

ALL AMERICAN SPOTLIGHT

New Balance Tampa Recognizes, Promotes the Value of Masters Athletes



The highly competitive women of the New Balance Tampa Masters Racing Team slow down a moment for publicity photos of their newly launched women's 40+ team. Photo by Albert Wieringa

New Balance is leading the way as one of the first major corporations to understand the value of masters athletes to sport. Creating and supporting a new USATF club titled New Balance Tampa Masters Racing Team, the athletic shoe and apparel company supports the efforts of five remarkable over-forty women who have achieved significant success on the roads and track.

The team was conceived to bring awareness to age 40+ women who, in addition to managing professions, families and the processes of aging, remain fit and competitive. The members of this inaugural team are each capable of elite performances and were chosen for the above qualities. The emphasis is to showcase this demographic, who, with respect to athletic promotion, has historically been overlooked. New Balance's part in this is, naturally, not completely altruistic as statistics reveal that women in this demographic have robust buying power and are often their families health care decision makers. These athletes are role models and New Balance is banking that this carefully chosen team will achieve great success. They have certainly selected well as the team is comprised of five multi-award winning runners.

The five members are:

Susan 'Lynn' Cooke, 57. A former registered ER nurse, Lynn Cooke is now a Medical Diagnostic Imaging Representative

4 National Masters News

whose running career did not begin until she was age 50. She celebrated her half-century birthday by running a half-marathon. A high school gymnast, skier, and biker, she first stepped on to a track in 2015 after consistently placing among the top runners in her age group in road races. She entered her first USATF Championship Track Meet in 2015, her first time in spikes, and placed second in both the W55 800m and 1500m, easily eclipsing the All American standards in each.

Terri Rejimbai, 47. Terri Rejimbai, who used prize money from the USATF Half-Marathon Championships a few years ago to purchase her lab-chow buddy, Ursa, is a self-described masters runner, animal lover, solar-eclipse chaser, world traveler and wine enthusiast. Rejimbai is also a 5-time Disney Marathon masters champion, the 2014 USATF LDR Masters Age Group Grand Prix Champion, a 5-time Florida USATF LDR Athlete of the Year, and a multi-year Boston Marathon competitor who has taken advantage of opportunities to train with Kenyan, Ethiopian, and German runners in her long-lived running career. Rejimbai can lay claim to bests of 1:21:50 in the half marathon, 5:41 in the mile and 36:53 in the 10k. She lives by the motto, "It's not over yet, I'm just getting smarter, faster, and wiser," and offers up as her best piece of running advice, "Take care of your feet and they'll take care of you."

Laura Drake Cole, 47. Labeled "too slow" for track or cross-country in high school, Public Defender and Criminal Defense Attorney Laura Drake Cole began her athletic career riding Hunter/Jumpers. She also cycled at a national level in college at the University of South Florida before transitioning to triathlons and running in 1989. She has since qualified nine times for the Kona Ironman World Championships including a first place qualifier in 1999. Drake Cole also won both the 5k and the 15k Gasparilla run in the same day in 2001 and taken first in the prestigious Peachtree 10k. Drake Cole, living her life's motto of, "Whether you think you can, or think you can't, you are right!", is currently working on earning a private pilot's license.

Laurie Wisotsky, 45. In addition to her career as a Surgical Physician's Assistant Laurie Wisotsky describes herself as soccermom, dancemom, and short distance masters runner. She began her racing career eight years ago after being inspired watching the NYC marathon. It being her favorite distance, Wisotsky ran the 26.2-mile event until back injuries demanded a change. Two years ago she tried the shorter 5k and 10k races and added some events on the track. As Wisotsky put it, "The decision did not come easy, but I have come to realize it's the best

Continued on page 53

ALL AMERICAN SPOTLIGHT

Continued from page 4



Top, Terri Rejmbal finished 3rd female overall and 1st masters with a time of 1:29:35 at the 2015 Halloween Half. Photo provided by Terri Rejmbal

Bottom, Lynn Cooke broke the tape at the 2016 Iron Girl Clearwater 5k in Clearwater, FL with a time of 20:01 (age graded = 91.68%). Photo provided by Lynn Cooke

decision I made, not just athletically, but personally.” In the short span she has been racing the shorter events, Wisotsky has had success. She was the USATF Florida 2014 Masters Track Athlete of the year, earned a bronze medal in the 800m at the National Outdoor meet and bested the All American standard in both the 800m and 1500m. Off the track Wisotsky is passionate about medical missions, having spent time in Guatemala providing health care to the indigent and hopes to do so again in the future. Wisotsky lives by the motto, “You only live once”, explaining, “I don’t want to look back on my life and have any regrets. Pursue your passions no matter how crazy. No dream is too big!”

Christina Noordstar, 40. The youngest member of the club has been married for fifteen years to her college sweetheart, training partner and business partner, Quint. Noordstar fits running in between managing the seven Tropical Smoothie Café’s they own. Noordstar is also a Real Estate Developer and a Guest Speaker at Universities, athletic groupings and schools and was past nominee of the St. Petersburg Woman of Distinction award. She has completed six sub-3-hour marathons, her best being a 2:54 in 2014. In 2014-2015 She was selected for Florida’s Finest Team as a top Florida runner to compete at the Disney Marathon and has bettered the All American standard five consecutive years.

It was Cooke who approached New Balance about supporting Masters running as she was convinced that masters athletes, women in particular, are setting trends for the Baby Boomer generation. Cooke, who currently trains six days a week and claims top-ten masters rankings in the 800 (2015-2nd) and 1500 (2015-4th), details her reasoning, “Historically, much attention has been put on young athletes. Women 40 and over (Masters) have not been featured as being viable marketing icons. But, it is clear to many women athletes and nonathletes, and to me personally, that there is genuine interest and intense attention to the over 40 female athletes as both exercise and style trend setters. I have always believed the over 40 female is an overlooked demographic with respect



Laurie Wisotsky finished third woman overall in the the Hooters to Hooters 5k, in September 2015, with a time of 19:14.

Photo provided by Laurie Wisotsky

to athletic and shoe apparel. I can testify that these women have buying power and are still deeply influenced by athletic style, perhaps more so than ever. A high quality and well-respected company with a product line such as



Christina Noordstar was the womens half marathon overall women’s winner in 1:22, November 2013 in St. Petersburg Florida, shown here posing with her daughter in front of the Dali museum. Photo provided by Christina Noordstar

New Balance should capitalize on what I see and live. The timing is perfect with today’s older yet active and health conscious female to show it’s not always about the younger woman athlete. For New Balance to promote wholesome role models showing that an older woman can achieve what was only thought of as a younger person’s sport is not being emphasized effectively in the sports apparel and shoe world, and I feel it’s time has come.”

Paul Carlin, therunningprof.com (and valued NMN writer) featured the new club and it’s members on his site, saying, “These women are not only terrific runners but were selected for their potential to serve as role models for women 40 and up. Like many women that balance careers and family, these women also add in Elite Running

and Racing as important components of their successful lives. We look forward to seeing New Balance Tampa at the National Championships on the USATF Masters Grand Prix Circuit later this year and in the future.”