

## Storm blows Brookings Marathon into October



Toppled trees lay where the postrace refreshment stand would have been set up at Pioneer Park by the finish area.

**By Dave Graves**  
Newsletter editor

When emergency sirens blew at about 5:30 p.m. May 12 to warn of a rapidly approaching derecho, they also sounded the cancellation of four races over the following two days in Brookings.

With south winds topping 90 mph, hundreds of trees were toppled within minutes, power was knocked out and some homes and businesses lost sections of their roofs. The Scotty Roberts 5K was scheduled for 6 p.m. Friday and the Brookings Marathon, Half Marathon and Relay were to start at 7 a.m. Saturday, all at Pioneer Park.

However, Pioneer Park was one of the hardest hit areas as far as loss of trees. Also, sections of a county-owned metal building had been blown into the park. The marathon's route goes through parks, the SDSU campus and several residential sections. Downed trees along the marathon route were more numerous than the ubiquitous turn arrows.

The City of Brookings' first priority on Thursday night was to clear trees from the streets. Friday, attention turned to Pioneer Park.

However, by mid-morning Friday the answer was obvious—there was way too much work to do to get the town ready to run a marathon in less than 24 hours. Plus there was no power and it was expected to be Saturday before the power

would be restored. That meant stoplights weren't working and hotels, restaurants and gas stations were closed.

"I knew at daybreak Friday morning we needed three things for the race to happen: electricity for the community, full volunteer availability and support, and a cleared and safe race course. The only thing I was pretty certain we could accomplish was the clear and safe course," race director Matt Bien said.

### Dealing with disappointment

Incident command at the City of Brookings made the call about 10:30 a.m. that the Brookings Marathon would have to be called off. That wasn't what Bien was hoping to hear, but he knew it was the right call. Runners were notified by website posting and social media, quickly followed by an email. Most got the word soon enough to avoid having a town filled with disappointed runners.

But they were definitely disappointed.

"When the news first broke on Friday, I was in disbelief. Crushed," said Molly (Wedel) Radigan, an All-American college distance runner who at age 42 had decided to run her first marathon at Brookings. "I'd followed an 18-week training plan to a T, finally got to race-

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## Strider race previews

### Longest Day 10K—8 a.m. Saturday, June 18

One of the few 10Ks in the region will have a new race director and a new course in 2022.

Derrick Powers, who ran at SDSU in the 1990–92 seasons and has organized the finish line at the Brookings Marathon for many years, takes over for Chris Gruenhagen as race director.

The course change — two loops around scenic Dakota Nature Park — was dictated by construction on 20th Street South, which had been part of the race course.

In addition to the 6.2-mile event, there will again be a two-person relay option.

Cost is \$25 through midnight June 16, when online registration ends.

For more details: [shorturl.at/jzM16](https://shorturl.at/jzM16)

To register: [shorturl.at/bkKQ6](https://shorturl.at/bkKQ6)

### Beef and Eggs 5K—8 a.m. Saturday, July 9

A magnet for the region's top runners as well as moms with strollers, the Beef and Eggs 5K kicks off Arts Festival weekend in Brookings.

Staged on the Brookings County Courthouse lawn, the course snakes through downtown and residential Brookings, passes near Pioneer Park, the children's museum and through Hillcrest Park. The course is well marked with very light traffic.

The race was begun in 2005 by Kevin Bjerke and Ryan Egeberg while they were junior teammates on the SDSU track and cross country program. They continue as race directors today and the event serves as a summer gathering time for current and past SDSU runners.

For more details: [shorturl.at/dlFR2](https://shorturl.at/dlFR2)

To register: [shorturl.at/wW167](https://shorturl.at/wW167)

### Oakwood Lakes Trail Run—7:30 a.m. Saturday, Aug. 13

The club's only trail run is staged at the west boat ramp at Oakwood Lakes State Park. (State park pass required for entry; not included in registration cost.) There are 4- and 7-mile options, mostly run on a crushed gravel course, however, the jaunt around Boy Scout Island is less groomed.

