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Running in the family

The Rices finish one JFK 50, aim for better time

by **MATTHEW UMSTEAD**
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John and Tracy Rice are to return to the JFK 50 Mile ultramarathon Saturday. They finished the race two years ago and hope to take 30 to 60 minutes off their finishing time.

(Photo credit: by Kevin G. Gilbert / Staff Photographer)

MARTINSBURG, W.VA. - **Editor's note:** This is the second story in a six-part series about some of the people who will compete in the JFK 50 Mile ultramarathon Saturday in Washington County.

John and Tracy Rice's goal for the 2006 JFK 50 Mile ultramarathon is to "slice" 30 to 60 minutes off their time from two years ago, when they both just hoped to make it

to the finish line.

"I made him stay with me," Tracy Rice said. "If I was going to run 50 miles ... "

They were going to run them together, she said.

After 10 hours and 5 minutes of slogging their way through cold, rainy conditions, the husband and wife made it to the finish line of the nation's oldest ultramarathon.

The endurance event, which will be Saturday, takes participants from Boonsboro to Williamsport along paved roads, the Appalachian Trail and the C&O Canal towpath.

"I just wanted to finish that day," said Tracy Rice, whose interest in running dates to her days at Clarke County (Va.) High School, where she set a record in the 2-mile distance. The record stood for 15 years until it was "demolished," she said.

John Rice, 41, said he took up running 5K and 10K races for his health at age 23. He since has competed in more rigorous events, including the 2005 Ironman Triathlon in Panama City, Fla.

In March 2007, the World Police and Fire Games triathlon in Adelaide, Australia, awaits him.

"She's my coach," John Rice said with a smile.

"When they let arm floaties in, I'll do a triathlon," Tracy Rice, 36, said.

The Rices' first race together - about six years ago in Hampton, Va. - was instigated by John, who subtly prodded Tracy's competitive nature.

The two had become friends through professional circles.

"He called me on the phone one day and asked me if I wanted to run a half marathon," Tracy Rice recalled.

"I thought he was challenging me," she said, recounting his tone of voice when he told her, "Well, I'm doing it."

"He got a medal. I got an IV tent," said Tracy Rice, explaining how she consumed the wrong type of carbohydrate-laden liquid before the race and needed medical treatment.

The couple has logged about 1,600 miles while training for the JFK 50, John Rice said.

"We're not sit-on-the-couch kind of people," Tracy Rice said.

But they will be Sunday, the day after the event, she said.

John Rice said he and his wife take part in a race together every year, but they are not the type of runners who care all that much about winning these days.

The JFK 50 Mile is well-organized, and Tracy Rice said it gives her an excuse for eating M&Ms and drinking sugary soda, both of which were provided at aid stations along the course in 2004.

"Hopefully, they'll have peanut butter M&Ms this year," she said with a laugh. "... All joking aside, we just want to finish (again)."

The Rice file

Name: John "J.R." Rice and Tracy Rice

Age: John, 41; Tracy, 36

Residence: Martinsburg, W.Va.

Occupation: John, paramedic/firefighter; Tracy, stenographer

Number of JFK finishes: John, one; Tracy, one

The JFK in one word: "unique"

COMING WEDNESDAY:

Meet Martha Carpenter, a 48-year-old Keedysville resident who has finished the last three JFK 50 Miles.
