

The Monster Runner Award

The Monster Runner Award is designed to celebrate the runners in our community who excel in race finishes, overcome personal challenges, run personal bests, contribute to a better life for those around them, and go far beyond their comfort zone to find something special within. Let us know about the Monster Runners that you see out running in the Eugene/Springfield area.



May 2009 Monster Runner – Matt Barnhart

This month's Monster Runner, Matt Barnhart, stands out in a crowd. Not only is he one of the area's fastest runners, but he's always positive, has great energy, and oh yeah, he doesn't like to wear clothes when he runs. Matt's running costumes and antics have always attracted attention – check out the pictures of Matt dressed as a fork, as he raced against the Krusteaz pancake (aka Flap Jack) in the recent Eugene Marathon 5K. Matt (the fork) won by the way, cruising to victory in 15 minutes and 28 seconds over the 3.1 mile course. The fork outfit, Matt admits was a bit more than he usually likes to race in – last year, he ran to victory at the Truffle Shuffle 4 Mile wearing a pair of girls running shorts, fashioned into a speedo.

Matt started running in the 5th grade in all-comers meets at school, with some guidance from his dad, who was a track and cross country coach in Harrisburg. Although he participated in a lot of sports until high school, it ultimately was running that kept driving him forward. Matt was a standout at Sheldon High School, where he graduated in 2004. He competed at Lane for 2 years and now he's not only running to stay fit, but he's still improving on his personal bests. Earlier this spring on the track, Matt established his all-time bests in both the 1500m (4:09) and 5000m (15:14). Matt says he's looking forward to some long trail runs this summer, maybe an ultra – knowing Matt, anything's possible.

Matt's talents extend far beyond his running prowess. You can regularly see him at events, shooting footage and doing interviews for RunnerSpace.com. He acknowledges that he loves music, video, and media in general, and even entertains with his band, Green Is For Go, where he plays guitar, mandolin, banjo and the ukulele. So what does he want to do with his diverse talents? Matt wants to be a teacher – he's currently working on his teaching certification, with a focus on Latin American studies. Having already completed his Spanish major, Matt has his sights set on teaching language. As evidenced by the photo on the left, it's clear to see that he's already got a great rapport with the kids.

Matt's desire to teach is also reflected in his philosophy on life – he's after that which is enduring, seeking things that go far beyond instant gratification. Over the long haul, running makes him feel real he says, and if he doesn't run, then he feels worse than if he had and had a rough experience. Matt also notes that, "Adversity leads the way – the times when you're making the greatest progress are when things are the toughest." With many enduring lessons to teach down the road and many miles to cover, we look forward to the next time we see him – in whatever clothes he is or isn't wearing!