For more information and to see GoPro footage of the course: [shorturl.at/hiIMP](https://shorturl.at/hiIMP)

To register: [shorturl.at/akE07](https://shorturl.at/akE07)

### Jack 15 Road Race—8:30 a.m. Sept. 24

The 60th running of the oldest road race in the Midwest will include an anniversary program the evening prior.

Program participants will include course record holder and road racing legend Dick Beardsley, members and coaches from the 1963 SDSU team that comprised the first race, and Jack 15 stalwarts like Bob Bartling. The program is in the auditorium of the South Dakota Art Museum, which also will host packet pickup from 4 to 7 p.m. Sept. 23.

The course — from Hooker and Main in White to the Campanile on the SDSU campus — remains part of the 60-year tradition.

For more details: [shorturl.at/lpsKL](https://shorturl.at/lpsKL)

To register: [shorturl.at/hlBIJ](https://shorturl.at/hlBIJ)

# Marathon: Runners, race organizers refocus

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When the Brookings Marathon and Half Marathon was cancelled, Beth Sims created homemade bibs for herself, her daughter Maren and Maren's friend Chloe Boonstra. The Eden Prairie, Minnesota, residents also created their own half marathon, logging 13.1 miles at the nearby Mississippi River town of Stillwater, Minnesota.

day eve, and then nothing in my control" forced the race to be cancelled.

"I wallowed in self-pity over the weekend, then Doug (her brother) and I decided to sign up for Fargo Marathon this coming weekend," Radigan said a few days after the cancellation. "Hopefully we can carry out our taper and peaking fitness one more week. I feel fortunate to have this new race opportunity but definitely sad we didn't get to celebrate our first run in Brookings!"

## Finding a new focus

The siblings pivot proved successful.

Radigan reported, "It was a great first marathon experience for both of us! I finished fourth (among females and 30th overall) in 2:59.35 and Douglas finished 74th in 3:19! Both of us hit our goals and learned a lot. What a sport!"

Actually, both smashed their marathon debut goals. Radigan was shooting for 3:20 and Wedel was aiming for 3:30.

So now their plans are to come to Brookings in October. That's because Radigan and Wedel weren't the only ones to quickly develop a Plan B. After checking with city and campus officials as well as scouting the dates for other fall marathons, Bien announced May 18 that the 53rd running of the Brookings Marathon would be Oct. 22.

The date avoids a home SDSU football game, which creates traffic congestion, and is positioned three weeks after the Twin Cities Marathon (Oct. 2).

## Registration open for Brookings Marathon

The 318 runners entered in the half marathon, the 147 entered in the marathon and the 45 six-person teams entered in the relay were given the option to receive a code to register for the Oct. 22 race or have their race packet mailed to them. A few also asked to run the race virtually, however, there is no such category planned.

By early June, Bien said one-third of runners had asked to have their race bags mailed to them.

Runners who hadn't been registered for the May 14 events but wanting to jump into the Oct. 22 race could do so beginning June 1.

Registration links for the Brookings Marathon, Half Marathon and Relay can all be found at [brookingsmarathon.com](http://brookingsmarathon.com).

No Scotty Roberts 5K will be held the evening prior due to concerns about darkness and safety, Bien said. Those who registered for that May 13 race had their race bags mailed to them.

One marathoner who rolled over his registration was North Dakotan Nate Lizakowski, who had plans to notch his 50th state at the Brookings Marathon. "I've been planning (a 50th state celebration at Brookings) for five years, so I can certainly wait a bit longer. I'll see you there!"

## Making the best out of cancellation

For Maren Sims, who was planning to run her first half marathon before turning 14, it was Mom to the rescue. Part of the attraction in picking the Brookings Half Marathon is the May 14 race was the weekend before her May 20 birthday. It was to be a mother-daughter adventure and one of Maren's friends was joining them.



From left, Maren and Beth Sims and Chloe Boonstra pose with the Stillwater, Minn., lift bridge in the background after completing a hilly 13.1 miles there in lieu of the Brookings Half Marathon.

"We pivoted and took the girls to Stillwater, Minn., for a hotel night, since they were so excited about that part too, and I took them on a 13.1-mile hilly run! They did so great and I was so proud of them! We definitely will remember the weekend ... The girls have cross country in the fall but if we can make that work, we'd love to try," said mom Beth Sims, of Eden Prairie, Minn.

