly encouraged to take MARTA to the Lenox station to get to the start line. MARTA will begin running at 4:30 a.m. on race day. Breeze Cards are available for purchase at the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo.
As long as marathons start at the crack of dawn, you can count on GEICO saving folks a ton of money.

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Celebrate the music of the last 50 years as you make history in the 50th Running of the AJC Peachtree Road Race! We’ll have music from the 70s, 80s, 90s and 2000s along each mile, so keep an ear out for:

- Nathan Morgan Band
- DJ QTip
- Lethal Rhythms
- DJ Joel Rabe
- Wasted Potential Brass Band
- The Fur Bus
- Norfolk Southern Lawmen
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Getting Home

Participants and spectators are strongly encouraged to take MARTA home after the AJC Peachtree Road Race. The closest stations to the finish line are Midtown and Arts Center. MARTA buses will be staged near the finish. Participants must have Breeze Cards to board the buses, which will transport you to the Lindbergh MARTA station.
• Don’t forget to pick up your race number at the Peachtree Health & Fitness Expo if you didn’t choose to have it mailed.

• Plan your race day, including how to get to the start line, where to meet family and friends, and how to get back to your car or access MARTA.

• Stay hydrated with water AND electrolytes.

• Don’t try anything new on race day or in the days just before it. This includes physical activities, food, clothing or shoes.

• Cotton shirts and shorts may cause chafing, especially if they get damp from humidity or doused with water from hoses. Breathable running attire is best even if you’re walking. And no flip-flops!

• Remember to set your alarm.

• And don’t forget to have a great day – you’re about to become part of history!

### Ways to Watch

Our media partners will have complete coverage of the 2019 AJC Peachtree Road Race on July 4.

**AJC The Atlanta Journal-Constitution**

Race day coverage and results can be found online at AJC.com

**NBC Sports Network**

One-hour highlight show at 7 p.m.

**11 Alive**

Live race coverage from 6-10 a.m. and a one-hour special at 8 p.m.

**98.5 The Fan**

Live race coverage from 6-10 a.m.
Explore West Midtown and beautiful Buckhead neighborhoods. You’ll experience unmatched course support from 10 themed cheer zones pushing you through each mile.

- Commemorative item
- Commemorative medal

There’s no 10 miler quite like this one

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- Triple Peach medal
- Commemorative item

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