

# Mainers win overall titles at Portland event

BDN STAFF

A couple of familiar faces took home individual titles during the 2015 Maine Marathon held on Sunday in Portland.

Evan Graves of Caribou was the overall winner for the second time in five years, while Leah Frost of Glover, Ver-

## MAINE MARATHON

mont, claimed her third consecutive women's crown. The 34-year-old Graves, the 2011 champion, got to the front near the halfway mark and was never seriously challenged. He clocked a time of 2 hours, 34 minutes, 59 seconds to beat the field of some 850 competitors.

Robert Ashby of Brunswick was second in 2:41.31, and Boston's Sean Cameron finished third with a time of 2:42:26.

Frost, a 32-year-old Maine native, registered a personal-best time of 2:47:34, which sliced more than four minutes off her previous best set while taking the 2014 Maine Marathon.

Rachel Coogan of Allston, Massachusetts, was the runner-up but finished 5½ minutes behind Frost in 2:53:07. Mary Pardi of Falmouth wound up third in 2:54:39.

Graves, a teacher in Caribou, is the coach of the varsity boys cross-country team at Presque Isle High School.

"I noticed the guy ahead [of] me

start to fall apart form wise, and I plugged away, still running my race for three miles until I caught him," Graves told the Aroostook Republican in Caribou.

"From that point on, I continued to be pretty consistent running 5:55 miles and dropping a couple of 5:40s, which felt good," he said.

Graves, formerly a successful cross-country performer at the University of Maine-Presque Isle, is a member of the Owls' Athletic Hall of Fame.



Graves

"I stuck to my plan, went out on pace, and I felt good," Graves said. "I dipped under to 5:55s pretty consistently after eight miles, and it turned out to work in my favor."

In the Half Marathon, Mike Fisher of Brookline, Massachusetts, won a tightly-contested race against Ivan Reznik of Archangel, Russia. Fisher clocked a time of 1:12:10.

The Half Marathon women's champion was Jenna Krajewski of Hallowell. She ran a 1:20:20 to beat defending champ Christine Irish of North Yarmouth (2:10:20).

Krajewski won for the second time after earning her first title in 2002 when she went by Jenna Richardson.

Gabrielle Wheeler of New Swe-

den was third among the women in 1:23:06.

There were several other Mainers among the age-group winners in the Maine Marathon.

On the men's side, they included: Dick Graves, Gorham, Male Grandmasters, 3:23:03; Colin Schless, South Portland, Male 30-34, 2:55:16; Jeff Rioux, Kennebunk, Male 40-44, 2:59:52; and Bob Morse, Standish, Male 70-74, 4:08:36.

Among the women, divisional champions from Maine were: Kathy Ventura, Falmouth, Female Grandmasters, 3:27:50; Danielle Skillin, Cumberland, Female 30-35, 3:14:20; Kate Church, Cumberland, Female 60-64, 4:46:45; and Jeanne Butterfield, Bangor, Female 65-69, 4:35:56.

## Football

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Berkner believes public awareness about the effect of concussions and other head injuries on football is one factor in decreased participation rates at the high school level.

"I think what we're going to see is that smaller schools are going to have a problem recruiting enough young men to play football," he said. "The number of kids nationally going into Pop Warner football has declined dramatically over the last couple of years, and I think part of my worry here is that we're vilifying football, and as we start looking at data ... football is a high-risk sport, but women's soccer is equally high risk."

"My take on this is not whether there are minimum roster sizes but more how do we continue to maintain this sport and whether we want to maintain this sport as a society," he said.

The National Federation of State High School Associations has established no national mandate for minimum roster size for high school football teams, nor is there a specific standard in Maine.

But there are numbers that raise eyebrows.

"There's not a magic number," said Mike Burnham, assistant executive director of the Maine Principals' Association. "I think any time you get below 20, that's a cause for concern, but there also have been some programs over the years that have had fewer than 20 that have been very successful."

Burnham said one factor to consider when assessing roster size is the age of the players. A senior-laden roster is more likely to be able to cope with the demands of the sport than rosters heavily populated by younger players.

"In 2010, Stearns went to a state championship game with around 20 kids, I believe, but they had 12 or 13 seniors," he said.

New high school football teams in Maine must complete two years of developmental play — typically involving subvarsity competition — before joining the varsity ranks. Burnham added that the decision by any Maine Principals' Association-member school to field a football program ultimately is made at the local level.

"If a school wants to make the commitment to try to field a program, we want them to have the opportunity to do that because any member school can offer any program that we offer," he said. "I think you can have those conversations about the sustainability of the program, but ultimately the decision on whether or not to sponsor a program is left up to the school."

