

HISTORY: Women's involvement in U.S. Marathon Trials Pre-event Validation

In 1985, Fred Lebow, of the NYRRC (New York Road Runners Club), anxious to dispel rumors about the length of the New York City Marathon Course, contacted Pete Riegel of the RRTC. Pete formed a group measurement team of the best U.S. riders that traveled to NYC from June 21-23, 1985. That team included Pete Riegel, Bob Letson, Wayne and Sally Nicoll, along with NYRRC staffers and NYC measurers Bill Noel, David Katz and Terpsie Toon. Ted Corbitt, founder of the certification program, attended the exercise but did not measure. The group laid out and measured a new NYC marathon course. The activity was reported in Measurement News #12, July 1985.

The measurement and validation was styled after the pre-validation the RRTC had completed to verify the 1984 Olympic Marathon Course in Los Angeles. As a point of information, the IAAF has utilized a procedure of course pre-validation for many years.

So this was the first time that a US woman had had an opportunity to measure with the men. From this exercise, Sally Nicoll hatched the idea to form an all-women's pre-validation for the 1988 Women's Olympic Trials Marathon in Pittsburgh, PA. Sally volunteered to coordinate with RRTC chair, Pete Riegel, to form an all-women's pre-validation team. This allowed the women to take full responsibility for their own event. Pete agreed to support the concept and Sally was charged with identifying and training the team.

The 1988 Pittsburgh Marathon Trials sponsors were very supportive of the idea. WLDR chair, Julie McKinney, threw in some support along with the RRTC and the rest is history. The first women's pre-validation was a huge success. The 1988 team members were: Carole Langenbach, Betsy Hughes, Susan Bascom and Amy Morss. Wayne Nicoll served as technical advisor. Sally Nicoll coordinated all aspects the pre-validation event. Bill Phelps accompanied the team on the course in place of course measurer, Mark Courtney.

Sally spearheaded the women's team again for the 1992 Marathon Trials course in Houston. The team of riders included Amy Morss, Betsy Hughes, Carole Langenbach, Elizabeth Longton supported by Sally Nicoll. Mary Ann and Tom McBrayer, the course measurer, served as local hosts and technical advisors. The crew came up with the idea to include a Trials qualified athlete, so Carol McLatchie was asked to ride with the women's team. Carol did not use a Jones Counter, rode at the back of the team and learned first hand what is involved in course validation. Again, this was a special event for all involved.

Four years later, Sally passed the baton to Carol McLatchie to organize and continue with the Women's Marathon Trials pre-validation. Amy Morss, the only female state certifier (New York), help recruit the women's team and manage the technical aspects of the pre-validation for the 1996 Trials in Columbia, SC. The team included Amy Morss, Betsy Hughes, Elizabeth Longton and Carol McLatchie, riding as athlete representative.

Amy and Carol again recruited for the validation exercise for the 2000 Marathon Trials for a return to Columbia, SC. The team for the 2000 Trials included, Amy Morss, Karen Gerweck, Carol Kane, Kathy Vierzba and Carol McLatchie. Local athletes were recruited to ride with the women's team: Janis Addison, a qualified Trials athlete and Holly (Hargroder) Ortlund, local athlete and Carolina Marathon organizer.

For the 2004 Trials in St. Louis the women recruited were: Carol Kane, Kathy Vierzba, Mary Edwards and Carol McLatchie. Bill Glauz, Kansas/Missouri state certifier, traveled across Missouri to assist the team.

A note of recognition to the course measurers of the Trials Marathon courses. They have usually ridden to lead the women's validation team---providing valuable insight in the shortest possible route for course validation. Experience has showed these men to be helpful, dedicated, and fun individuals. Hats off to all Women's Trials Course Measurers: 1988- Mark Courtney, 1992- Tom McBrayer, 1996 & 2000- Ed Prytherch and 2004- Tom Eckelman.

Submitted by Sally Nicoll & Carol McLatchie
Fact checked by Pete Riegel (February 2004)