



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Participants of the 11th annual Historic Half run down Cowan Boulevard as Semper 5ive runners head up the road Sunday.

Racers brave the heat for Historic Half

BY JAMES SCOTT BARON
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Every imaginable emotion—from tears to uncontrollable jubilation—was visible at the finish line of Sunday’s Marine Corps Historic Half marathon, as 5,397 men and women completed the challenging run through the city streets of Fredericksburg.

As they took their final steps across the finish line, runners were greeted by a large gathering of junior officers from the Marine Corps’ Basic School, who presented each of them with a commemorative medal for each race that they had participated in that morning, as well as a salute and a thank-you.

“We love having the Marines out here interacting with the community,” said Col. William Bentley III, com-

RESULTS >> Former UVa. runner finishes first at race. B1

manding officer of Marine Corps Base Quantico. “It’s a great way for us to connect with the community, for the community to see what the Marine Corps is all about, and a way for us to give back.”

Congressman Rob Wittman offered praise and congratulations to all branches of the armed forces, not only for their commitment to the event, but also for their involvement in the Fredericksburg community.

“The appreciation that the people have here in Fredericksburg for the military, and how this really brings it to life once a year—what a great day,” said Wittman.

SEE HISTORIC HALF, A5



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Marines from The Basic School at Marine Corps Base Quantico hand out medals to the finishers of the race.



TOM ROTHENBERG FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Stephanie Thomas (left) of Fredericksburg grabs a cup at a water station. Sunday’s temps climbed into the low 90s.

DOWNTOWN’S THUNDER ALLEY COMES ALIVE WITH CHEERS AND COWBELLS



TOM ROTHENBERG FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

The G-Force band was among the groups performing downtown for runners during the Historic Half marathon.

BY LINDLEY ESTES
FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Downtown Fredericksburg woke up a little earlier than usual Sunday morning. The commercial thoroughfare that typically doesn’t see much foot traffic before midmorning was alive with cowbells chiming, a string band covering Queen and the cheers of a crowd when the first runner of the Marine Corps Historic Half marathon ran down Caroline Street at 7:43 a.m.

When he ran by, escorted by police cruisers and with the second runner on his lead, the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society performed

its first English country dance of the day in front of Sammy T’s.

And the fanfare continued through the last runner to make it through downtown’s thunder alley after 10 a.m.

April Peterson, co-owner of River Rock Outfitter and president of the Fredericksburg VA Main Street, Inc. board, said the group started its “Thunder Alley” event three years ago to encourage runners when they get downtown, which is also the halfway point of the race.

Main Street offered free coffee, treats and 500 cowbells to attendees and publicized

SEE DOWNTOWN, A5

HISTORIC HALF

► FROM A1

Hundreds of well-wishers lined the route throughout the morning offering snacks, water and loud cheers of encouragement to the runners.

"This community has really come to embrace this event," said Wittman. "This has become not just a regional event, but it's become a national event, and that's pretty significant. Having the Historic Half in Fredericksburg is something to be really proud of."

Regardless of personal exhaustion, brutal heat or in some cases—severe personal experiences—each of the runners crossed the finish line to receive a hero's welcome.

Navy Master Chief Robert Hunter of Virginia Beach completed the run with a prosthetic, his first race following the amputation of his right leg.

"This is actually just a practice prosthetic leg that I got 14 days ago," Hunter said.

Hunter, who remains on active duty while rehabilitating at Walter Reed National Military Center in Bethesda, Md., suffered a severe injury when he fell down a ladder—a shipboard term for a stairway—while serving aboard the USS Blue Ridge in Japan.

"My leg got caught between steps on the way down," said Hunter, who developed complex regional pain syndrome after his fall. CRPS is a chronic, consistent pain experienced in a limb following an injury.

"The CRPS was brutal," Hunter said. "I was in pain constantly and lived with it for three years before the military gave me an option for an amputation," he said. "I'm a little sore today, pretty beat up."

