

RUNNING

Rod Dixon to speak in Middletown

Famous runner medaled in the Olympics and won the NYC Marathon



Frank Giannino

Olympian Rod Dixon, the 1983 winner of the New York City Marathon, will be the keynote speaker at the annual Crystal Run Healthcare Classic 10K recognition dinner next Wednesday at Kuhl's Highland House in Middletown. Dixon is one of the most charismatic motivational speakers around.

In July 1982, Dixon raced Middletown native Frank Shorter to the finish of one of the hottest Classic 10Ks in history. At the time, Dixon was the top-rated road racer in the country.

Brian Baker of Walden has been friends with Dixon for almost four decades. They first met in 1980 at the Falmouth Road Race and again at the Virginia 10 Miler, where Baker asked for Dixon's autograph. Brian and Rod have been friends ever since. Baker, the owner of Formula H Motorworks in Middletown, is a lifelong runner and a sponsor of the Classic 10K.



Long-distance runner Rod Dixon, left, and Brian Baker, of Walden, with Dixon's 1972 Olympics bronze medal. [PHOTO PROVIDED]

When we invited Dixon to run the Orange Classic 10K in 1982 and again in 1984, Baker volunteered to escort him through both weekends. As the years have clipped by, they would regularly see each other at races throughout the year, most often at the Falmouth Road Race in August.

The friendship

Fast forward to 2018. Baker was about to run his 40th consecutive Falmouth Road Race.

"My wife, Carolyn, and my children, Sarah (20) and Ainsley (13), love Falmouth so much that

we bought a second home on the Falmouth race route," Baker said. "I had been in touch with Rod during the prior months about having him visit me in Falmouth to celebrate. It came to fruition and we had the most incredible four-day weekend: sightseeing, running, bicycling, dinner. He became a part of the family.

"When I found out that he was going to have some free time after the New York City Marathon, I didn't hesitate to ask him to visit us at our Walden home," Baker added.

And because of Baker, we are about to share an evening with one of the most memorable

figures in all of sports: Rod Dixon.

Boston Marathon director Dave McGillivray recently shared: "Rod is the man!" I couldn't agree more.

Dixon's inaugural Classic

Rod Dixon is a rock star, a great-looking guy with a magnetic smile. People are just drawn to him. McGillivray introduced me to him at the 1982 Boston Marathon post-race gala — hundreds of people were in attendance, including Larry Bird, running-industry executives, and countless high-profile runners and sports agents. Running had become a big-time business and all the high rollers wanted to be in Boston that year.

I mentioned to Dixon at the gala that we had a race in Frank Shorter's hometown and asked if he would be interested in coming to Middletown to race. Dixon, who is from Norman, New Zealand, said, "You bet I'll come, mate, and I'll bring some of these runners with me."

Next thing: Joan Benoit, Dick Beardsley (who had placed second in the 1982 Boston Marathon to Alberto Salazar in a photo finish), Pete Pfitzinger, Sammy Peletier, Randy Thomas, McGillivray and many more of the best in the sport of road racing were coming to run in Middletown. To me, 1982 was the best year of all the Classics

because more runners participated in the race that year than in any other, and because many of them would go on to do great things.

Dixon would go on to win the New York Marathon in 1983 in one of the most memorable come-from-behind finishes in the history of the marathon. Benoit would go on to win the first women's Olympic marathon in Los Angeles in 1984.

Dixon's speech is important

I'm looking forward to hearing what Dixon has to say, as are many others. We all want to learn a few things from the man himself.

Dixon has created an amazing international organization called Kid's Marathon. He is a passionate advocate of children's health worldwide and the fitness movement. He knows that kids are not getting the physical exercise and nutrition they need.

For 17 years, Rod Dixon was one of the best runners in the world. He was recognized by Runner's World Magazine in 1991 after his 4:02 mile, as the world's most versatile runner ever.

