

How the ‘ShyROCK Marathon’ was Born

Inaugural Race Transforms a Town

By David Matherne
Wire2Wire Running Press

CARTERSVILLE, GA—The news came like all the rest, predictable in its disappointment. The 2020 Skidaway Island Marathon had been cancelled. Well, not exactly. Rather, it was being transformed into a ‘Virtual Marathon.’ Last I checked, it’s not easy to do a marathon no matter *how* you do one, even if there’s a chorus-wall of adoring, screaming fans lining the streets along the way.

Nothing would deter Shyanne Gentry. She had trained *too* hard for this day.

Her show must go on. Still, she realized she would be going it alone. That’s when the Wire2Wire Running Club stepped in.

“We could do it with you,” chimed Susie Lackey, 67-years-young, “there’s no reason for you to do it by yourself.” Others quickly seconded the informal motion at the Tuesday night club run. And just like that, a new plan was set in motion for that coming Saturday. Who says you have to plan for months for a marathon?!

Within a truncated week, the Running Club began to build on Susie’s idea. Indeed, why not?

Well, the COVID-19 virus for one thing. After all, wasn’t that the indiscriminate culprit of why the race in Savannah unplugged its clock and went virtual? With the idea of appropriate social distancing, and limiting to 10 how many folks could gather to help Shyanne at any one time, the race was back on.

A 26.2 pound baby

Soon, a route was formed—two identical 13 mi. loops around Cartersville’s storied Indian Mounds—and the **Wire2Wire ShyROCK Marathon** was born!!...a beautiful 26.2 pound baby at 7:00am, March 21, 2020. The mother of the idea—the *Wire2Wire Running Club*—was a baby itself, a toddling six months old, having only formed in September, 2019. But it has been destined for great things since, growing from 8 members to over 30 in its short existence.

After the pledge of allegiance and a sweet prayer offered from Shyanne, a small group would soon be off. Referencing Hebrews 12:1, “Let us run the race,” she prayed, “with perseverance the race set before us...” I’m sure that was not the last time she prayed to God during what would end up being a five-hour journey. She certainly had no illusions of challenging Eliud Kipchoge’s recent sub-2-hour-marathon, the fastest ever. And her **shoes** from the local running store *Athlete’s Locker*—where its owner Landy Shropshire opened up his shop nearly three hours early for restrooms—*those shoes...*were certainly good enough for this day.

Runners gotta Run!

It was dark. A half-dozen or so spread out at the make-shift starting line. In a terse blast, the bullhorn's siren went off, waking a distant neighbor perhaps. It's fine...he would surely go back to sleep at 7:00am on a Saturday, right? After all, *he* did not have 26 miles to run. Such a fellow might sleep in, later have a casual breakfast, check the weather, then even later, much-much-later, have lunch and do all sorts of things in between those meals before maybe getting in his exercise for the day...a walk outside to get his mail and a U-turn back to his crib to work from home.



Shyanne Gentry (foreground) & Wire2Wire Running Club ready for 7am start of the 2020 ShyROCK Marathon.

That's what our strange new world looks like for the moment. But runners need to **RUN!**

The first loop of 13miles would have a half-dozen or so runners ushering Shyanne, initially fresh and light-footed, through her first miles with joy and pep and camaraderie. These were Sherry Spinks, her college-aged daughter Cheyenne (different girl from Shyanne Gentry), David Reusch, Kimberly Mayben, Steve Gardner, Susie Lackey and Sarah Hardeman. Coach David Gierlak soon met them halfway through that first long loop. Some would drop off while others jumped in like some *'It's a Small World'* ride at Disney.

“Doc, it hurts when I do this.” * “Well,” Doc said, “then don’t do that.”

And on it went.

Rockin’ and Running, just like Shyanne always does. Including jams like *Hall of Fame* featuring Will.i.am and M.J.’s *Don’t Stop ‘til you Get Enough*, her playlist blared.