Emotions also ran high for Bridget Saverine of Philadelphia, as tears of joy streamed down her face as she crossed the finish line.

"When I started the race this morning, I didn't



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Marines cheer on Mandi Lindner (from left) of Washington, D.C., Notah Begay Jr. and Claire Begay of Albuquerque, N.M., and Sheila Burns of Fredericksburg as they near the end of the Marine Corps Historic Half in Fredericksburg.

know if I'd be able to finish," said Saverine. "I have a cold, I'm not really a runner, this is my first race ever, and I'm just proud of myself and so happy to be part of this great event. I'll definitely be celebrating and watching 'Game of Thrones' tonight."

As the last runners were on the final stretch of the course, Marines sprinted down the course to help cheer them across the finish line.

The final runner was Notah Begay Jr., 77, of Albuquerque, N.M.

This was Begay's first race that he ran to pay tribute to his father—a World War II code talker—and to his son, who had completed two tours of duty in Iraq as a Marine. He also dedicated his run to all of those code talkers who are living, as well as to those who have passed away, and "to the people in this county who understand what really true Americans are," he said.

"I felt this run was something I could do," said Begay, who served in the Marine Corps himself from 1967–71.

"I feel I've accomplished something today and there's more things that I need to do, I guess to make



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A Marine from The Basic School at Quantico waits to distribute medals to the race finishers.

myself feel that I've accomplished something in this world, and this is one of them," he said.

Over the last several months, the Marine Corps Marathon organization has worked closely with the military, as well as with law enforcement officials from Fredericksburg City, Stafford and Spotsylvania counties, the Virginia State Police, Mary Washington Healthcare, and numerous medical and emergency response crews from the region.

"There's a lot of setup involved with the community, city officials, the military, they're all in," said Navy Capt. Martha

Cutshall, commanding officer of Marine Corps Base Quantico's medical clinic. "It takes a lot of months to prepare for this."

In addition to an overabundance of water, sports drinks, ice, snacks and well-staffed medical tents throughout the venue, traditional emergency response equipment was also on scene to treat runners who fell victim to the high heat and humidity that plagued runners all morning.

But keeping the runners safe and healthy wasn't the only concern for race officials on Sunday. Keeping track of over 5,300 runners was another feat that was meticulously or-



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A lone Semper Parvum runner heads up Cowan Boulevard during the 11th annual Historic Half.



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Marines and medical personnel attend to an injured runner during the Marine Corps Historic Half.

chestrated. Jim Jackson, business manager for the Marine Corps Marathon, said the equipment used in the event's timing trailer—and on the runners themselves—tracked the whereabouts of each and every runner throughout the entire course.

The timing and location of each runner was revealed through the use of microchips that were embedded in each of the runner's bibs. The chips communicated via sensors on the route with satellites that relayed the information to crews on the ground.

"This happens when runners travel over mats that are strategically located throughout the course, about every three miles," said Jackson. "We keep an eye on everybody all the way."

As the event drew to a

close, the loud cheering, the booming music and the intense fanfare all seemed to quickly dissipate. Sunday's runners were now in the history books with over 60,000 runners before them who had crossed the same finish line since the event first came to Fredericksburg in 2008.

Charlie Harr, the Marine Corps Marathon operations coordinator, called the end of the race a bittersweet experience for many of the day's runners.

"Training for an endurance event like this—especially for a first-timer—can be bittersweet because you first have that boost of confidence that comes from completing the event," said Harr. "But then the bitterness comes when you finally realize that the journey is over."

James Scott Baron: 540/374-5438 jbaron@freelancestar.com



SABRINA VAZ-HOLDER FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Herberth Padilla from Herndon runs under a U.S. flag on William Street in downtown Fredericksburg. More than 5,300 people participated in the 11th annual Marine Corps Historic Half marathon.



LINDLEY ESTES FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Jan and Bjorn Bieneck, who live downtown, found a nice little spot to enjoy their morning coffee and watch the runners make their way along William Street.