Steve Schroeder, at 79 the oldest entry in the day's entries, was nearly in Brookings by the time the word got out on the cancellation.

"We were devastated driving through Brookings on Friday afternoon after the storm. Cancellation of the marathon was certainly expected and accepted, so Vicky (Rohl, his niece) put together an informal half marathon, which we completed Saturday. Vicky organized a beautiful route for us around the lake (Oakwood) she lives on at Bruce. So many trees down and a lot of farm damage," Schroeder, of River Falls, Wisc., said.

## Marathon — A return to fall

This will be the second running of the Brookings Marathon in the fall in three years. In 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March forced postponement to Sept. 12.

While Oct. 22 can be late enough to run into dicey weather in Brookings, the average high and low for Oct. 22 is 55 and 32.

Fairly early in its history, the Brookings Marathon (then the Longest Day Marathon) was a November event, usually the first weekend. The latest date was Nov. 16, 1974, when the marathon switched from June. The last time it was run in November was 1981.

# A local look at the Boston Marathon

## Harris, McEntee complete Boston Marathon

Two Brookings women were among the 12,000 women who finished the Boston Marathon on the 50th anniversary of the first year that women ran in the world's oldest marathon.

Prairie Striders Running Club members Anne Johnson Harris and Adrienne McEntee were among 28,600 competitors in the 126th running of the Boston Marathon April 18.

Harris finished in 3:27:33 (7:55 per mile pace over 26.2 miles) to place 9,746 overall, 2,208 within her gender and 335 within her 40-44 age division.

McEntee finished in 4:08:38 (9:29 pace), to place 18,618 overall, 7,148 within her gender and 1,167 within her 45-49 age division.

In the accompanying articles they share their thoughts about participating in the world's oldest marathon.

## Anne Harris: Boston — An indescribable experience

Running in the 126th Boston Marathon was absolutely amazing. Not only is it the oldest marathon in our country, but this year marked the 50th anniversary of women legally allowed to participate. The array of emotions throughout the experience was indescribable, and the positive energy in Boston on Patriots' Day is incredible.

I qualified for Boston in September of 2021 at the Fargo marathon. With nearly a 10-minute buffer, I hoped my application to Boston would be accepted. I applied in early November, and when I received the acceptance email about a month later, the training began. I never imagined I'd ever run a marathon, nonetheless the Boston marathon!

I followed Hanson's 18 week training program, fortunately remaining healthy and injury-free for the duration. Although a majority of the miles were on the treadmill, I am thankful for my training partner, Ross Abraham, for the challenging early morning workouts, always involving wind! I also incorporated some strength work about three days per week.

With Easter falling on Patriots' Day weekend this year, the kids had a few days off from school. My husband, Chris, and I decided to make the trip a family vacation. We had never been to Boston, so the six of us explored the city in the days leading up to the marathon. We walked the Freedom Trail, watched a baseball game at Fenway Park, and even had lunch at Cheers.

Of course, for me the marathon was the highlight of the trip. Unlike other races, the start time was late, nearly 11 a.m. After gear checking my post-race bag, I boarded one of the official buses to Hopkinton. Shortly after arrival at athlete's village, I was directed to my corral to wait for the start. I will never forget the thousands of spectators throughout the entire



Anne Harris shows off her Boston Marathon medal with family members Max, Kaitlyn, Chris, Ty and Jay while in the lobby of their hotel.

course. The signs, music, cheering and overall encouragement was unforgettable.

The Boston marathon experience still seems surreal, and it gives me goosebumps just thinking about it. I would be honored to run it again someday and encourage every runner to add it to their bucket list. 😊



## Adrienne McEntee: “Right on Hereford, left on Boylston”

I qualified for the Boston Marathon at our local race, the Brookings Marathon, in May 2021. I was so excited to achieve my goal!

It was quite the process to arrive at the starting line, starting with bussing to Hopkinton and walking more than a mile to get to my assigned corral but for the number of people, it went very smoothly.

