

'Crazy' Harvey returns to Marine Corps field

Running

Steve Nearman



Alisa Harvey, whose running prowess spans from 200 meters to the marathon, will give the Marine Corps Marathon another shot in two weeks.

"I know I'm crazy," she said with a sigh. "After 2005, I vowed never to do it again. It was a miserable experience. [But] I decided to do it after Army [last week]. I was getting in hour-and-a-half runs, and I was feeling pretty good."

Harvey said she also was spurred on by a number of women from her running store who are training for fall marathons.

Harvey, a national-class runner since high school, has had an interesting affair with the marathon. With her middle-distance career coming to a close in 1999, she stepped up to the marathon distance and ran an Olympic trials qualifying time of 2:49:28 at Richmond. That race ended with her in a wheelchair because of exhaustion.

She competed in the Olympic marathon trials in Columbia, S.C., in 2000, then honed in on building her masters track resume.

Then came 2005 and Harvey's nightmare at Marine Corps, where she helplessly watched her lead evaporate.

"I went out too quick in 2005," said the 43-year-old Manassas, Va., resident, who finished 16th that year in 3:10:07 and then won the accompanying 10-kilometer race twice. "And I didn't fuel well enough. What ended up happening is that I hit that nasty wall at 19 and 20 [miles]. It was starting to get ugly. It was

'the night of the living dead.' I nearly blacked out, and I was getting woozy along Route 110."

This year, she insists, will be different.

"I'm not going for a win," said Harvey, who ran 1:27:58 at the MCRRC Parks Half Marathon in Montgomery County on Sept. 14 and 1:00:57 for 10 miles at Army last week. "I don't think I have it in me to go under three hours. But I'm going for a masters win."

She may be duking it out with 1992 Olympic gold medalist Valentina Yegorova, a 44-year-old long-distance runner with the Atlanta-based Foot Solutions Elite Racing Team, race director Rick Nealis said.

Yegorova grabbed gold in the women's marathon for the Commonwealth of Independent States at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona and earned silver for Russia in the 1996 Atlanta Games. Nealis believes she will be the first Olympic gold medalist to run in the 33-year history of the Marine Corps Marathon.

Nealis also confirmed the return of defending champion Tamrat Ayalew of Ethiopia, who will wear bib No. 1.

"But the Mexican Navy has a group of tremendous athletes — five guys — with two-time champion Ruben Garcia [2005, 2006], and Michael Wardian will be running," Nealis said. "It should be pretty competitive at the front this year."

Wardian, who has been running nearly a marathon a week in preparation for the 100-kilometer world championships Nov. 8, has won three straight national marathons and hopes to shine in the nation's fourth-largest marathon after placing 12th in 2005 and 17th in 2003.

"Long Beach [this weekend]

and then I try and win Marine Corps," Wardian said.

Nealis said he has been busy the past year with course changes.

"I think I'm probably happy with the changes we made on the course," said Nealis, who ran Marine Corps from 1981 to 1983 in 3:11, 3:10 and 3:09, respectively, before taking up scuba diving. "So Georgetown's in there again," he said. "Left off the [Key] Bridge, but this year there will be a reverse loop around Palisades."

"Then the next thing that we changed: In the past the runners hit the wall at Hains Point. It finally hit me when you come down past the Kennedy Center and around the Lincoln Memorial and down Constitution to the Capitol and back up Independence along the Mall then to Hains Point. Put the wall where the crowds are on the Mall. So now from the Lincoln Memorial just stay on Ohio to Hains Point along the river. And then up Washington Channel side to the Mall to the Capitol and straight over the 14th Street Bridge."

Nealis said he also took away the U-turn in Rosslyn after the cutoff for Marshall Drive near the course's end. "What really drove it from the runners was that at mile 24 to 25, the tease where we took them up past the finish to Rosslyn and back, that wasn't well-received," he said. "When they come to Marshall Drive, they are ready to be done."

Note — Watch D.C. runner Rod Koborsi and his competitors on UniversalSports.com, which is offering a free live Web cast of Monday's IAAF World Half Marathon Championships in Rio de Janeiro.

