

May 2008

The month started on a positive note with a track workout on the first. Dan and I went to the Phillips Andover track, which is bright blue and turns the bottom of your shoes blue, and did repeat kilometers. This was the first track workout I felt good at since doing workouts indoors at The Governors track. The coach remembered us from our forays onto the track over the last couple of years. We asked for permission to do a workout and he said "no problem" which we then took to mean we are welcome to use the track all we want this year.

On Friday I got a jump on the weekend, cutting out of work at 10:00 am for the ride to Vermont. I was heading up to meet Eric (Morse) and do some running with him before going to the Green Mountain Hill Climb on Saturday. I made good time with little traffic and headed to Orange NH for a run up/down/around Mt. Cardigan. The day was a bit gloomy and I wasn't sure what conditions to expect as it is still pretty early in the spring season. Two hikers arrived at the closed access road at the same time I did. As they bundled up, I did the opposite and "un-bundled" myself. They gave me a funny look when I stepped out of the car with map in hand wearing running shorts and a light long-sleeve top. The half mile to the trailhead gave me a chance to loosen up, and then the climbing really started. The trail was in very good shape for the first  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a mile and then it was a bit muddy with some snowy patches but nothing severe. The final 2/10<sup>th</sup> climb on the exposed rocky summit was very cool (and chilly as well). I could see the fire tower on the summit as I scrambled up the rocks. I was happy that it hadn't started to rain and the footing was excellent.



The summit was quite windy, so I only spent enough time to take in the view and some pictures. I went a few minutes towards Firescrew Mountain, but decided to skip it as the trail was steep and had some fairly deep snow. I jogged back over the summit then hit the South summit and then Rimrock summit on a wide open trail. The trail down was a bit dicey for running and had a lot more snow than the trail I'd come up. All in all it took me a little over an hour to loop around about 5 miles with 1,500' climb and descent. Another fire tower bagged!

I met up with Eric at his house and we piled into his car for a drive to Lake Elmore. Eric had hiked it in grade school, but didn't remember much about the hike, heck I can't remember hikes I did last month! The park was closed so we left the car in a dirt lot near the lake and headed up. The first section was on a nice access road with level grades; even the higher section was nice. The final push to the top from the old caretaker's cabin to the fire tower was very steep and had just enough snow to make it slow going. The tower had an open cab, but we went up three of the six flights of steps and both felt we were high enough. The fact that the stairs were a bit wobbly and weren't well enclosed left us both nervous. For once I've actually gone up higher than someone else in the group (by a couple of feet). ☺ The next morning we did a four mile run from Montpelier high school with a loop through Burnham Park. There is a big stone lookout tower at the summit with views of the surrounding countryside.

Eric tagged along with me later that day as I was racing the Green Mountain Hill Climb. The race is around 6 miles and climbs over 1,200' from Ripton to Middlebury Gap. I was hoping to give Rob Lukaskiewicz a run this year as he nuked me in the final mile last year. The conditions were a lot tougher this year with a very cold and steady wind blowing in our faces on the point to point course. I tried to go out hard and Rob was a half step in front of me right from the gun. Last years third place finisher (Tim Reynolds) was also in the lead group. It felt awfully fast to me and I had trouble right from the start staying in the mix. At three miles Tim threw a surge in and I fell off the back. On one of the very few downhill's I gave a little extra effort and got back into the group. That didn't last for long as Tim put in another move and gapped me and Rob. The last mile has about half (500') of climb and a lot happened in that mile. Rob moved back into the lead as I fell further behind. He stayed in front until the final 200m when the young skier from Middlebury found a little something extra and blew by for a 4 second win. I never felt like I had anything in the tank and took third 37 seconds back.



The following weekend was busy, with two series having races. I decided that it would be impossible to race well at both and chose to focus on the USATF NE grand prix race on Sunday. I was really hoping to finally break into the top ten in the 40+ as I'd gotten two 12<sup>th</sup> place finishes

last year. Saturday was the fourth race in the CAR series. Dan, Rod Viens, and Scott Clark were fighting for the top three spots and I was pretty securely ensconced in fourth. My plan was to "jog" through the race. We went out and warmed-up on parts of the course, having trouble following the course map on a couple of occasions. The course was billed as a "scenic Cross-country race" and I can't argue about the scenery, but the footing was a bit rough and I would've called it a trail race (it even had some single-track). Rod took off at the start and built up a small lead. Dan hung back, having trouble deciding how hard to run with the 6k the next day and how badly he wanted to take a shot at defending his CAR series title. Scott ended up taking the lead on the tough climb up to two miles for his first win in the series. Rod sealed up the overall series title by holding off Dan. The final race in July will determine who gets second place, but my "jog" through in 9<sup>th</sup> place kept me locked into fourth place (money for the top 5).