The MPA has adopted several measures in recent years to address safety con-



BRUCE MCLEAN PHOTO

Andrew Daigle (55) of Stearns pursues a Medomak Valley ballcarrier while his teammates watch from the sidelines during a game on Sept. 11 in Millinocket. Stearns coach Steve Waceken, whose team has only 21 players, understands why Camden Hills Regional High School had to cancel its season because injuries were reducing the roster to an unsafe level. He said his team has been lucky to avoid injuries that would put the safety of the team at risk.

cerns, including placing limits on contact during preseason and regular-season practices and this year adding a rule that provides for running time during the second half of games with a differential of at least 35 points.

Roster sizes also are monitored in an effort to recognize any programs in jeopardy such as Camden Hills or schools that previously suspended their football teams such as Calais and Sacopee Valley of South Hiram.

The Vermont Principals' Association takes one additional step.

"If we have a team with 17 players [or fewer], they get a letter from the [Vermont Principals' Association] football committee just informing them that we are concerned about their numbers, we are concerned about potential injuries, and we're hoping they have a medical protocol in place to be able to deal with their students," said Bob Johnson, Vermont Principals' Association associate executive director.

While Maine has 76 varsity football programs competing in four classes with North and South divisions, Vermont has about 30 schools playing varsity football in three statewide divisions.

Johnson said that for the first time in Vermont history, one of its varsity football programs, Winooski High School, is dropping the sport after this season because of shrinking participation. As would be the case in Maine, Winooski's decision to drop varsity football was made locally.

"The bottom line is it's up to each school to decide whether it's going to maintain a program or not," Johnson said.

Participation in Maine high school football has declined 11 percent from 3,902 to 3,487 (11 percent) from

2010-11 to 2014-15, according to National Federation of State High School Associations surveys, while participation dropped two percent nationally.

### Roster realities

One commonly held belief among small- and medium-sized football programs in Maine is that maintaining an average of 10 players per high school class would provide a sufficient talent pool for program sustainability.

But most coaches in the northern Maine's smallest football division, the LTC Class D North, are envious of such lofty numbers.

Just two of the league's 12 teams, defending champion Maine Central Institute of Pittsfield and Medomak Valley of Waldoboro — a first-year program that is Class C by enrollment but playing its first two varsity seasons in Class D under the Maine Principals' Association's developmental policy — began the season with more than 40 players.

Five schools — Stearns (21), Orono (27), Dexter (28), Camden Hills (28) and Ellsworth/Summer (30) — began with 30 or fewer.

"I think it's harder and harder to not only start a program but even sustain a program with the emphasis on head injuries and concussions and the fact the vast majority of schools in the state are seeing a decline of enrollment so you have fewer kids to draw from," said Burnham, who also cited the effect of student-athletes opting to play on non-school teams as they specialize in a single sport.

Veteran LTC coaches have learned to adjust to often volatile participation numbers from year to year.

Twelfth-year Orono coach Bob Sinclair has guided Red Riots' rosters ranging from nearly 60 players to the mid-20s.

One challenge he and other coaches with small rosters face is occasionally integrating first-year players into varsity competition.

"In our league it's not uncommon for a few freshmen from each team to play, and you have to be careful when you do that," he said. "We've got one ninth-grader who plays one way this year and some who play on special teams, and you have to be careful with the situations you put your kids into because there's a big difference between a 14-year-old young man and an 18-year-old senior, a big difference."

The largest LTC Class D North roster this year is at MCI, but Huskies' coach Tom Bertrand once fielded a team there that dipped to as few as 17 players during the season.

"We had to back off some things in practice," he recalled. "We couldn't afford any more injuries so we did a lot of skill work and half-line things in practice, but we still knew we needed to go out and compete every week, so we had to get the kids ready to play."

"We slowly got the numbers back up, but when you get down into the mid-teens, it's kind of an unnerving feeling about what's going to happen from week to week, so you go into a little self-preservation mode, for sure."

Bertrand said among the areas where having more players is better is game preparation, but he added that a small roster doesn't preclude a successful season.

### Comeback trail?

Not all varsity football programs that have struggled with low participation numbers at some point in their history have been relegated to their demise.

Old Town High School compiled a 4-62 record be-

tween 2002 and 2009 and played down a class for several seasons in a bid to sustain its varsity viability.

This year's Coyotes are undefeated and already have eclipsed that eight-year victory total with a 5-0 record after Friday's 36-28 win at Belfast.

Gray-New Gloucester hadn't won a game since 2012 until its season opener last month when the Patriots ended a 23-game losing streak by defeating Mountain Valley of Rumford. GNG is 4-1 and battling for a Class C South playoff berth.

And while Stearns has lost its first five games this season, Waceken is hopeful about leading his alma mater back toward upward mobility within the LTC Class D ranks. The Minutemen went 5-3 and qualified for postseason play in 2014.