I think the thing that sticks with me the most is the spectators. From the starting line to the finish, it was

non~stop cheering and encouragement. They had just as much fun cheering as we did running. “Right on Hereford, left on Boylston” (the final two turns in the race) is my favorite phrase from the event, and also seeing famous runner Shalane Flanagan pacing a 2013 injured bombing victim, Adrienne Haslet.

I plan on trying my best to requalify for next year's race to take in such a wonderful experience!

Adrienne McEntee poses by the finish line a couple days before the 126th running of the Boston Marathon April 18.

# The road to Boston

By Owen McElroy

**Editor's note:** Watertown resident Owen McElroy, a frequent participant in Prairie Striders races, reflects on his 11-year journey from running a 5K on a lark to competing in the Boston Marathon.

My running story started about 10 years ago when my wife Jennifer decided to sign up for a 5K. Being a youngerish man, we tend to do stupid things, so I had to sign up too.

My last time running was as a sophomore in high school roughly 13 years earlier. The race was tough like every 5K and I felt like I did respectable for the preparation I put into it. Naturally by doing OK in a 5K, I had to buy a bunch of running gear.

Of course, this annoyed my wife because she has seen me invest in just a couple things (no one has any proof that there was more) prior to this and just have stuff end up laying around the house. This prompted a necessary "how long is this going to last" comment. So, the desire to prove her wrong is what started my love/hate relationship with running.

Like many people who start running road races, the distances just keep getting longer. The following year (2012) I completed my first half marathon and the Jack 15. (My grandfather, father and I have all completed the Jack 15 and it is now one of my families' favorite races to run).

## First marathon experience

Next race had to be the full marathon. I signed up for the Brookings Marathon the following spring. I remember doing a 20-miler to gauge how this marathon was going to go. It was awful, my legs hurt so bad! My mind instantly went to how are you going to complete this (I still had 6 more miles to complete a marathon) and why did you sign up for this?

Well, race day came and I went into it with the mindset to just to finish without walking. I was running on the bike trail that runs adjacent along the interstate, it was about halfway, and all those negative thoughts came rushing back



A few years ago at the Jack 15 3 x 5 Relay - Team McElroy (Kate left & Grace Right)



Owen McElroy (in blue) heads to Boylston Street, the final stretch of the Boston Marathon.

into my mind.

I decided to change my mindset and since I was going to finish this race to enjoy the back half of the race. It made the second half of the race a lot more bearable.

## Meeting the wall and not surrendering

After that race, running became a lot more of a permanent fixture in my life. My wife started to run the longer distances and we decided to start running with the Watertown Area Run Club.

In 2016 we ran the Twin Cities Marathon and this would be the first time I was going to push myself to see how fast I could run a marathon. Like most novice marathoners, I got wrapped up in all the excitement of the event and went out too fast. The pace felt so comfortable until it wasn't. Every mile from 17 on just kept getting harder, it became a struggle just to keep running. I hit "The Wall"!

I thought the wall was just something that took down weak runners, something I could just push through and still finish the race hard. The race that started with trying to see how hard I could run it turned into just finish the thing without walking. It took everything in my power to finish that race. I ended up finishing that race at 3:09.

At my age that put me 4 minutes off my Boston Marathon qualifying time. That put qualifying in sight, especially with me aging up to a 3:10 the next year. Well, like Boston typically does, it likes to kick people in the shorts and it decided to move qualifying times down 5 minutes, so I had to still qualify running a 3:05.

The following year we ran the race again with a group of people raising money for a disease called Friedreich's Ataxia. I decided that I was just going to give it a shot again, except this time I half-assed my training. I started the race too fast (again) and ended up struggling to finish (again), I ended up with a 3:17.

## Marathon: Looking on from the outside

Clearly, I need to properly train and figure out a race strategy if I was ever

going to attain this qualifying time.

I've ran a few marathons with a set mile time in mind. I was pacing myself at the start and then finishing it hard when I knew I could finish the race. I was figuring out a strategy! In 2020 I was lucky enough to train with a partner that runs a very similar pace.

Greg and I started training for the Brookings Marathon. Since he was a "few" years younger than me, he had to run under a 3:00 marathon to qualify. I figure if I could run under 3:00 that should give me enough of a cushion to avoid Boston cutting you, even though you ran a fast enough time to qualify. We had our training locked down and were gaining confidence with every long run. Then COVID-19 hit and the Brookings Marathon was postponed. I was so disappointed.