DOWNTOWN

► FROM A1

Caroline and Princess Anne streets as prime cheering spots for locals.

"We are such a community of veterans," Peterson said. "Even our business, we are a Marine-owned business. We want to be loud and give them a complete surprise to hear all of this, look up and see a downtown that's alive. They'll look up at the buildings, see the businesses, and want to come back."

Main Street's hubs of activity were centered around the Visitor's Center, Italian Station, Goolrick's and Fraser Wood Elements.

Outside Goolrick's, Cecilia Tueros held up a sign imploring her husband, David DelCastillo, to "Hurry up, I'm Hungry!" She is seven months pregnant, so she couldn't run with him. But she was excited to be there and support him with his parents.

Across the street, in front of Picker's Supply was the Double Koru Rock Orchestra, a group of student string musicians serenading the runners with their renditions of songs by Queen.

Just down the street, also cheering along thunder alley, were Barry and Sandy Yatt, who came down from Arlington to support their son, Ben Yatt, with his girlfriend, Kalika Lakhi.

"It's his first time running in this," Barry Yatt said. "He is really excited."

They came to Fredericksburg just for the day but said the town was charming and had really grown since the last time they were here years ago.

While waiting for Ben to run by, they encouraged other runners and shook cowbells.

Just one block over on Princess Anne Street, Jeremy Harrison and Beth Black were leading the cheering at their restaurant Foode.

For the second year, they gave out Paul's doughnut holes with bakery owner Neil Glancey. They had 800 to give away to runners looking for a sugar rush at the middle of the race. The cheering was not confined to



TOM ROTHENBERG FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Bill Glover of Fredericksburg blows a vuvuzela as the racers go by.



TOM ROTHENBERG FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

A Historic Half runner glances at the crowd cheering him on.



TOM ROTHENBERG FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Bob Whittingham uses a fan to help cool down the racers.

thunder alley, though. On William Street, locals turned out to cheer for friends and family.

Vivify Burger & Lounge owner Aby Bethem came out early to cheer for her friends before opening her business for lunch.

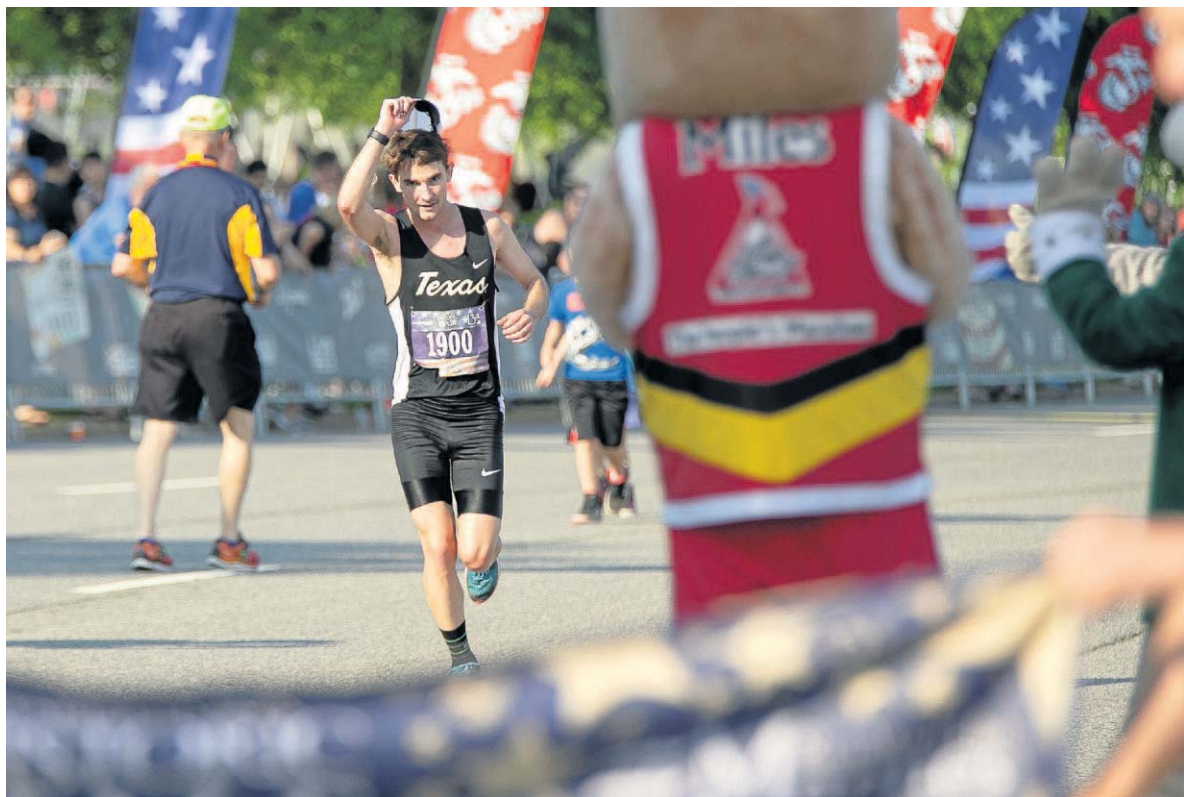
She brought out a pot and spoon to make noise for employee Emily Elliott, who ran by at 8:30 a.m.

