

Black Distance Runners Hall of Fame Inducts Inaugural Members

Marathon pioneers Ted Corbitt, Marilyn Bevans top honorees.

By

Alison Wade;

Image by

Courtesy of Corbitt family

Published

November 18, 2013



The inaugural Black Distance Runners Hall of Fame induction ceremony was held on Friday in Richmond, Virginia, in conjunction with the Richmond Marathon. The first class of inductees included distance running pioneer Ted Corbitt (seen above) and 1977 Boston Marathon runner-up Marilyn Bevans.

This was the ninth year that the National Black Marathoners Association (NBMA) held its annual summit in conjunction with a marathon. The Hall of Fame induction ceremony on the eve of the marathon was a new – and necessary – addition, according to Tony Reed, co-founder and executive director of the NBMA.

“If we don’t recognize our own runners, I’m not sure who really will,” said Reed. “We feel that it’s important that we acknowledge the things that our runners have done, even if others haven’t. It also becomes a source of information for blacks that are interested in getting into distance running. They can come to one place and find information about the achievements of the Hall of Fame members, as well as the achievements of others.”

Corbitt was a member of the U.S. Olympic marathon team at the 1952 Olympics, but was best known as an ultramarathoner. He was also integral to early efforts at organizing road racing, such as helping to create the Road Runners Club of America and New York Road Runners, and standardizing course measurement.

Bevans, who in addition to her Boston runner-up spot also won the Baltimore Marathon twice, was the first national-class black female U.S. marathoner.

The Black Distance Runners Hall of Fame ceremony honored runners in several categories. Bevans and the late Corbitt will received Trailblazer Awards. Frederick Davis III and the late Angela Ivory, who have completed 440 and 303 races of the marathon distance or longer, respectively, were honored in the Distance

Runner category.

In the Running Community Service category, Frances Gilbert, co-founder of Cincinnati's Avondale Running Club and Flying Pig Marathon board member, was honored, as was Warren Elzy, co-founder of Cleveland, Ohio's Team Marathon running club. The South Fulton Running Partners of Atlanta, Georgia received the the Running Club Award.

NBMA members who have achieved various milestones, including 100 marathons, running a marathon in each of the 50 states, or running a marathon on each of the seven continents, were also recognized.

Despite the NBMA's name, being a marathon finisher is not a requirement for membership. The NBMA estimates that only 54% of its members have completed a marathon. The Black Distance Runners Hall of Fame will not be limited to marathoners either, but the honorees will mainly be those who focus on distances of five miles and longer.

According to Reed, only one out of every 52,500 people in the U.S. is a black marathoner. "A large percentage of [our members] don't belong to running clubs because there are no black running clubs in their cities, and that's one of the things that we hope to change," said Reed.

"A lot of us end up doing our training alone," added Reed. "This annual summit is an opportunity for them to be around other black marathoners and to get inspiration."

The video below shows Corbitt's son, Gary, at a different Hall of Fame induction for his father. Corbitt was one of four marathoners added to the New York Road Runners Hall of Fame on October 31, three days before this year's New York City Marathon.

<http://www.runnersworld.com/new-york-city-marathon/legends-1976-new-york-city-marathon-key-to-running-boom>