

5th Annual Great Cranberry 5K
June 18, 1983 | Great Cranberry Island



Clapper Wins Annual Cranberry - The Bar Harbor Times
-David Avery & Mary Ellen Matava

Lined with lupine, lilacs, and buttercups, the single road on this sea bound oasis is usually only graced by aging pickup trucks laden with lobster traps. But on this June day, the cracked and weather pavement suffered the pounding of 600 feet as runners from all over the country competed in the fifth annual Great Cranberry Island five-kilometer road race.

Five years ago, the road and the flowers scarcely noticed the 60 athletes who ran in the first race. But Saturday, the flowers along the route were stretching their pistils and stamens in order to catch a glimpse of the leaders as they rushed past.

And rush past they did. Gerry Clapper of Bucksport established a new course record in winning his second Cranberry Island race in five years. His winning time of 14:49 shaved two seconds off the previous record set by last year's winner Mike Gaige of Bangor.

Well-known female runner, Robin Emery of Lamoine topped the women's field of 95, covering the course in 18 minutes and 11 seconds. Diane Wood of Bar Harbor was the second woman finisher with a time of 19:26.

Clapper, a University of Maine cross-country star, pulled away from second-place finished Neil Wood of Keene, N.H., "over the last 200 yards of the race," the winner said. The two had bolted from a group of half a dozen leaders with about with about three-quarters of a mile to go, turning it into a two-runner race.

Clapper said later, he was not sure he would win until the last 10 yards of the race, when he checked over his shoulder for the last time and Wood was too far behind to catch up.

The record holder for the cross-country course at UMO said he had not really trained since spring track season ended five weeks ago. Clapper said, "the rest didn't help or hurt me." The biggest reason for Saturday's success was his outstanding cross country and track seasons where he improved his endurance and developed a strong kick.

This was Clapper's fifth Cranberry Island race and his second win. He won in 1980 and was second in 1981 and 1982 to Gaige.

The winner was one of four members of the Clapper family to compete Saturday. Both his parents and his 15-year-old brother also ran. His mother, Leona, took top honors for women, 50 and older with a time of 22:39.

Jeff Crawford of Orono finished third, overall, with a time of 15:01 and Carol Roy of Bangor was the third-place woman at 20:01.

In the special categories, Ron Merriam and Heather Dankel won the 12-years-and-under category with times of 22:09 and 25:27 respectively.

Tim Wakefield of Omaha, Ne., and Susie Higgins of Bangor were leaders in the 13-to-18 category, covering the course in 15:20 and 20:17. Wakefield's father, Gary, was the winner in the 40 and-over category at 17:31, and Mardi Reed as the woman's winner in that category at 21:06.

Loren Ritchie of Patten covered the course in 18:21 to be the leader in the men-over-50 category.

The Central Maine SStriders team consisting of Clapper, Chris Bovie and Fred Junkins, was the first men's team to cross the finish line, and the Harbor House Harriers with Virginia Vendrell, Ellen Hunter and Paula Dunbar, were first for the women's teams.

Race directors and some-time residents of Cranberry Island, Larry and Gary Allen, work at making the event more than a race. "We want to make it an outing," Gary said later. With plenty of free beer and 500 pounds of lobster on hand for spectators and runners alike, and outing it was.

The two are avid runners who were members of the Mount Desert Island High School cross-country team which won the state championship in 1972. They have both directed other races, including the prestigious Benjamin's 10K in Bangor. Gary has even completed an ultra-marathon, a grueling 50 miles of running.

Sons of a military family, the Allen's spent much of their early childhood traveling. But their high school years were spent on Cranberry Island and at MDI High School. "This is home," Gary said.

Because brother Larry is moving to Florida next year, Gary will be left to direct the race by himself. In 1984, Allen hopes to get some major sponsorship and attract some really big names in the running world he said.

But he would not even promise there would be a race next year. "Logistically this is a very tough place to put on a race he said of the plans necessary to ferry nearly 500 people to the island. "But we'll try."

This year, the race was sponsored by Maine Distributors who supplied free beer to all attending. The lobster feed which followed the race featured the tasty Maine delights caught by Cranberry Island fisherman Wesley "Junior" Bracey.

After the ferry returned the racers to Northeast Harbor Saturday afternoon, a midday fog bank rolled across the southern end of Great Cranberry Island. It pulled a subtle shade over the previously vivid hues of the flowers and returned the island to its sea bound serenity.