Loop 1, down, no blisters, no worries. Unless you count the sore knee that Shyanne hardly complained about, but the grimaces she attempted to hide began to betray her and soon let me know that she was in serious pain. *Dang*, I wondered out-loud, running beside her. Thirteen more miles to go with an iffy knee? Won’t be pretty. Now for Loop 2.



Good news at 20--downhill; Bad news—a wall.



Then end is almost in sight, just a 5K to go.

Shyanne suggested she might begin to use words a bit less-‘PG’ than ***‘Dang.’*** You’re entitled, I told her.

Her husband Carl repeated his support job of giving her water, nutrients, and electrolytes along the way before asking, “Need anything else?”

“No,” she said, “I’m good.”





Cheyenne Spinks, *Cheyenne-the-Younger* so we don't confuse her with Shyanne Gentry, inexplicably headed *back* out for Loop 2, abandoning her plan to "only" run the first 13 mi. loop. She tagged up with her teenaged sister, McKenzie Spinks, who had committed to running the second loop. Something got into Cheyenne, as she just didn't stop. They made a good movie about a guy from the South like that.

Well, it wasn't water that got into Cheyenne-the-Younger because at mile 18 she began to cramp. Having not planned to go this far, she had not taken in enough agua. She'd never done a marathon before but with "only" 6 miles left, Cheyenne-the-Younger admitted that she was thinking, 'Oh, what the heck.' Others might be saying the same thing about now...only 'WHAT THE HECK?!'

The Spinks sisters plugged along in spaced tandem. Meanwhile, their mother was steady as a rock, running every step of the way with her new sister-in-Christ, Shyanne, who was now debating walking.

Let me set one thing straight right here. At 18 miles, you don't 'debate' walking. At times in life, our body has VETO power, executive authority, king-of-the-hill last word on telling you, I WILL Walk. And after around 20 miles that's with a *good* knee. "OK, 30 seconds of walking, then back to running," veteran marathoner Sherry Spinks coached. A large contingency entered Dellinger Park, only to find that the much-needed restrooms were all locked. [*Insert appropriate expletive here!*] Additional challenges not needed at that point.

Many Endearing Moments

At this point a worn-out Shyanne admitted, "I just want to go home." Then, to balance that desire with the stronger urge to finish, she triumphed, "ROCK ON with perseverance!"

The last group met up with her for the final 4-5 miles...Dede Florence and Sherry's husband Travis Spinks, with whom I had joked that he would join the amazing women of his family, Sherry, Cheyenne, and McKenzie, for the final 365 yds. He's actually quite a good runner himself, but he takes my ribbing well. Dede's son Maximus jumped in to "do a few miles, maybe 10," yet ended up putting in 14 miles. Nothing says 'New Distance P.R.' like a spur-of-the-moment marathon in your town.

There were many endearing moments throughout the day, but it was not uncommon for people to literally jump from what they were doing to hop in on a whim and run a bit with the small group, still maintaining their social distance.

A man and his pre-teen daughter were doing yard work, but when the running party came by their house, they funneled in and did over 2 miles with the group. Turns out, it was Sarah's husband and daughter Grace.

Another stowaway, Abby Culverhouse, talked it over with husband Charlie, then exited van, hopped in, non-running shoes and all, and managed the last 4 miles. Again, like some scene from *Forrest Gump*.

*** CAUTION ***

This race was transforming a town, a small town badly needing some synergy like this. But perhaps the funniest moment of the day was when Shyanne & Co. entered a subdivision. No more than two years old, a toddler was playing in the yard with his dad.

Eyeing our group...the little one was apparently hatching a plan as we circled the cul-de-sac and head back out. As we passed his house again, by now he had coaxed his dad to bring him to the street and he toddled the length of his yard to his-mailbox-finish line. SO precious!



C'mon, Dada. FASTER! You gotta keep up!

The end was in sight. David Reusch, who had started off at 7:00am doing the first 13 mi. loop, had gone home to corral his family, bringing them back to form a cheering section for the few and proud. The finish line, Landy's running store Athlete's Locker, was coming into view. A make-shift finish tape—bright-yellow **CAUTION * CAUTION * CAUTION**—was festooned like some taut and colorful Christmas

lights. It was held by Susie and Sarah of course, who had also started out in the race with that siren blast in the dark-yawn ...All assortment of family and friends were in an otherwise-desolate parking lot awaiting their ROCK Star, Shyanne to arrive.

