



## Race brings thousands to streets of Victoria

29th Royal Victoria Marathon boosts city's profile, economy, noted runner says

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The social and financial benefits to the community from events such as tomorrow's Royal Victoria Marathon far outweigh the inconvenience of short-term road closures, according to veteran runner Dick Beardsley.

Beardsley, headliner today at the conference centre during the Free Speakers Series of the RVM, said annual marathons are a part of the urban fabric in cities across North America, half sporting event and half community festival.

"Shutting down city roads for a few hours once a year is a small price for the benefits marathons bring to a community. Volumes of people come in from outside, and the impact of that is nothing to be sneezed at," said Beardsley, whose two-second loss to Alberto Salazar in the searing race-to-the-wire 1982 Boston Marathon remains a fabled moment in running history.

Rob Reid, in his 12th year as RVM race director, estimates the marathon makes an annual impact of \$3.5 million to \$5 million on the local economy.

Of the 9,554 runners registered as of yesterday for either the RVM marathon, half-marathon, eight-kilometre or kids' races, only 2,400 are from Victoria. Approximately 4,300 are from elsewhere in B.C., 1,100 from Alberta, 640 from Washington and 250 from other U.S. states.

Beardsley kicked off the speakers' series yesterday with a talk titled My Love for Running ... It's Not Just About Winning. He will address the runners and public again today at 12:45 p.m. with a speech outlining the many obstacles he overcame following more than 20 back and leg operations, after a series of accidents left him addicted to painkillers.

Also speaking today at noon will be Michal Kapral, the "joggler" whose feats of juggling while running marathons have landed him in the Guinness World Records, and successful local runner Lucy Smith, who at 1:30 p.m. will speak on five steps to racing success.

The day will be capped at 2:15 p.m. with a question-and-answer session with 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics silver medallist Simon Whitfield, the Victoria triathlete who will join Beardsley among the 8K throng tomorrow.

Being an Olympic-distance triathlete and not an Ironman, Whitfield worries only about building up his 10K speed. Although contesting the 8K here this time, Beardsley still hauls his 52-year-old body over 42.2-kilometre marathons on several occasions through the year. When he was 48, Beardsley was able to place an admirable seventh in the 2004 Royal Victoria Marathon with a 2:44:31 clocking.

"I can't run 2:08 anymore," chuckled Beardsley, referring to his scorching personal best time of 2:08:54.

"But I still love to run. I love everything running is about. I do it for myself now. What running does for people, both physically and mentally, can't be overestimated."

Beardsley can still attract a throng of admirers, who pepper him with questions about what is considered a golden era of marathoning in the 1970s and early 1980s. Top runners of that time included himself, Salazar, Olympic champion Frank Shorter, multiple Boston Marathon champion Bill Rodgers and Canadian great Jerome Drayton.

"I never get tired of talking about that time," said Beardsley, a speaker, author and fishing guide based in Austin, Texas.

"It never gets old for me and I hope it never will. It was special."

The 29th Royal Victoria Marathon begins tomorrow with early starts at 6:30 a.m. and the main start at 8:30 a.m. The picturesque route begins on Menzies Street and winds through downtown into James Bay and Beacon Hill Park, along Dallas Road to Gonzales Bay and through the neighbourhoods of Fairfield, Oak Bay and Uplands before the turnaround and retracing of the route.

To view the course map and for additional details, go to [www.royalvictoriamarathon.com](http://www.royalvictoriamarathon.com).

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For a personal perspective on the race, go to [timescolonist.com](http://timescolonist.com) and read Denise Helm's take on her preparations for race day on the blog *Woman on the Run*.

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