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NIKE Central Park Track Club

"Don't give anything away. Never make it easy for the guys you are trying to beat." – Bill Bowerman, former University of Oregon Track and Field Coach

On August 16th, more than 100 members of the NIKE Central Park Track Club (CPTC) lined up for the Club Championships, a double point scoring race that tends to bring out the best of the best from all the running clubs. Prior to race day, CPTC Men's Team (open A division) were ranked 1st while the CPTC Women's Team were ranked 2nd (open A division). Each team placed 3rd in the competition, allowing the club's overall standings to remain. There are only a handful of scoring opportunities left, meaning both teams are in prime position to win the overall club championship. With its rich history, winning is nothing new to the NIKE Central Park Track Club.

For over a decade, both teams have consistently placed in the top three of the NYRR open divisions, with the Women's Team being the two-time defending champions (2006 & 2007). In addition, the CPTC Masters' Men currently hold the longest club champion winning streak by capturing seven consecutive titles (from 1998–2005). Already in the 2008 running year, CPTC Women's Team claimed the USATF Track & Field Championship with the Men's Team placing second.

When asked to describe the accomplishments of the 2008 Central Park Track Club, Coach Tony Ruiz shared, "There is a list of superlative accomplishments thus far, with the Club Track Nationals leading the way. With our road running teams (open, masters, and seniors) all having a legitimate shot at winning the NYRR team titles, there are reasons to be optimistic. In addition to the outstanding team success thus far, there are a number of individual accomplishments that should be highlighted such as Carl Dambkowski's 15k win in Central Park followed by his sparkling 19:36 four-mile race; Val Barnwell's 60 meter indoor record (50+) victory at World Championships and Aileen Conlon's number one ranked four-mile road time in the USA."

The secret to the overall success of the NIKE Central Park Track Club is quite simple: consistency, dedication, and commitment. Each athlete is responsible for his or her individual training: making sure to log enough miles throughout the week and sticking to an individual plan, yet due to CPTC's structured practice schedule (Tuesday and Thursday nights), each runner has ability to gain insight and guidance from two expert coaches, Tony Ruiz and Devon Martin. These structured practices are the key to the diverse make-up of the NIKE Central Park Track Club.

Back in the early 80's, CPTC would generally only meet on Thursday nights for what was considered 'race night.' With the general focus of the team being ultra-marathons and marathons, there was limited access to improve in shorter distances. It was former CPTC coach, George Wisniewski that changed the mentality of the team and formed CPTC into a balanced, diverse unit with athletes featured in cross-country, track and field, and road races. With a structured program, CPTC holds weekly practices incorporating speed workouts on the track and long runs on the weekends. Staying true to its history, CPTC still meets every Thursday gathering together at the Daniel Webster statue in Central Park at 7pm.

"The key to our team's overall success is having one track workout for VO2 maximum development and one solid tempo workout. These are basic guidelines but we stay true to form. We want to make sure that our athletes run at a more anaerobic level while working out on the track and build strength in the early part of the season. Eventually, we shift focus to running two track workouts – one consisting of longer intervals while the other consists of building on raw speed. It should also be noted that our sprinters have a completely different program. As you can see, based on our Club Track Nationals, we have a great range of diversity."

With the conclusion of the Club Championships, CPTC now looks forward to the remaining four scoring races, one race being the NYC Marathon. With both the Men's and Women's team in great positions, the idea of having both teams claim NYRR Club Champion is not unrealistic. "The Men's Team has never won an open division title so that would be extremely exciting while our Women's Team is also looking to become three-time champions. Overall, we want to finish the season strong and perform well in the NYC Marathon," states Coach Ruiz.

If you are interested in learning more about the NIKE Central Park Track Club or want to join, please visit www.centralparktc.org.

Inside Central Park Track Club Workouts:



According to Coach Ruiz, the following workouts are some of his favorites: "During marathon season (NYC or Boston), I like to have my athletes run 2 x 4 mile loops in Central Park. The key is to have negative splits. I also like giving them the 2 x 2 mile workout, prior to peaking for short road races. In terms of track workouts, I like the ladder-style workout. The workout is simple: 400, 800, 1200, 1200, 800, & 400. Finally, when I am feeling like a hard run, I give them 12 x 400, in various styles depending on the focus on the evening. Overall, I like to make sure that my athletes get the most out of each workout."

30 August 2008 | NIKETOWN, NYC, New York

by KevinS

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