"My goal taking this on this season was to get this team through this year and look to build the program in the future and doing some things with the Little Giant [youth] league and junior high teams to get the retention rate from them to the high school team a little better," he said.

Camden Hills, which because of the premature end to its 2015 campaign is ineligible for varsity football competition for the next two years unless it makes a successful appeal to the Maine Principals' Association, also may get the chance to resurrect its program, which has won just two of its last 35 games.

That area's Five-Town Community School District scheduled a forum Monday night in the high school gym to discuss the future of football at Camden Hills. Possible options include petitioning the MPA to resume varsity play next season, competing at the junior varsity level or fielding an independent club team.

## Former UM player joins NHL's Canucks

BY LARRY MAHONEY  
BDN STAFF

Former University of Maine All-American defenseman Ben Hutton has earned a roster spot on the National Hockey League's Vancouver Canucks.

Hutton decided to pass up his senior year at Maine to sign with the Canucks after the Black Bears' season ended last March.

He then played in four games for the American Hockey League's Utica Comets and had a goal.

The 22-year-old Hutton shared the Canucks' team scoring lead during the preseason with five points on one goal and four assists in seven games.

Vancouver General Manager Jim Benning told The National Post, "We knew Ben Hutton was going to be a good player, but we didn't think he was going to challenge for a lineup spot this year. We thought he would become a top-four defenseman eventually, but we didn't know he could play with this kind of poise with the puck. On any given night, he has been one of our top two or three defensemen."

Canucks assistant coach Glen Gulutzan said to the the Vancouver Sun, "There are some guys that just have those NHL subtleties, and [Hutton] has those hard-to-teach things."

"The first thing is the poise with the puck and the ability to hold it for that extra second — not that too-long second — but that extra second, maybe make a quick step and let plays develop and move the puck," he said. "He can see plays, he has the patience to let them develop and then makes the play."

Hutton had nine goals and 12 assists for the Black Bears last season after leading the nation's defenseman in goals with 15 during the 2013-14 season when he was chosen an All-American. He also had 14 assists. He set the school record for goals by a defenseman in a season, and he became the first defenseman to ever lead Maine in goals.

He concluded his career with 28 goals and 37 assists in 108 games.

The 6-foot-3, 205-pound Prescott, Ontario, native was a fifth-round draft choice in 2012. He was the 147th overall selection. He will make \$896,250 with the Canucks.

The Canucks open at Calgary on Wednesday night.

## Nationals fire manager Williams

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

The Washington Nationals fired manager Matt Williams on Monday after a season in which the team badly underachieved and missed the playoffs.

Williams was National League Manager of the Year in his first season with the club in 2014 but his second season was a disaster. The Nationals were favorites to reach the World Series and struggled through an 83-79 season.

"This entire season was a disappointment," general manager Mike Rizzo said during a conference call. "It was not our best year. It wasn't Matt's best year. It wasn't my best year. As an organization, it wasn't our best year. All of us, together, feel the disappointment."

## Dolphins fire Philbin, name Campbell interim coach

THE SPORTS XCHANGE

The Miami Dolphins on Monday fired coach Joe Philbin and named tight ends coach Dan Campbell interim coach. Campbell will remain in the position for the rest of the season.

The 1-3 Dolphins are coming off a 27-14 loss to the New York Jets on Sunday in London. Despite rumors of his demise immediately after the game, Philbin remained confident that he still would be the coach when Miami played

the Titans in Tennessee on Oct. 18. The Dolphins have a bye this week.

But team owner Stephen Ross felt differently and by making the change now he hopes the season can be salvaged.

In turning the reins over to Campbell, Ross has put his trust in a 39-year-old disciplinarian who played with four teams from 1999-2009.

"We have to change the culture. This is the most talented team we've had," Campbell said Monday.

Campbell said one of his strengths is that he can relate to the players because he's been there. He was a member of the New Orleans Saints Super Bowl winning team in 2010.

"I'm somebody that understands them. I've been at the top, I've been at the bottom. I understand what it's like



Philbin

when things start going ... not the way you want them to," he said. "No player is the same, no coach is the same."

Campbell said he is prepared to push each player — no matter their status — to get the best performance of each player.

"You can't just go through the motions through the week and turn it on (Sunday)," he said. "That goes for the best player we have on this team. Mike Pouncey, as great as he is, needs to be pushed. Every single day."

"That goes for Suh. That goes for Misi. They have to be worked. They have to be challenged. That's the first thing I'm changing. I want them to be challenged. I want them to have to compete."

After receiving the news he had been fired, Philbin thanked Ross, the players and coaches, and Dolphins fans.

Philbin compiled a 24-28 in Miami since taking over in 2012. He is the first head coach in the NFL to lose his job this season.