And just like that, with no visible limp, after a loop or two around the parking lot to ensure that it was indeed 26.2 miles on her GPS, in came ShyROCK Gentry. She was flanked, like the heroine she was becoming, by several Wire2Wire Running Clubbers, still disciplined enough to maintain their social distancing, and ushering her in unlike the Skidaway Island Marathon ever could have. There, too, was Sherry and Cheyenne Spinks, who had run the entire dang thing as well!

She broke the CAUTION tape in 5:03:12 as cheers became the only hugs she could have from us. Well, Carl her wonderful husband, was allowed to give her a well-deserved one in earnest. The rest of us had to restrain what would've undoubtedly been our throng of congratulatory hugs and high-fives. Instead: Virtual high-fives and words of pride.

After five, wonderfully-painful hours, her playlist of songs now exhausted, she, like the lyrics which urged "...don't stop 'til you get enough," had finally gotten enough. And stopped. 26.2 miles was certainly enough. And much like that Tom Hanks film, ShyRock stopped. I'm not sure if her knee was just fine-and-dandy, but she completed her M A R A T H O N! She could now go home.

"I truly believe," Shyanne told the small crowd, shortly after finishing, "that I was way more successful with all of the wonderful people supporting me!" She smiled, "I am so blessed." Indeed, the day blessed us all.



Shyanne Gentry winning the inaugural ShyROCK Marathon as W2W Running Club members cheer her on.



The Three Amigas: **Cheyenne Spinks (L)**, **Shyanne Gentry (C)** and **Sherry Spinks (R)** display **Shyanne's finish time**. **All three finished the entire 26.2 mi. marathon distance.**

FINAL TIME: 5:03:12

And suppose Shyanne *had* worn a pair of those Nike 'Vaporfly 4%' racing flats, the brilliant-orange controversial racing shoes Kipchoge wore in setting his world-best. Might Shyanne have gone sub-5 hours, as Kipchoge went under 2? Let's see.

Well, if Shyanne is 4% faster than her 5:03:12, then she effectively cuts off 12 minutes, 13 seconds... equivalent to a 4:50:59. Conveniently, the finish line was right there at Landy's store, *Athlete's Locker*.

Skidaway Virtual Results												
File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help												
100% \$ % .00 123 Default (Ar...) 10 B I A												
fx	Last Name	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
32	Grippe	Lisa	F			6:35:00	Full					
33	Contreras	Dwan Ana	f			2:27:03	Half	Moncks Corner	SC			
34	Doty	Meg	F			3:36:05	Full					
35	Gentry	Shyanne	F			5:03:12	Full					
36	Williams	April	F			2:34:01	Half					
37	Myers	Leslie	F			45	5k	Sierra Madre	CA			
38	Moore	Chana	F			2:54	Half	Grovetown	GA			
39	Spite	Erin	F			2:54	half	Grovetown	GA			
40	Russell	Jonathan	M			4:58:52	Full	Clayton	NC			
41	GaNun	Shannon	F			2:31:58	Half	Savannah	GA			
42	Finley	Marion	F			2:55	Half	Athens	GA			
43	Vazquez	Paige	F			48.07	5k	Rincon	GA			
44	Vazquez	Anyia	F			48.07	5k	Rincon	GA			
45	Jones	Stacy	F			2:09:19	Half	Mount Pleasant	SC			
46	Ernst	Jennifer	F			5:28:13	Full	Saint Louis	MO			
47	Simanek	Juanita	F			2:17:33	Half	Nashville	TN			
48	Jordan	Janet	F			2:00:24	Half	Skidaway Island	GA			
49	Ware	Megan	F			2:12:40	Half	Seattle	WA			
50	Li	Tim	M			1:47:18	Half	Broomall	PA			