

Once, she ran and loved it

By **MARK MCGUIRE**, Senior writer

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A decade removed from her high school years regimented according to the changing seasons -- outdoor and indoor track and cross country and road racing -- Erin Davis is in more of a see-how-she-feels mode these days.

She still runs five to six days a week, but that's for her, just to feel right. Last year, she found herself in the mood to run a marathon, so at the last minute she entered the Mowhawk-Hudson River Marathon.

"I wasn't in it for the competition," she said. "I just wanted to see if I could finish it."

She finished -- in 2 hours and 58 minutes.

"I'm a pretty competitive person," she said. "My competitive spirit took over."

Not enough at age 29 to get back into running full-time on a competitive basis. But every once in awhile she gets a strong reminder of her stature as a schoolgirl in the running world.

For there was a time in the mid-1990s where there was no competition for Davis, who held the nation's best marks in the 3,000 meters in 1993-94.

Running for Saratoga Springs High, Davis reached phenom status by the time she was a freshman, becoming the only ninth grader to win the national cross-country championship. In her high school career, she would win four consecutive Federation cross-country titles, and later be voted New York state's best runner of the 1990s by sportswriters.

Davis spent much of her childhood training and running. She looks back through the eyes of an adult unclouded by any regret. Well, she would have liked to ski a little bit more than she did, but that's a quibble without sadness.

"I thought it was cool at the time," she said. "What else was I going to do in high school? At that time there was nothing more I wanted to do than run."

The same was true at Penn State: Davis just wanted to run. For the most part, she couldn't.

Nothing went as planned. There were stress fractures and back injuries. "And pulls, tears -- you name it," she added. There were no Olympics, little collegiate glory. She ran the 5K and 10K, when she could run at all.

"I tried to make the most of Penn State," she said. "I was lucky enough to have good friends. I liked running too much to ever give it up."

Davis is now an assistant track coach in Lake George, a ski instructor at Gore Mountain and a job coach with BOCES in Hudson Falls. Now living in Wilton, she infrequently enters competitions. A lot depends on how her knees feel, and the left foot that sometimes aches, probably from an old stress fracture.

Maybe another marathon? (Pause): "That was a pretty LONG run."

What about the Freihofer's Run for Women, the national 5k race to be held in Albany later this month?

"It's a little too crowded for me," Davis replied. "If I feel like it, I will enter the day before."

Erin Davis is running on her own schedule these days.

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