This kind of threw me into a funk and my weekly mileage suffered big time. Greg signed up for the marathon before it was postponed (I was waiting to see what happened), so he ran the race that year in the fall.

Watching people run the marathon just makes you wish you were out there. That kind of lit the fire to go for it again in 2021. Greg and I were starting training and things were going good until Greg went down with a nagging hip injury. I was able to keep my training up at a higher level but was lacking the confidence from the year before.

## Successful BQ effort

Race day came and my goal was to try to average a 6:55 mile. The race started and I was holding the time down fairly well. The temperature started to inch into the 60s. All my training was done in colder temps. It was starting to get to me. My time started to slip. I tried to get it back to 6:55 but could not manage to do it.

I started to break the race down into smaller segments. Finally got to 3 miles left. A 5K! I run more than that any day I run. Just had to finish and I should have a little bit of room to still qualify. I finished

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# McElroy: Faces decision at race's midpoint

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with a 3:03:19. I made the time I needed to qualify but was it enough to make the cut for the race. I was not feeling good about it.

Luckily, 2022 marked the first time since 2013 that everyone that qualified was accepted to the race. I was in!

## Shoulder to shoulder at Boston

Now the biggest challenge was a small town guy navigating public transportation to be where I needed to be to start the race. Luckily, my wife and I arrived a few days early and I became fairly comfortable with it. On race day I boarded the bus and was taken to athlete's village where all 24,000 runners stage. It was an hour wait before my wave and corral was released. We walked almost a mile to the start line shoulder to shoulder with other runners. We enter our corrals and they played the National Anthem, two huge military planes did a fly over and it was on.

I decided to try an average a 7:30 pace, I figured that would leave me at pace that I'd be happy with and still enjoy the race. There were so many people that run similar times as you that you quickly locked on a group of runners and use them as pacers.

I hit the halfway point and the downhill portion killed my legs. Many people warned me about this, but I was too ignorant to train for it. I had a

decision to make — either back off my pace and try to enjoy the race or try to maintain my goal time. The goal time was the only real option. It was going to be super painful! It was becoming more difficult to keep up with group I picked out. They flew through the downhills, it hurt my legs so bad to try and keep up. I usually caught up on the inclines.

## Found: Energy on Heartbreak Hill

Then came Heart Break Hill. I was dreading this point in the race. I had this imagine in my head of what that hill was going to be, and it was dreadful. It was a long hill but not as steep as I thought. I ended up passing my group I was pacing with going up the hill.

I looked for them at the top and didn't see them. It was time to go it alone. I saw a buddy at Mile 22, which gave me a boost of energy to keep me going. My wife was right around Mile 26, right at the turn onto Boylston Street heading to the finish line. I was so relieved to see her and turn that corner to the finish.

I gave her a hug and turned the corner. There is the finish line (I was hoping it was a lot closer)! Finally made it! I felt so relieved to be done. I just wanted to sit down and take it all in.

Unfortunately, unlike the Brookings Marathon where I can walk off right off



McElroy poses with his Boston Marathon medal.

the course and sit down, the roads are barricaded off to keep the fans in place and you have to move out of the area because there is literally thousands of people coming behind you. Even though that was a little annoying, the race was great! The fans and the 15,000 volunteers it took to put on the race really make it what it is.

## Parting advice

If you are lucky enough to qualify one day, do whatever you can to go. You will not regret it. Give yourself a few extra days to enjoy what Boston has to offer! Two pieces of advice I can offer after running the race. Train for downhills and wear a hat or sunscreen (I got baked).

Run on!

## Member Spotlight



### Frank Robertson

**Age:** 53

**Residence:** Brookings, SD / Grove City, OH

**Occupation:** Instructor at SDSU

**Family:** My wife Mary Ann and I have a daughter and three grandchildren.

**Years as a Prairie Strider member:** While I've run a number of Prairie Strider events, I officially joined in April 2022.

### Why you're a member:

I've enjoyed participating in the club's well-organized events for a few years and decided it was time to become a dues-paying member to better support these events.

