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March 6, 2008 / 6:00 p.m. - Midnight / Hilton New York

# NYRR Club Night 2008 Celebrates Running—Past, Present, and Future

Since 1980, New York Road Runners has held an annual awards banquet, now known as Club Night, to honor the top individual runners and teams at our races during the previous year. It was fitting that this year's gala, held at the Hilton New York on March 6—three months before NYRR's 50th anniversary—celebrated some of the most accomplished athletes in New York-area running history, along with the current stars and those primed to succeed them.

“Happy Anniversary to everybody,” said NYRR president and CEO Mary Wittenberg. “You are the stars of New York City running, and this is the running capital of the world.”

In an emotional highlight of the evening, co-hosts Ian Brooks of NYRR and Heidi Jones of WABC Channel 7 recognized the 50th Anniversary Champions' Circle, a group of nine athletes whose performances in NYRR races over time have been truly extraordinary. Five of these runners came to the stage (three are deceased and one was unable to attend) and received a standing ovation. The applause became thunderous as one champion, 78-year-old Toshiko (Toshi) D'Elia, received the 2008 President's Award from Wittenberg and NYRR board of directors chairman George Hirsch. D'Elia has won an astounding 25 NYRR Runner of the Year age-group awards. She is member of the USATF Masters Hall of Fame and was the first over-50 woman in the world to run a sub-three-hour marathon.

"I can't thank you enough," said an overwhelmed D'Elia. "I am so humbled by what running has taught me."

It was a night for many—even the most talented—to feel humbled by the accomplishments of those around them. In attendance were the first-ever NYRR Runners of the Year, Pete Squires and Kathy McIntyre, women's running pioneer Nina Kuscsik, former American marathon record-holder Pat Petersen, and many others.

Squires, now 57 and the owner of a New Balance running store in New Jersey, expressed amazement at the growth of NYRR since his heyday. "The races are huge!" he said as he watched footage from 2007 NYRR events projected onscreen above the award winners. "But," he added with conviction, "we were still tough back then, we were competitive. [NYRR] races were always top-level. *Always.*" McIntyre, 59, greeted old friends with unbridled enthusiasm. "I can't believe I'm going to be 60!" she exclaimed. "How did that happen?"

Like McIntyre, many attendees took the opportunity to catch up (figuratively speaking) with old rivals and teammates, and to reminisce about races, seasons, and decades gone by. "Do you remember the Bagel Run?" asked one. "What ever happened to the 1-2-3 Mile Relay?" wondered another. Several of these runners expressed appreciation that NYRR's annual calendar, updated every year to keep offerings fresh and current, includes some races with decades-long histories, such as the NYRR New York Mini 10K, the Continental Airlines® Fifth Avenue Mile, and of course, the ING New York City Marathon.

Others came to Club Night 2008 to celebrate the here and now. Wittenberg, Brooks, and Jones presented Runner of the Year awards to individuals in 16 age groups and honored teams in nine divisions. Nominees for age-group Runners of the Year, who must be members of NYRR, are selected by an awards committee based on their performances in at least six NYRR races. The winners are named based on their year's best races, with special consideration for head-to-head competition and performances across a range of distances. All nominees are invited to Club Night and receive special medals. View the galleries for the [Men's](#) and [Women's](#) winners.

The highest honors, the Fred Lebow Runner of the Year Awards, went to Alemtsehay Misganaw and (for the second consecutive year) Demesse Tefera, both of the Westchester Track Club.

"In one of the greatest running cities in the world, it's fitting that our winners have preformed their very best when they ran here against the world's very best," said Wittenberg. Misganaw placed 10th at the 2007 NYC Half-Marathon Presented by NIKE. Tefera finished third in the Healthy Kidney 10K and 13th in the ING New York City Marathon.

Other awards included the Ted Corbitt Award for Dedication to Running in New York City, which went to the New York City Police Department; the Achilles Athlete of the Year Awards, presented by Achilles Track Club president Mary Bryant to Minda Dentler and Daniel Trush; and the New York Road Runners Foundation Awards, presented by NYRR Foundation executive director Cliff Sperber to Shamel Victoria and Tyto Moore, both of PPS/MS 15 in the Bronx.

“The New York Road Runners Foundation Award points toward the future—a future where children and adults in America are the fastest and fittest in the world,” said Sperber. Club Night included a fund-raising raffle for the NYRR Foundation, whose youth running programs serve nearly 50,000 children every week. Four lucky winners each received 50,000 Continental Airlines OnePass miles.

After the presentations, Club Night continued with dancing into the wee hours—never mind the miles waiting to be logged in the morning.



Women’s running pioneer Nina Kuscsik holds a Club Night program featuring a photo of the lead runners in the 1979 NYRR Women’s Half-Marathon.

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