

Tom Bandler
Distance Running

Tom took a different route to distance running. Whereas many in the field of distance running begin at younger ages — usually in late adolescence or early teens — Tom discovered his passion for the sport in 2007 at the tender age of 55. Now, at 71 years old, Tom is still recording strong performances road race after road race.

Since he started running, Tom has competed in more than 300 races, many of them in and around the Memphis area. Included among those 300 races are an impressive 66 marathons, with at least one coming in each of the 50 states. He had a goal of running a marathon in each of the 50 states, and he reached that milestone in 2023 when he ran in one in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The personal goal took him 13 years to complete.

Tom ran in all three major marathons in the U.S. — Boston, New York and Chicago — TWICE. He qualified for the Boston Marathon an amazing seven times, with the last coming at the age of 70. He ran in 11 St. Jude races, including four marathons and seven half marathons. Of his 66 marathons, Tom placed in the top-three a total of 17 times, a whopping 26 percent of his appearances. In his more than 300 races, Tom had a top-three finish 144 times, close to a 50 percent clip.

Locally, Tom has run in the Memphis Runners Track Club Road Race Series for 15-consecutive years. The series, which runs from July through November, includes five races of increasing distances: 5k, 5 miler, 10k, 10 miler and half marathon. Since he turned 60 years old, Tom has run in 63 of the individual races and have age-group placed an amazing 56 times, including 16 first places and 31 runners-up.

As impressive as his performances are, his contributions to the Memphis running community have been just as valuable. In 2017, Tom and his wife, Sara, spent up to 50 hours gathering information, filling out forms and garnering letters of support to enter the city of Memphis in the Road Runners Club of America Runner Friendly Community competition. Part of the information submitted was a video highlighting the Memphis running community. Tom's and Sara's work paid off, as Memphis was awarded one of the eight runner friendly five-year designations, which ran through 2022. Memphis also was selected as the Outstanding Runner Friendly Community from among all the entries in 2017.

For his efforts, Tom was honored with the 2018 MRTC Jack Rocket Award, which highlighted not only his personal achievements but also his support and enhancement of the running community in and around Memphis. In addition, Tom is an active member of the Germantown Thoroughbreds and Bartlett Running Group and has served as a coach in the Women's Run Women's Walk program, mentoring others to pursue their own running goals.

Please welcome to the Hall of Fame, for distance running — Tom Bandler.