On Sunday morning we were treated to excellent conditions, with temperatures in the low 60's and a bright blue sky. I enjoy the USATF NE series; it is a great opportunity to catch up with people. Everywhere you turn there is another familiar face. We got a big group together for a warm-up on the course; we even had a few runners from GBTC jogging along. Tim Van Orden hung out with us and signed up for a USATF number, with little convincing, he also joined up with CMS. Tim turned 40 earlier that week and will be a major score for our master's team. Joe Shairs also turned 40 two days before the race and had been planning his debut for many months. I felt a bit sluggish but was more concerned with how sore my ankles were. They've been bothering me a lot after workouts and races.



I got in a good spot in the second row at the start way on the left side of the road. I figured that would be a safe place to be as the course took a 90 degree right turn about 100 meters in. It worked out well as the field went to the right and I had plenty of room to run without having to use my elbows 😊 Dave Quintal (U-Lowell and now CMS teammate) and I worked together in the early going. Dave even got water before the mile mark and offered me some, but I was working too hard to even do more than grunt a "no" in his direction. Jim Pawlicki moved by just before the mile and I tried to stay with him, but really could do no more than watch him pull away. After 2 miles I tried to reel in Terry McNatt and Eric Beauchesne, but never quite got back to them. Those guys can really move despite how big they look (or are). I ended up 13<sup>th</sup> in the 40+ and 48<sup>th</sup> overall, just missing my goal of top ten (and my goal of 20 flat) in 20:22. We gave the Whirlaway 40+ team a scare, finishing a scant 20 seconds back. Gee, if I'd run my goal time we would've beaten them by 2 seconds. Ugh! On another note, that race was the 200<sup>th</sup> race that both Dan and I raced at (out of 1,013 for me). Dan is slowly gaining on me as I've beat him 112 times and he has gotten the better of me 88 times. At the rate he has been beating me (and the rate of races in common); he should pass me in head-to-head victories some time next year.

Al and I raced in Nashua in the New England 6 Km road running championships then piled into the car headed for Croydon (Sullivan County, NH). We quickly made the 70 mile drive to the meeting place at Exit 12 off of Route 89. Most of the group was already there even though we were half an hour early, excitement filled the air ☺ We drove to exit 13 to pick up two more of our group (note to future COHP hunters heading to Croydon - there is a brand new Park and Ride at exit 13 which is also the exit you take to get to Croydon). We headed south on Route 10 a little over 7 miles and took a right onto Croydon Brook rd,

then a right onto Central Station road which looks like a driveway. It is unpaved and signed "Dead End". It was another 1.7 miles to the imposing gate blocking entrance to Corbin Park.

I had arranged for us to hike in the afternoon as hunters would be out in the morning (turkey hunting). The Blue Mountain Forest Association number is 603-863-3250 and access was permitted for our group at \$50 per person. The biggest disappointment of the day was an unanticipated two hour wait as the caretaker was not available. He returned at 3:00 after having located a lost hunter. We handed in our waivers and piled into the back of his truck, with one four-wheel drive vehicle following. The 3 mile drive was not too bad and we all had our eyes trained on the woods looking for signs of wild boar.

After a short briefing on what to do if we encountered a boar (the stout caretaker noted "It may not look like it, but I *can* climb a tree") we were off. The trail appeared to be an old jeep road to the summit and it was in very good shape for climbing. The woods were a bushwhacker's dream and there were a number of good views as we climbed. We stopped at the memorial, but I got a bit queasy watching JR back up to take a picture. Some people have no fear of cliffs, but I get nervous watching other people on open ledges. In less than an hour our goal was achieved.

The summit was open with great 540 degree views. There was also a hunter's cabin on the summit that looked very inviting. I bet none of us have enough cash to secure a night in that cabin. The fire tower is no longer in service but the cab was locked. We all climbed to the top steps nonetheless. There was a benchmark on the summit and some cliffs to whack to. We spent a good ½ hour on the summit checking out the incredible view (to Mt Washington and beyond).



Half of the group headed back the way we came while the other half headed for Grantham peak. I think if it had been earlier in the day the entire group would have gone on as JR noted "we may never make it back here again". The day was just about perfect and the hike didn't take very long despite a 20 minute error heading down the wrong trail. We contacted Jerry from Grantham summit and then began our descent to the cabin we could see from the summit. In no time (well a little time) we were at the cabin.

