

RUNNER'S PROFILE

by Joe Howell

Our Profile subject for this month is Leah Etling. Leah is an avid (and talented) runner - she currently leads her age group in the Grand Prix. When I pressured Leah for info on past running accomplishments, she reluctantly admitted that she was the Santa Barbara County champion at 3200 meters in 1996. When I pressed for more, she used the words every reporter hates to hear . . . "No Comment". She takes pride in being the product of an all American upbringing: her parents live nearby, her mom has a toy store and "bakes better than Betty Crocker", and she describes hers as the "best family on the planet". Leah has had a number of "beats" in her position as a reporter with the *News-Press*, including sports, UCSB and her current position of covering the Santa Ynez Valley.

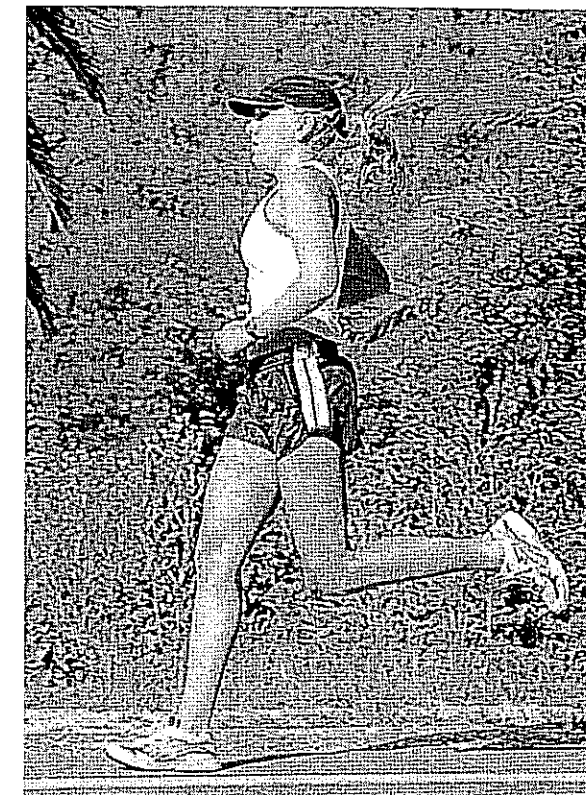
For those of you who have not yet been featured in a Runner's Profile and would like to be - take note - if you are as open and informative as Leah has been in providing information, your fellow runners will not only know you better, but newsletter readers will enjoy reading about you!

Basic Information**Name:** Leah Etling**Age:** 24**Personal Information - Basic****Nicknames:** Lee, Lee-Lee Bongeegee, ET-ling, Rover, Martha**Employment:** Newspaper reporter for the *News-Press*, covering the Santa Ynez Valley.**Family:** My brother Will, 21, is a senior at UCSB, an acoustic guitarist and my favorite comedian. My dad, William, writes a column for the *News-Press* and owns Ranchland Real Estate in Los Olivos. My mom, Debra, runs the coolest toy store in Solvang, Charlie's Playhouse, and bakes better than Betty Crocker. All four of my incredibly warm and effusive grandparents live in the SYV.**Other sports, hobbies, etc.:** Swimming, cycling, surfing, hiking, backpacking, cooking, travel, reading, driving aimlessly in circles.**Personal Information - Additional****My friends describe me as...** Martha Stewart, Nancy Drew, Gabrielle Reece, Sidney Bristow, Joan Benoit and Lois Lane in a blender.**My trademark expression is:** "Everyday I do the best I can with what I have."**If money were not a consideration, I would love to...** live in Santa Barbara and not Goleta. Write the sort of stories that people identify with and are

inspired by .. full time. Coach kids. Travel more. Spend all my extra time with the people I love the most.

