

**RUNNER'S PROFILE**

By Joe Howell

This month's profile features Debbie Flores, now Assistant Superintendent and soon to be Deputy Superintendent of the Santa Barbara School District.

Like other runners who have been featured in this column, I first met Debbie in connection with the Law Day 15K Race. That meeting was not a particularly positive one, as Debbie took a wrong turn on the course (okay, perhaps it was course monitor error) and I had the job of informing her that not only did she not win the race, as she thought, but also was disqualified!

I later met Debbie in connection with some school-related activities and have learned that she brings to her job the same level of discipline and high performance that she demonstrates in her running. If there is a tough issue in Santa Barbara Schools, you can be assured that Debbie is involved in solving the problem, often as a spokesperson who deals with parents, the media and others.

Now that Debbie has completed her dissertation, she is renewing her commitment to running and racing. Look for Debbie at this month's Chardonnay, where she will try to beat her course PR. With a little luck, Debbie will meet and exceed her goals for the year, no doubt making her a strong contender for one of the top places in her age group in this year's Grand Prix competition.

**Basic Information**

**Name:** DEBORAH (DEBBIE) FLORES

**Age:** 44

**Employment/Family:** Assistant Superintendent Santa Barbara Elementary and High School Districts

**Spouse:** George Flores, age 45

Middle School Science Teacher

Carpinteria Middle School

George and I have been married almost 24 years and have been running 20 of those years together. We both used to run and race a lot, but in recent years he has had to cut back. We still run together 3-5 times a week and he cycles 1-2 days a week.

**Other Sports/Interests:** Our favorite "sport" is hiking/backpacking. We love the outdoors and several times a year go on some pretty tough backpacking trips (e.g., every February we rendezvous with friends from the East Coast in the Grand Canyon). In the summer, we take two weeks to explore the backcountry of such places as the Tetons/Yellowstone and the Canadian Rockies. We also love to ski. When we lived on the East Coast, we were cross country fanatics. Since moving to California, we have renewed our enthusiasm for downhill—we have fallen in love with Mammoth and June!

**Running Highlights**

**Favorite Distance & PR at same:** My favorite distance is the 5K, probably because I have run my best times at this distance. In 1986, the year before we moved to California and almost 10 years after I started running, during a weekly summer 5K series in Western Mass., I ran five in the low 19s and three under 19 minutes. My PR 18:48 was the last race of that summer.

**Best Race and Why:** Last year's Chardonnay 10-miler. I ran it in 69:45, which was not that fast but was the fastest 10-miler I had raced in a number of years. For the past five years, while I have been working on my doctorate at UCSB, I have not been able to train much.

**Worst Race and Why:** Probably because it is so fresh in my mind—a recent Adventours 5K. I had been training pretty hard with speed workouts once a week and long hard runs on the weekends. I wanted to run it in 20 minutes and didn't.

**Average Weekly Mileage (last 12 months):** 25

**Favorite Local Race:** Chardonnay 10-miler

**Goals (Realistic) for 1997:** 5K - under 20 minutes

10 miles- closer to 69 minutes than to 70

Half Marathon - 1:32

1 mile - 5:25

800 - 2:30

**Goals (Wildly Optimistic) before Year 2000:**

5K - 19:30

10K - under 40 minutes

10 miles - under 69 minutes

Half Marathon - 1:30

1 mile - 5:20

800 - 2:20

**Additional Information**

**Why I Run:** There isn't enough room in this newsletter to talk about why I run - running has had such an impact on my life. Running has taught me how to set high goals and then work hard to reach them. Through running, I have learned how to be tough, not to give up, and how to endure. I have also gained confidence in my own abilities through running. Running not only keeps me physically healthy but mentally healthy. I have a very stressful job and running helps me to relieve the stress. It is an activity that my husband and I do together - one of many reasons why we have such a great relationship. The principles that I apply to running, I apply to my entire life now.

**My Runner Hero & Why:** No one in California will know my running hero as she has never set any records. Her name is Mary Cushing. When I first started running 20 years ago, there was a local runner in Western Mass. who everyone admired and I soon learned why. She was always encouraging others to do their best, offering words of advice and training tips, she volunteered many hours to our running club and to local races, and she rarely talked about her own accomplishments. I will never forget the day I finally passed Mary in a race. She was cheering for me as I went by! After I had been running about five years, Mary developed a serious illness, almost died, and has not run since, but her impact on my early running career was very significant. Now I am in my mid 40s and doubt if I will run as fast as she did at my age. I didn't appreciate until now her running talent because I had so much more appreciation for her as a person.

**Personal Training Tips:** I am the worst person to ask for training tips. It has taken me 20 years to learn how to not overtrain, not to race when I am sick/tired, and not to get so down on myself if I don't race well. I guess I would rather offer some advice, particularly to young women and those over 40. When I was in high school, people kept telling me I had tremendous running talent, but because I didn't like the coach (and was at that age when I didn't want anyone telling me what to do), I quit the track team and did not run again until my mid 20s. My advice to the young is listen to your coaches, don't waste talent, take advantage of your youth. My advice to everyone else, especially those in their 40s and beyond, is not to let the aging process slow you down. I refuse to let the fact that I am getting older stop me from training hard and even running some fast times again. I promised myself when I

finished my dissertation that I would train hard again. I firmly believe that most of the slowing down occurs in the mind and not in the body. So my advice is to stop saying things like...I just want to win my age group..and say things like...I am going to run this race as fast as I can and place as high as I can!

**Suggestions for Local Races:** I think Santa Barbara has a good variety of races at all distances. The folks who put on the races do a great job. Probably my only suggestion is to post results more quickly. I have waited for over an hour at several of the bigger ones for the results.

**Quote:** "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