On the next block, Jan and Bjorn Bieneck were seated. The couple live downtown and didn't know anyone running, but wanted to support the event and be part of the action.

They brought out their morning coffee pot, mugs, chairs, a table and their paper to William Street. It's the same setup they have every Sunday, just in the midst of a race.

Jan Bieneck said when they went out to eat the night before, she could tell that runners and other out-of-towners were here patronizing businesses and helping the commercial corridor thrive.

"It's so nice," she said, "to live in a town like this. We just wanted to support it. It's exciting to see this happening in our town."



PHOTOS BY MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Connor Hendrickson tips his cap as he approaches the finish line of the Marine Corps Historic Half.

A SNAP DECISION PAYS OFF FOR HENDRICKSON

BY JOEY LOMONACO
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

With a tip of his cap, Connor Hendrickson finished the 2019 Marine Corps Historic Half looking equal parts cultured and composed.

But it took a mad dash to get him to the starting line.

The Texas native and former University of Virginia runner exhausted his NCAA eligibility two weeks ago, and while his legs hadn't yet started to atrophy, the competitive hiatus struck him as a waste nonetheless.

"I was sitting there

CITY JOLT >> Runners, fans give Fredericksburg an early start Sunday. **A1**

yesterday, figured I was getting out of shape," Hendrickson said.

He'd heard about the Historic Half—sort of hot, hella hilly—from friends in his graduate program and decided to sign up. When he submitted his payment around 3 p.m. Saturday, Hendrickson assumed he could pick up his race day packet early Sunday morning.

That was not the case. So Hendrickson raced from Charlottesville

to the Fredericksburg Expo Center ahead of the 6 p.m. deadline, picked up his packet, ate dinner, and promptly went home.

"It was a very scenic drive," he noted.

With limited preparation, Hendrickson relied on his pedigree as a college distance runner specializing in the 10k. His winning time of 1:15.23 outpaced runner-up Stephen Harrison by about 30 seconds.

"I've run this distance before, but never this fast," Hendrickson said. "I was kind of worried

SEE HISTORIC HALF, B2



Matt O'Neill was the first man to finish the Devil Dog Double at Sunday's event.



Emily Hopely completes the Semper Five. She won the women's division, and her husband Mark triumphed in the men's competition.



Race director Rick Nealis (right) salutes Amber Reinecke on finishing the Devil Dog Double.

ONLINE >> View more photos from the 2019 Marine Corps Historic Half at fredericksburg.com



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Lindsay Carrick breaks the tape (being co-held by Rep. Rob Wittman, right) to win the women's division of Sunday morning's Marine Corps Historic Half.