Goals, in the next 5 years: Establish some sort of balance between brokenhearted, angrily ambivalent, and head over heels. Rehab my ankle. Do more ocean swimming; perfect turns in the pool. Avoid looking like I'm drowning when I surf. Figure out what I'm writing my book about. Run a marathon.**In the next 10 years:** Love unconditionally. Buy a real house in which I own the walls and can kill plants in the backyard. Get my MBA. Finish the book. Train a great running dog.**Accomplishments:** I have been blessed with one of, if not the, best family on the planet, so anything I've achieved is mostly due to their love and support. I'm very proud of my two national journalism awards and my UC Berkeley master's thesis investigating the status of women sportswriters in the U.S.**Running Highlights****Favorite Distance and PR:** (post collegiate) at same: Half-marathon. 1:32:11.**Best Race and Why:** 2003 *News-Press*. At the end of a long, hard stretch of bad weeks, when it seemed like karma was all retribution, there was a gorgeous race on a perfect day that I wish could have lasted twice as long. Being the cover girl on the shirt wasn't bad, either.**Worst Race and Why:** 2003 *Semana Nautica* 15K. Because for the last four miles, every step felt like running into a brick wall. I was undertrained coming off an injury and I paid the price.**Average Weekly Mileage (last 12 months):** 45-50
Favorite Local Race: *News-Press* Half Marathon, of course! I think it is so cool that my place of employment sponsors the biggest race of the year.**Running Goals (realistic) for this Year (2004):** Sub-40 10K and run the San Diego Rock and Roll Marathon in June.**Running Goals (Wildly Optimistic) for this Year:** Sub 19 5K; finish *Nine Trails*.**Running Goals (Lifetime):** Maybe an ultramarathon. To run healthy for as long as I can, and to devote myself to other interests with comparable passion if for some reason I can't. I'd like to share with high school students how to be smart and successful in their training.**Additional Running Information****Why I Run:** I wrote a whole essay about this once for *Runner's World*. But in case you don't have the 1996 high school edition archived, briefly .. Running is my metaphor for everything else that goes on in

my life. It is so important to me as a conduit for the perfect balance. I think the quality of people that you meet through running demonstrates what a truly unique and inspiring sport it can be.

My Local Runner Hero and Why: Dianna Hall, because she's a true real runner AND a super model to boot! Also Patsy, because she is so inspiring and every time I see her I want to hug her, but I don't cause I don't want her to think I'm insane.**Personal Training Tips:** Blend the hard days with an easy run with a friend or a game of ultimate frisbee. Meet someone else who's running nearby. Run on vacation (but don't sprain your ankle like I have twice while staring at the views in Door County, Wisc., and the Appalachians). Getting out of your usual neighborhood to train can prevent a rut.**I love runners who:** have passion, who say "good job," who understand being "real," who volunteer, and who understand why you don't have to be fast to have fun.**I don't care for runners who:** have attitudes about fast people vs. slow people. If you can't respect all others for their efforts, no matter what the performance, you jeopardize your "reality" in my eyes.**Suggestions for local races:** Let's have a fall cross country series, and bring back the marathon!**Suggestions for SBAA:** More social outings!**Miscellaneous****My views on:** divorce have changed in the last year. I've also gained a newfound appreciation for people who care, tell the truth, and pack it all in.**Quote:** "If you fall out of the raft, you must be an active participant in your own rescue."**Add anything:** The superlative quality of the endurance community went underappreciated by me until I experienced otherwise elsewhere. It's a cliché for our city, but it's better here .. if you don't read the *News-Press*, please don't criticize it, if you do, your negative or positive comments are always welcome (letting@newspress.com)**SBAA member since:** 2002; running SBAA races since 1994**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS****Tuesdays - Intervals** at SB City College. 5:30 PM warm-up, 5:45 PM workout, different speed groups. Coached workout. Starts promptly, 10 laps (2 1/2 miles) of interval work.**Sundays - Trail Runs.** E-mail Patsy Dorsey at patsybike@yahoo.com for information on weekly trail runs on Sunday. Patsy will create an e-mail list for location and time.**Saturday, December 6 - 11th Annual Goleta Noontime Rotary Club "Run for Youth"** Dos Pueblos High School. 5K/10K 8:00 AM. 10K is Grand Prix race. 10K course through rolling foothills and around Lake Los Carneros. Ed Graper, 964-7117, ed@lebowcompany.com**Thursday, January 1 - 25th Annual Resolution Day** 10K and 17th Annual Fay Hobbs Memorial 5K. Palm Park. Start the New Year with an invigorating ocean front run. Wally Marantette (805)965-3671