

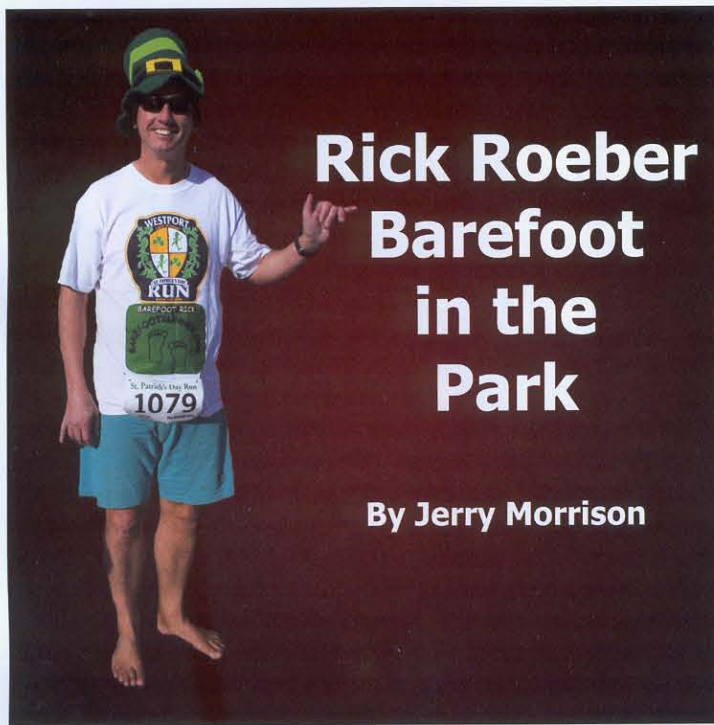
# MASTER PIECES



**MAGAZINE OF MID-AMERICA RUNNING ASSOCIATION**

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**[WWW.MARARUNNING.ORG](http://WWW.MARARUNNING.ORG)**



# Rick Roeber Barefoot in the Park

By Jerry Morrison

**Y**es folks, he runs barefoot in the parks, on the roads, everywhere. We are talking about Barefoot Runner Rick Roeber. Since he started running in 1990 he has compiled an amazing record of marathon runs, both shod and shoeless. Until recent times the only person to run ONE marathon barefoot was Abebe Bikila, who won the Olympic Marathon at Rome in 1960.

Rick ran 18 shod marathons starting in October, 1990, at the Kansas City Prime Health Marathon. He ran 18 shod marathons up to Dallas White Rock in December 2003. Taking his shoes off, he ran 26 more marathons barefoot! Most of his marathons, shod and unshod, took place all over the country, including Hawaii. Some notable runs were Boston, barefoot, Kansas City Marathon, barefoot, Dallas White-Rock, barefoot, Kona Hawaii, barefoot. Lincoln, Chicago, St Louis, Heart of America and Salt Lake City all were barefoot. He has run the notorious Heart of America, shod and unshod three times, and Boston four times, once barefoot.

On February 10th, this year, Rick ran the WyCo Run Toto Run ten miler trail run on the outer course at Wyandotte County Lake Park. Yes, no shoes. There was snow and ice on the trail. How were his feet? "Beat up," he said. So he stayed in for a couple of days to recuperate. In all, he has run 7885 miles since starting barefoot running November 21, 2003, including The Patriots Run Ultra Remembrance run in September 2006. That he ran in nine hours and eleven minutes, No shoes.

Rick Roeber, 51, started running in 1990 at age 35. He was coming off a divorce and looking for something to do, "besides hanging out in bars." He started out with a mile run, then two miles. Soon he was training for a marathon, which he ran at the Rib Run in 1999. He ran Boston in 2003 which he ran with a stress fracture in his knee. Looking for some relief from his knee problems, Roeber heard about barefoot running and decided to try it. It worked. Soon he was running trouble-free. His problems had cleared up. He has been injury-free for three years. He runs every day. Although sometimes

it can be nasty, as in December 2005, when he ran in snow at six degree temperature. He had frostbite in some toes. "It was stupid," he said. But he went to Dallas the next week and ran a 3:50 marathon.

Why does he do it? He said, "There are several reasons why. When I began in October 2003, I was fascinated by the idea that one could run without shoes. I have always loved going barefoot, so it seemed very logical to me. I read up on barefoot running and discovered that barefoot runners experienced far less injury because of ball/heel foot strike. Heel striking causes leg and knee problems. Since I have run almost exclusively barefoot since October 2003, I have not experienced an injury to my knees or legs. That was not true when I wore shoes. I experienced a stress fracture in my tibial plateau of the left knee and severe clicking in my right knee. Since running barefoot, I have no recurrences of problems associated with former injuries." See FAQ on this subject at Rick's website: BarefootRunner.Org.

Roeber has been married for ten years. He and wife Rebecca have three grown children, a girl 18 and two boys in their twenties. His wife's daughter is 17 and stepson twenty. His wife is not a runner, but she is his biggest cheerleader and goes to his race. She thought barefoot running was a bit weird at first, but she got used to it. Roeber has worked for Sprint ten years as project manager.

We asked him about his foot strike while running barefoot. He says he has learned to land lighter on his feet than when he wore shoes. He lands on the bottom of his foot first, quick and flat. The force is taken on the outer arch. A quick, short stride.