Al noted "Grantham Mountain was certainly worth the extra distance. After taking the wrong trail off the summit for almost 10 minutes, we looked a little more closely at the map and corrected our route, then had a really smooth, beautiful walk over mossy, seldom-trodden paths down to the col and back up to Grantham. The ridge was littered with viewpoints, including some unique looks back at Croydon itself. There was a nice big cairn on the summit and a close-up look at some of those cliffs that are so prominent as one drives up route 89. The views northeast towards Moosilauke, Mt Washington, and the Sandwich Range were even clearer, too. It took us about an hour to reach Grantham Peak, where we called Jerry the caretaker and he agreed to meet us at the alternate trailhead. It took 20 minutes to get down to the col and 25 more minutes to arrive at the trailhead - an easy descent. We finished at 6:55 PM, and apparently we just missed 5 elk standing in the field where Jerry was waiting to pick us up".

Jerry then took us on a grand tour of the park. He must have laughed to himself when we got excited about seeing a couple of boar as when we returned the clubhouse area was nearly overrun with boar. Rod Viens (who was returned with the first group) noted: "The views up there were fantastic. We had a really cool ride back. We saw three sets of boars and one who was very brazen; he just looked at us as if to say "I dare you to get out of that car".. Yikes!!" Al also noted "We got to see a large portion of the perimeter fence, lots of feed lots, old homestead sites, a beautiful pond with cabins and picnic areas, and a couple fields that had about 20 elk in them, and about 8 boar in the swamps or off in the undergrowth. When we got back to the clubhouse, he drove us over to show off the meat-cutting facility, and there were about 100 boar running around in the fields by our cars and eating at the feed lot behind the meat-cutting building. It was quite the trip"! Al and I were on the road heading for home just as the sun set. What a once in a lifetime hike!

Links and info on Corbin Park from Bryan Meyeette's site: <http://brian76.mystarband.net/CorbinPark.htm>

Pictures: <http://s153.photobucket.com/albums/s209/davedunham/2008%20Croydon%20peak/>

Video: <http://www.active.com/video/play.htm?assetid=189f42eb-7ba6-4734-b1d5-3d16e3b58794>

The following weekend looked like my best chance to town-bag this month so I was up at 4AM for a drive to the RI border. I parked in Mendon a little way from the town line and a fire tower that I had yet to visit. I did a 6 mile run that covered Mendon, Millville, Uxbridge, and Blackstone. It was 43 degrees and raining pretty steadily but surprisingly bright at a little after 5 AM. It seemed like every street I ran on had either "hill" or "tower" in the name! The run included an East to West journey across all of Millville (a very small town). I then drove to Oxford and ran up and down to the Goat Hill to check out the fire tower in that town, Cath and I had hiked within a ½ mile of it when we did a section of the mid-state trail. Then I was off to Auburn and did a nice run on some ATV trails in Auburn and Millbury. By now the sky was clearing and temps were getting much more pleasant. Next up was Charlton, but couldn't quite get to the fire tower on Little Mugget hill. **It was heavily posted and there was a state trooper's car parked at the house adjacent to the road up the hill.** I rarely worry about a quick trespassing, but thought I might be pushing my luck on this one. So, I headed on to Rutland and parked on a dirt road by the scenic Pine Hill reservoir. This time I ignored the posted areas and ran up a grassy trail over Smith hill which straddles the Rutland & Holden line. Just before I turned back I spooked a deer and moments later a coyote. The next drive took me through Worcester, which took some time as people were out n' about on what was turning into a beautiful Saturday. I stopped at Fay Mountain in Westborough and ran up the paved road to the summit despite the "Beware of Dog" warning. There were some nice trails off the summit but they didn't head back toward the car so I only ran about ¼ mile before retracing my steps. The final stop of the day was the Crane Swamp regional trails in North/Marl/South/West - boroughs. I had a heck of a time finding the trailhead near the Westborough hospital and some of the trail markings weren't great, but I had a pleasant run up/down Cedar hill in Northborough.



