

Elite Freihofer's runner returns to field, with stroller in tow

Melody Fairchild will push 14-month-old son in race on Saturday



IMAGE 1 OF 5

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Melody Fairchild, two-time masters champion at the Freihofer's, talks to students at Guilderland Elementary School on Thursday, June 1, 2017, in Guilderland, N.Y. (Paul Buckowski / Times Union)

Elite runner Melody Fairchild has taken her son, Dakota, to a dozen states and five countries since he was born 14 months ago.

Their latest trip brings them to the Freihofer's Run for Women, where Fairchild will push Dakota in a

stroller during the 5-kilometer race Saturday morning in Albany.

"He's had quite a first year," Fairchild said.

Fairchild, 43, won the Freihofer's master's (40-and-older) division in 2014 and 2015 but missed last year after having Dakota, her first child.

While she'll wear an elite number (No. 40) this time, Fairchild plans to start at the rear of an expected field of more than 3,000 entrants. She has a left knee injury that she suspects is a torn meniscus and is participating mainly to encourage the recreational runners at the back of the pack.

"It's important, because I love talking to people and I love hearing their experiences," Fairchild said. "I really admire women, or men, who'll never know what it's like to run a seven-minute mile. For them, walking a 5K is a big deal. I'd like to celebrate that and just be out there to feel the vibe."

Fairchild will be done in time to cheer on the Junior 3K Run at 11 a.m.

More Information

Freihofer's Run for Women

When: 9 a.m. Saturday

Where: Start/finish on Washington Avenue in Albany, next to the state Capitol

Fairchild, who lives in Boulder, Colo., nearly came to the Freihofer's last June. Even though she wouldn't have competed, she enjoys the visits to local schools in the days leading up to the race that have become a valuable part of the event.

"I had bought the ticket to come and everything, for even just the speaking," she said. "I had to cancel. It was just too much."

Fairchild returned to win the master's title at the USA Track & Field Cross-Country Championships in Bend, Ore., this past February.

She began feeling knee pain after returning from Uganda, where she coached the U.S. junior team in

the world cross-country championships in March. Naturally, Dakota went with her.

"He was held by beautiful Africans along the trails," Fairchild said.

Dakota certainly captured the attention of the fifth-graders when Fairchild brought him along on their visit to Guilderland Elementary on Thursday morning. Students laughed when Dakota made noises into the microphone that his mother was holding.

Asked if her son will become a runner, Fairchild sounded cautious about Dakota following in her footsteps. She was a celebrated runner in high school and at the University of Oregon before taking a long break from the sport.

"I think it would be so much fun if he was (a runner), but I'm not attached to that," Fairchild said. "If he wants to play the violin, whatever. Where I live, the town is full of kids who are the children of star runners. And those children have had a bit of a hard road, because there's this expectation from the time that they can walk that they're going to be like their mom or dad."

Fairchild said having a child has tested her in ways that distance running never did.

"I love it," she said. "I've never dug so deep for anything. Those first few months as a mom, I said, 'I think 100 miles would be easier to run.' You think, 'I'm so tired,' but it's amazing because you're going on no sleep and you've got to get up and take care of this little one. Then the sun comes up and you forget it all and you just have another great day."

Fairchild, who's married to Glen Delman, would like to have a second child. At some point, she plans to return to the Freihofer's to run competitively again. Until then, she's content to be part of the pack.

"I like going slowly," Fairchild said. "As a runner, you're always shooting out the door and running so fast, training. I've learned being pregnant and being injured, when you're walking, you take in a lot more information."

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