

THE BIG RACE

Site good resource for Steamtown Marathon

October is one of my favorite months. We still have warm, sunny days, and the cool nights make for wonderful slumber. The trees explode in brilliant hues, and little ghosts and goblins haunt the evenings.

That should be enough for anyone to enjoy. But, for more than 2,000 masochists, the month



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InSites

would not be complete without running the 26.2 miles from Forest City to Scranton in the Steamtown Marathon. The race will mark its 20th year on Sunday, Oct. 11, with no signs of slowing down. That's a lot of Gatorade, worn out sneakers and chafed thighs.

The event is enjoyed by many people in addition to the runners (though I'm guessing that not all of the runners end up enjoying the race). The course is always lined with enthusiastic spectators cheering on the participants. If you're running, or just want to go out and watch, you can find a lot of good raceday information at SteamtownMarathon.com, the official web site for the race.

Runners take note

Of course, if you're a runner, you hopefully have already prepared for the big day through intensive training and research of the route and its unique challenges. You should still check out the web site, though. There are a lot of details about raceday schedules, recent route adjustments, transportation, course amenities, pre-race and post-race activities and more.

Experienced runners and Steamtown veterans offer training tips and advice for handling the course's early downhill stretches and late uphill grinds. Resist the urge to speed down the hills into Carbondale so you'll have something left in the tank to climb the hills of Green Ridge at the end. They also give strategies for diet and rest in the days leading up to the race and its aftermath.

There are instructions on bus locations and schedules for getting to the starting line, as well as what you can and should bring with you. Turn-by-turn directions and a detailed, interactive map let you explore the course virtually, including the locations of aid stations and porta potties.

If you're from out of the area and haven't made your travel arrangements yet, the site has information and links for numerous area hotels, shopping areas and other attractions. There's also information on local dining, including some establishments that offer discounts to runners.

Another section of the site lists results from previous years' races so you can get an idea of the speed of the course. You can also see how far some runners travel to participate. Steamtown is an official qualifying race for the Boston Marathon — and it's known as a fast course — so many runners with their sights on Boston come here to run.

Something for the fans

If you're not up to running almost the entire length of the Lackawanna Valley, but would like to cheer on those who think it's a good idea, SteamtownMarathon.com has some useful information for you as well. There are a couple designated viewpoints for the race that are identified on the site, with directions provided.

Of course, there are many places to watch the runners along the route in addition to the official sites. Viewing the course map can help you pick a place that's convenient. Just be aware that there will be rolling road closures to accommodate the runners, so you may want to pick a place you can walk to.

The web site is very functional with useful information for anyone interested in the marathon. The design is not bad, but it's not top notch. I

suspect that is due to limited resources. The Steamtown Marathon is run entirely by volunteers with support from sponsors, so I'm guessing they don't have a big design budget.

And sponsors love to have their logos displayed on anything related to an event, including the web site. It's hard to make a webpage, T-shirt or banner look good when you have to accommodate a dozen or more different logos with varying shapes, decorative typefaces and clashing color schemes.

The Steamtown Marathon is a terrific, well-run community event, so get off the couch and go cheer on the runners!

