

# New Energy Found at Seashore 50k

by Billy Edwards

Late one Thursday evening, I met up with several older kids for my first run in Seashore State Park. It was 1988, I was 10 years old and was at my first run with the New Energy youth running group. The older boys included Pat Hunt, Tommy Holland, and several girls to include Dawn Grab, Lori Temple and Tami and Tracy, twins who would run for Bill Bernard at Kellam and set his high school coaching career in fast forward. I was in awe, as a young runner I knew each one of them by name and reputation and now I was going to run with these kids, a few of my idols, who were all about four years older than me.

We set out on a loop of Osmanthus/Lagoon (now just Ostmanthus) and completed the first loop at a moderate pace. Then the girls decided they would break from the boys and do a shorter loop. I distinctly remember that it was getting dark and I did not know the trails at all. However, the challenge was laid down at dusk, "Well, Billy, you can go with us, or run with the girls." I was intimidated as hell, but made the decision to follow my running idols. What occurred was a survival run back into the growing darkness of Osmanthus, as I desperately tried to keep the older boys in sight and would sometime make it back to my mother and sister waiting in the car for me. As the boys pulled away, I would lose them in the twists of the far portion of the loop, the sounds of the night and the muddy swamp were a bit scary for this ten year old and his foray on these foreign trails. I was dually in flight to escape the swamp and fight to follow and not be lost for good. Finally, the trail straightened and I could see Tommy and Pat and pushed one last time, blasting on to Bald Cyprus and then into the parking lot just behind them and safely to my ride home.

This past Saturday I returned to Seashore after a three year hiatus from one of my favorite running spots in the country. It is where I have logged more miles than any other in my twenty plus years of competitive running. My father laid down the challenge in September to come back and keep up the string of New Energy runners winning the Seashore 50k: Tommy Holland, Danny Tepovich, me? It was

fitting that I spent the first 20 miles running and chatting with Drew Midland, 10 years younger than I and also a veteran of New Energy. I wanted to just enjoy this run, and we talked about all the locals and drew connections from current Strider leadership to Strider running legends. At the 64th street aid station (20 miles), my lack of fall base miles prevented me from keeping up with Drew and he pulled ahead. For the next 10 miles I went through good and bad patches drawing on my ironman and ultra biking experiences to push through my longest run to date. At one point on White Lake, I even got to within 10 seconds, but then faltered again scarfing another Gu in hopes of drawing some energy from my nutrition. People were kindly giving me splits and encouragement, when at the final aid station before Osmanthus (about 28 miles) was told that Drew was well over two minutes ahead. Selfishly I begged out loud to Drew, "One more BAD patch, Drew!?"

My desperate crawl and tumble along Osmanthus brought me back to chasing the older New Energy boys. I drank cola from my bottle and washed down salt tabs fighting cramps and the failure of my quads and hip flexors. Going uphill was nearly impossible and downhill was clown-like. I just wanted to finish the last long straight stretch on Osmanthus and shoot for the main trail and then get back to the finish to end this thing. Then before my eyes it happened again, my physical hell was replaced by competitive elation in the form of Drew walking. I took some more salt, another guzzle of cola and with race tactics that would make Bill Bernard grin ear to ear, I blazed past Drew like a gazelle thinking in my mind, 'out of sight out of mind, GO!' Drew even congratulated me, but I feared another bad patch for myself and I ran as hard as I could over the final mile escaping the figurative darkness of Osmanthus and flying down the road to my mother, father, and my daughter Paige waiting to see daddy finish up his long morning. Although my time was weak compared to Tommy and Danny's efforts, I was more than pleased to take the win and complete my longest run to date. I don't know the root of the name New Energy, but it only seems fitting that the memories of running with New Energy



Above, Billy Edwards and Drew Midland running thru a GOOD patch early in the Seashore 50k. They went on to finish 1st and 2nd respectively.

provided just that, new energy, to get me through successfully.

Thanks to Bill Bernard who started the youth distance running movement in this area and in our club. I got to run by Coach B as I ran the first loop of the course, shouting back at him his favorite inspiration, "ARMS, ARMS! Go to the ARMS!" The running lives of those from Tommy Holland through to Drew Midland and on to those who run with Mr. Celesia have Bill Bernard to thank.

Finally, congratulations to Mel Williams, another childhood running idol of mine, and his crew on a great third annual event.

*-Billy Edwards began running in Tidwater Strider events in 1985 with his father, Dan Edwards and now resides in Boulder, CO racing triathlons professionally and following in the footsteps of Bill Bernard coaching endurance athletes.*