HISTORIC HALF

▶ FROM B1

at four miles. I figured it might not be my day. [Harrison] looked really good."

But Hendrickson overtook him as the leaders entered the downtown portion of the course, then padded his advantage over the final few miles. Not that it was a pleasure cruise.

"When you get to that hospital [hill] and start going straight up at like 10 miles, you wish you didn't have to do that," he said.

Marine Corps 1st Lt. Lindsay Carrick cruised to victory in the women's division with a time of 1:25.01, more than two minutes ahead of her nearer competitor. Fredericksburg resident Erica Brecher placed third.

Carrick, a logistics officer who lives in Fredericksburg, placed third among women in last fall's Marine Corps Marathon and competed in the Boston Marathon in April. After that gauntlet, the Historic Half amounted to something of a fun run with a familiar setting.

"It was hard to pass up a chance to run a race in my backyard," Carrick said.

Disappointment at the 2018 Marine Corps Marathon drove Matt O'Neil to attempt the Devil Dog Double, which entailed running the Semper 5-miler immediately followed by the half marathon.

O'Neil, wearing a bandana adorned with the Virginia state flag, showed his true colors by acing the 18.1-mile circuit in a blistering 1:43.56.

"Honestly, I didn't have a strategy," said O'Neil, who finished his first marathon just three weeks ago. "I went through five miles and wasn't even looking at my watch. Probably across the five-mile mark I looked down and felt, 'Wow, I'm really moving.'"

The husband and wife duo of Mark and Em-



PETER CIHELKA / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Historic Half men's winner Connor Hendrickson admitted climbing Hospital Hill was quite grueling.



MIKE MORONES / THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Holding their Semper 5-miler awards, Emily and Mark Hopely (center) pose with Marine Col. William C. Bentley III (left) and Wittman for photographs.

ily Hopely swept their respective divisions in the Semper 5-miler, earning the moniker "the first couple of running," from Congressman Rob Wittman, who administered awards.

Hendrickson is currently pursuing a masters in structural engineering. He understands that even the staunchest foundations crumble over time. He received an injury red-shirt at the University of Texas, and even prior to Sunday's race, his left foot was acting up.

"I've been running pretty hard for about nine years," said Hendrickson, 23. "My body has felt that, and it's told me to stop a few times but I haven't. I definitely enjoy running, but it might be time."

"I just wanted to come out here and run something I could hang my hat

on."

MEN'S TOP 10

1. Connor Hendrickson (Charlottesville) 1:15:23; 2. Stephen Harrison (Fredericksburg) 1:15:54; 3. Christopher Pirsch (Spotsylvania) 1:15:59; 4. Richard Harris (Washington) 1:18:00; 5. Jonathan Ladson (Woodbridge) 1:18:19; 6. Matt Boyd (Fredericksburg) 1:21:01; 7. Sean Blue (Quantico) 1:21:43; 8. Jared Jenkins (Fredericksburg) 1:22:09; 9. He Huang (Woodbridge) 1:22:17; 10. David Neal (Richmond) 1:22:47.

WOMEN'S TOP 10

1. Lindsay Carrick (Fredericksburg) 1:25:01; 2. Abigail Cember (Ardmore, Pa.) 1:27:07; 3. Erica Brecher (Fredericksburg) 1:27:13; 4. Shauneen Werlinger (Springfield) 1:27:34.65; 5. Serena Burla (Stafford) 1:27:34.79; 6. Tracy Dzubela (Fredericksburg) 1:27:56; 7. Alice Henley (Oakland Park, Fla.) 1:29:11; 8. Jillian Weisbeck (Fredericksburg) 1:29:53; 9. Amy Huerta (Fredericksburg) 1:30:34; 10. Stefani Watterson (Alexandria) 1:31:04.

Joey LoMonaco: 540/368-5045
jmonaco@freelancestar.com
@joeylomonaco