Hope to see you at the dinner. Tickets are \$25 per person. Call 845-551-8270 for further information.

This is the final run column of the 2018 season. See you next spring.

RACING CALENDAR

Cornwall Lions Club Fall Harvest

Race: Sunday, November 11, 8 a.m. Early fee: \$25. Register: LionsFallHarvestRace.com
Challenge River to Ridge Fall 5K: Sunday, November 11. 41 Springtown Road, New Paltz. Fee: \$30. Military veterans 20% discount. Info: NewPaltzChallenge.com

Livingston Manor Free Library 5K: Saturday, November 17, 10 a.m. Main Street, Livingston Manor. Pre-register: LivingstonManorLibrary.org, \$20 by Oct. 31. Late registration: \$25 (family maximum \$75). Info: 845-439-5440.

Warwick Valley Turkey Trot:

Sunday, November 18. 4

Warwick Turnpike, Warwick.

1 mile at 10 a.m., 5K at 10:30 a.m. Fees: Mile, \$17.50; 5K, 35. Registration: RunSignUp.com. Info: WarwickTurkeyTrot.com

Wallkill Turkey Trot: Thursday, November 22, 8:30 a.m. Galleria at Crystal Run, Middletown. Sponsored by Wallkill East Rotary. Register: OrangeTurkeyTrot.com

Thanksgiving run: Thursday, November 22, 9 a.m. 74 Sanfordville Road, Warwick. Benefits St. Stephen-St. Edward School. Early fee: \$25 (\$35 after Nov. 1)

Fernclyff Forest Turkey Trot:

Thursday, November 22. 8 a.m. Montgomery Street/Mount Rutsen Road, Rhinebedk. Fee: \$25. Walkers

welcome. Registration: RunSignUp.com

Turkey Trot: Thursday, November 22, Arlington High School, Route 55, LaGrange. 25K at 8:30 a.m., Kids 1-mile 8:45 a.m. 5-mile run 9:15 a.m. 2-mile fun run 9:25 a.m. Fees range \$10-30. Info: Irv Miller, immiller1@juno.com

Westchester Turkey Trot: Thursday, November 22. SUNY Westchester, 75 Grasslands Road, Valhalla. 5K. 8:30 a.m. Fee: \$39.99. Info: TriStateRuns.com

Turkey Trot: Saturday, November 24, Village of Monroe's Smith's Clove Park, 9 a.m. Discount fees available. Info: Joe Mancuso, 845-783-9108, SmithsClovePark.org

Sanfilippo Holiday Run: Saturday, December 1, Knights of Columbus, Wappingers, Kids 1-mile run 9:30 a.m., 5-miler 10:15 a.m. Fees range: \$10-25. Info: Mike Slinsky, runfast610@gmail.com

Reindeer Ramble 5K: Sunday, December 2. 1 p.m. YMCA of Kingston and Ulster County. Info: YMCAulster.org. Register: CatskillsTiming.com

Tinsel Trot 5K: Saturday, December 8, Katrina Falls Road and Rock Hill Drive, Rock Hill. 10 a.m. Fee: \$30 (until Nov. 30). Benefits Monticello students and local charities. Registration: RunSignUp.com

Santa Sprint 5K: Saturday, December 8. Fit Body Boot

Camp, 215 Quassaick Avenue, New Windsor. Run, walk. Info: CatskillsTiming.com

Snowflake 5K: Sunday, December 30. 251 North Midland Avenue, Nyack. Benefits Nyack Community Ambulance Corps. Fee: \$35. Register: RunSignUp.com

NYRR Nights at the Races: Thursday, January 10; Thursday, January 24; Thursday, February 28. 7 p.m. Track events at N.Y. Armory, 216 Forth Washington Ave., New York. Register: RunSignUp.com
Run for the Gold 5K: Saturday, March 23. 21 Wallkill Avenue, Montgomery. 10 a.m. Fees: \$5-25. Info: StPatsRambleMontgomeryNY.com