### What you enjoy about running:

I'm a life-long cyclist who began running seven years ago with the goal of eventually competing in triathlons — only, I never started the swimming portion of my training and instead fell in love with running.

I love the simplicity of shorts + shirt + shoes and heading out the door and just going for a run — whether it's with a headlamp before the sun is up, in the heat of summer or the subzero temps of winter (which does require another layer or two).

Along the way I've raced in numerous 5Ks, a few seasons of duathlons and two marathons.

### Favorite running memory:

My favorite running memory would have been during the 2018 Brookings Marathon.

Training for my first marathon had been hard and I'd run the course well — so well that my pace in the closing miles was getting quicker, not slower.

I vividly remember crossing Main Street, knowing the finish line was nearing, and I began thinking about my wife and my family and suddenly began getting choked-up and tears started to well-up in my eyes.

I chuckled to myself and I chided myself, "You're not to the finish line yet. It's too early to get this emotional!"

### Your favorite Prairie Striders race:

The Hobo Day 5K because of my long connection with the university (but the Brookings Marathon would be a very close second!)

### Favorite workout:

I love digging deep and running fast (for me) so my favorite workout would be a variation on running negative splits. I start my run relatively easy, then with each mile increase my pace by 10-15 seconds/mile.

### Your most recent running goal:

On May 22, I ran the Cleveland Marathon. While the marathon didn't go as well as I'd hoped, it was still a win in a few ways.

First win: I was able to simply start the marathon. Since I began training to complete a third marathon, I've struggled with and recovered from two knee injuries and COVID in January.

Second win: I finished the marathon. I would have loved to finish in under four hours and been thrilled with a PR, but I'm even more thrilled that my knees held-up and carried me across the finish line.

Third win: My Lego (a.k.a. Mary Ann) was able to attend while supporting and cheering me on from the start and celebrating my "wins" at the finish line. Go Team Lego!

# Member Spotlight

**Lyle Claussen****Age:** 74**Residence:** Brookings, SD / Grove City, OH**Occupation:** semi-retired, still coaching and helping teach math to fifth graders.**Family:** wife Mary, daughter Nikki, grandson Ryker, son-in-law Scott.**Years as a Prairie Strider member:** Since 1993**Why you're a member:**

Prairie Striders running club is and has been a premier running club since it was started and the active role they play in supporting the Brookings and regional running community.

**What you enjoy about running:**

I enjoy the feeling of doing something that pushes me to keep going on days when I'm not having a good day.

Also getting out and enjoying the weather, even when it's not so nice.

**Favorite running memory:**

I have many but going to Kansas with Bob Bartling to run a marathon around a lake four times. A snow and sleet storm moved in the final two loops and we finished with our jerseys, trunks, stocking hats and gloves covered with ice.

**Your favorite Prairie Striders race:**

Easy choice the Jack 15, followed closely by the original marathon course.

**Favorite workout:**

20-mile runs

**Your running goal:**

At my age is to just keep running and enjoying the ability to be able to run.

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## Youth track series begins July 6

Run 4 Fun Brookings, a simplified youth track meet, will be held on Wednesday evenings throughout July.

The event is the brainchild of Kati Merkley of Brookings with sponsorship by Brookings Health System and the support of Prairie Striders Running Club and the Brookings Area Fellowship of Christian Athletes ministry.

Registration is being handled online through the Fellowship of Christian Athletes website. The entry is free, but

advanced registration is required for the participation waiver.

Run 4 Fun Brookings is at 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 6, 13, 20 and 27 at the Brookings High School track. The following week is the Predictor Mile, a Prairie Striders event that also has 400- and 800-meter runs for younger participants.

At Run 4 Fun Brookings there will be a timing board but no individual timing. Brookings Health System is

providing participation ribbons as well as refreshments.

Ages to participate in the event are 4-11 years. Events offered each Wednesday will be 50-, 100-, 200-, 400- and 800-meter runs.

For more information, contact Kati Merkley at [kthoffman@yahoo.com](mailto:kthoffman@yahoo.com).

Be sure to like and share the Run 4 Fun Facebook page for information, the waiver-to-participate link and weather-related announcements.