**Three pictures of the view from West to East - Fire tower, No trespassing sign, cop cruiser....**

More pictures: <http://s153.photobucket.com/albums/s209/davedunham/2008%20multi%20towns%20and%20towers/>

The next day was the Trav's trail race. This is one of my favorite races; it is a great course (a slightly shorter version of the Thanksgiving course) and a great cause. The morning was sunny and the course was dry as I headed out for a warm-up with Dave Quintal and Mark Behan. Dave had never raced here before but Mark has been here many times as an athlete and as a coach. Nearly 300 runners toed the line and sprinted out for the downhill opening ½ mile. I had planned on going out hard and was surprised at how poorly I got out. It took about 200m for me to get past a girl who was about 4' tall. At the bottom of the hill I had weaved in-out of traffic enough to get to the top 15 and even went by Dave on a sharp turn (I did not throw elbows although he would be fair game in an XC race). Dave made a big move on the loose stone up hill

and easily gapped me. A couple of other guys went by as well and I was feeling that I was "all-out" and they just floated away. By now the leaders were long gone and I tried to focus on reeling in Dave. I nearly caught him at about 1 ½ miles but he threw another big surge in and I couldn't react (heck, I was already going as fast as I could...there was no other gear). He has been closing on me all year and his track work has been strong, so I knew I'd need to put some ground on him before the finish. I was also pretty sure there were no other 40+ runners ahead of us, so the battle was on for age-group honors. I snuck by him with about ¾ of a mile to go and caught a couple of other guys in the process. I was happy with how I finished on the uphill, which is not a strong suit for me. A fresh-legged 16 year-old re-passed me in the last 200m but other than that I had one of my best finishes at the Maudsley course.

The warmdown was also fun. Long time trail runner Paul Young and a friend of his from the MVS team joined me and Tom Derderian (author of a book on the history of the Boston Marathon, and soon to be a top 60 year-old runner) for a leisurely loop of the course. Tom is the team leader for GBTC and we chatted about the difficulty of getting a full team to show up to races. I later found that when typing Derderian in a document, the computer spell-check wants it to be "Doddering". It's as if the computer knows Tom! ©



A couple of days later I was back on my tower quest. This time I headed to Stoddard, NH for a run on the Monadnock-Sunapee greenway with a stop on Pitcher Mountain. I was in the region to do a talk at the EMS store in Peterborough, so it was very convenient to get a nice run in a place I'd never been before. This turned out to be a first for me. After the 5 minute run to the tower I paused on the top level to enjoy the view. Suddenly I heard someone walking in the cab above me. I was surprised and called out "hello" and in response the trap door was opened and Karen the fire warden invited me up. It was very cool to see all how they go about watching for fires and it was a bit busy due to some squalls that had passed through and blown down some trees. The only disappointment was that the clouds had rolled in and the view was limited. I asked about the distance to the next hill (Jackson Hill) and was off. The squall line hit as I was running and the rain made it seem even cooler than the mid-50 degree temperature. The run to Jackson hill was rolling and I chose the snowmobile trail which had better footing than the Sunapee-Monadnock trail. I was a bit surprised when I got to Jackson hill as I had a plan of running back but the way I wanted to go was 180 degrees in the wrong direction. So, I did an out & back run which gave me the bonus of a second ascent of Pitcher Mountain.

Wachusett Mountain was the kick-off to the Memorial Day weekend and it served as the first race in the 2008 La Sportiva USATF NE mountain series. I finished second the series in 2007, due to a combination of luck and the fact that the best mountain runners didn't race and that got me some of the La Sportiva \$\$\$\$\$\$. Wachusett requires speed and the ability to change gears. I prefer a race where I can get into low gear and just grind it out. I just don't have the flat-out speed to compete on Wachusett. I've won the masters category the last four years, but knew I wasn't going to win this year. Dan Verrington was running his first Wachusett. As we pulled into the parking lot the first person I saw was Craig Fram. The next person I bumped into was Tim Van Orden. Well, top five master would be good.

This is a big race for my team (Central Mass. Striders - CMS) and 54 of my teammates would end up finishing the race, not to mention the 20-30 others who worked it. About 15 of us got together and did a nice flat and easy 3 mile warm-up. I felt like crap which is always a good sign. The first mile climbs 357 feet or about a 7% grade, it is a steady climb. I settled right in at about 15<sup>th</sup> place. Heck there was a 50+ runner ahead of me for ½ a mile. I looked around and Craig and Dan were reasonably close and Tim was tucked in behind them. I felt like I was running well, but it is hard to tell. I hit the mile in 6:48, 11 seconds faster than last year. I couldn't remember my splits at the time so I wasn't sure how I was doing. I tried to run aggressively, keeping Dan in sight in case he faltered. I caught (teammate) Tim Mahoney at 2 miles (the same spot I got him last year). We were both intent on taking the tangents and Tim gave me an elbow shot at one point. He grunted an apology (at least that's what I thought it was), but one wasn't really necessary. It was just good hard racing and sometimes there is contact. The second mile had 250' of climb and 30' of drop, so the climb was about 5% on average. It seemed like every time you got grinding you'd have to pick up the tempo as the course got flatter. My second mile was 6:25, again 11 seconds faster than last year.

The third mile climbs 184', most of which is in the first ½ mile, then drops 114'. I could see the entire field in front of me on the final climb during the mile, but as we dropped everyone disappeared from sight. Well, everyone but Tim V.O. I tried to push hard on the downhill and at the same time tried to recover (does that make sense?). I slowly closed the gap on Tim. We hit the three mile mark stride for stride with a 6:02 split for me, which was 12 seconds faster than last year. I was looking ahead and watching as one of the guys got passed by Dan, when I heard someone charging from behind. Just as the climb got steep I could hear the breathing closing on us. Dang, that sounded a lot like Jim Pawlicki. I'd almost forgotten about Jim. My plan had been to try to go with Jim from the start. He has been beating me pretty consistently, but usually by 10-20 seconds. I hadn't seen him at all up until he passed both me and Tim at three and a quarter miles. I tucked in behind Jim and hoped that he would pull me away from Tim. I was right, but he also began to gap me. The fourth mile went by very quickly (a relative term) in 6:49 which was again 12 seconds faster than last year. I still had thoughts that I might be able to get Jim during the last .3 when the grade is the steepest (9%) but that was not to be. Jim took 10<sup>th</sup> place overall, five seconds up on me. I was very please with my time (27:28) despite it being my worst place ever at Wachusett. I ran 51 seconds faster than last year, which bodes well as we enter the Mountain racing season.

Wachusett pictures: [http://www.mtnhuck.com/gallery2/main.php?g2\\_itemId=13240](http://www.mtnhuck.com/gallery2/main.php?g2_itemId=13240)

Video (I shot right after finishing): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o5XvjQB0rQ>

The Sunday before Memorial Day is the traditional "Festivus" celebration and this year was no exception. We had about 30 people over at some time during the day. There was a ton of food and the badminton games seemed popular. We didn't really do a proper "airing of the grievances" but Peter Maksimow (who still holds the record for the longest stay during Festivus) did close out the party by pinning me. Guests got to take home a mix of "Music of Festivus".

My final race of the month was the Durgin Memorial 5km in Henniker NH. This was the second annual and I had fun at the race last year, it was one of the few wins I got last year. Despite an 8 AM start it was warm when I headed out on the course for a warm-up. I had forgotten how rolling this course was. I was still stiff and a little sore from Wachusett, but not from getting pinned at Festivus. The field was larger than last year but there seemed to be very few people out getting ready, a lot of the field would be walking. I zipped out at the start and was immediately joined by two others. The younger of the two made a big move just before the mile and I was gapped. I worked back as we came to the turn-around on the out & back course, and moved into second. The leader kept increasing the lead and I began to gap the chaser. I thought I was closing a bit from 2-2.5 but never closed enough to give a serious shot at first. Jason Porter went on to win and break my CR from last year. I took second running 13 seconds faster than last year. I can't complain about that.

I headed right back to the car and headed for the climb of the day. Craney Hill is the main slope above the ski area and it is the home to a standing (but inactive) New Hampshire fire tower. As I'd never been before it looked like a great place to head for a warm-down. The climb wasn't too bad as I took it very slowly. Most of the climb was on the paved road to the height of land, then another 200' or so on a jeep trail. Unfortunately the tower was fenced and there was no view from the top. I bushwhacked a bit and made my way over to Pat's peak where there was a good view to the north and then I finished the run by jogging down the access road that winded around the mountain.



Fire tower on Craney hill



Peter pinning me at Festivus

All in all it was a pretty decent month.

Totals = 371 miles (avg. 11.96 per day)  
 Raced 6 times with 1 PR (6km) and 3 40+ PR's.

Statistical oddity = May 3 now becomes the fourth most common day that I've raced on (8 times), the top three make more sense.

Date	#raced	Rank	
July 4	14	1	
January 1	12	2	
Thanksgiving	11	3	*This really doesn't count as Thanksgiving is on various dates
May 3	8	4	

Looking ahead:

- June will be busy with at least six races and the Orienteering 24 hour national championships, along with race directing at Northfield.
- 06-07-08 Northfield Mountain 10.3k
- 06-10-08 Boxford 10k trail race
- 06-14-08 24 hour orienteering
- 06-21-08 Mt Washington
- 06-28-08 Vermont 5k XC
- 06-29-08 Cranmore Mountain