Rick Roeber is interested in forming groups to enter races as a barefoot group. He has had no problem with race directors in the many races he has run barefoot.

We leave Mr. Barefoot with this quote from him. "Learn your limitations, go inch-by-inch, and mile-by-mile."

See several pages of information on barefoot running at Rick's website: [www.BarefootRunner.Org](http://www.BarefootRunner.Org).



Jerry Morrison, left, and Carl Owczarak show-off the quilt made by Janet Owczarak to celebrate Jerry's 24 years as director of the Groundhog Run. The quilt is made up of shirts from many of the past races. Jerry will retire next year after his 25th year as director..



## The PsychoWyCo A real trail event

by Rick Roeber

Photos by Dick Ross

Race Director Ben Holmes warns folks about this one as he states on the event webpage ...

*This is a REAL TRAIL event. Yes, I said TRAIL event. If you want to run on a sissy, paved course, this isn't the race for you! The course consists of rocky, rooty, and hilly bridle trails & single-track trails. It's a loop course, and you will be in the woods, for the most part. The length of each loop is a wheel-measured 10.35 miles; you do the math; 3 loops is 50 kilometers long. The course's trails can be challenging due to rocks & roots and the sometimes muddy conditions, and the constant barrage of rolling hills. But remember: This is Kansas, so how tough could it really be??? Actually, only 22% is flat, and the rest of the time you are either going up or downhill, and some of those hills are very steep. There is also a 1/3-mile section of paved road that you will run on at about Mile 5 of each loop. But, in keeping with the theme of the race, you will be going uphill on the pavement.*

He's not kidding about the difficulty ...

Not only is the course TOUGH, having all the characteristics of an Ozark trail complete with jagged limestone, tree roots and hills where you actually have to pump your thighs with your hands to get up, but it is in February, for gosh sakes! This means, in the Kansas City area at least, that the weather could be anything – balmy or frigid. On the morning of the

10th of February at Wyandotte County Lake in Kansas City, Kansas it was the latter. One could see that portions of the trails were still snow and ice packed. As the sun was peeking over the ridge at 8 a.m., photographer Dick Ross of SeeKCrun was having folks pose with a thermometer. Geez Louise! It was 16 degrees F, but no wind thank goodness! If it would have been any colder, this barefoot runner would have stayed home. I know my limitations! I had agreed to meet Scott and Jocelyn Jacobson who work for the Kansas City Star along with photographer Jennifer Hack at the morning event. Scott and his wife, Jocelyn, are working on a barefoot running article for the paper which should be out in the next couple of months. I met the threesome a little before the 8 a.m. start. Scott (also called "Jake")

determined to run with me. Did I mention that the 10 mile trail is one loop around the lake? Also, I failed to mention that other runners were looping TWICE and THREE times to make their run a 20 miler or a 50 Kilometer! Oy Vay! I couldn't imagine going any further than I did with the one loop. The run started a bit after 8 a.m. My feet were a bit sensitive for the first half mile or so and then they warmed up nicely and I fell into my running groove. My favorite parts of the trail were when we would hit flat spots of snow cover that had not frozen with ice. I could easily run along these trail portions without any fear of falling. However, the climbs were tough and the descents were treacherous where the snow pack had melted and where ice had formed. We all grabbed for saplings along the path on the descents just for a steadying influence. There were runners all around me falling from the slickness of the trail. I fell twice, both in the first 5 miles and on descents. Fortunately, they were "butt slides" which only gave me a good excuse to laugh at myself.

At the half way point, we were cruising down the road underneath the dam when those up ahead said "Turn around!". We had missed the trail! Not a big deal ... it was only about a third of a mile detour. On this course, I was not looking for any particular time so it didn't matter too much. The last 5 miles were the hilliest part. Literally, on some hills I would have to pump my thighs with my hands and arms in order to keep the inertia going uphill.



Keith Dowell shows the results of a fall on the ice.



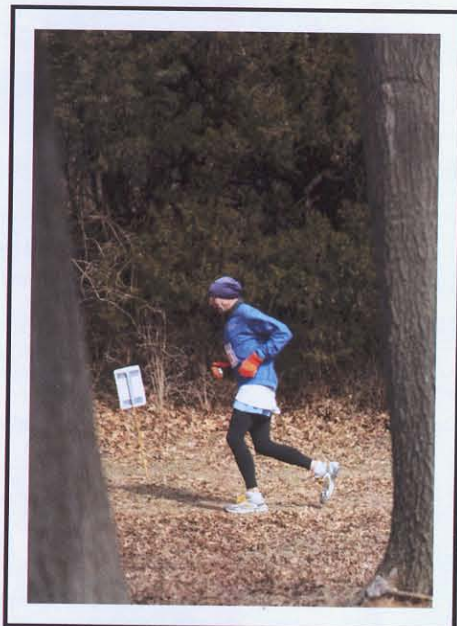
Rick Roeber ran the race in barefeet.

Finally, we came full circle back to the parking lot where we had started. After stopping, I noticed that I had stubbed a couple of toes and the blood covered toes on both feet. After wiping them off, I noticed for such small wounds they were sure oozing demonstrably. No big deal as they were superficial. Like I told those at the finish line, there will be plenty of other "shod" runners dealing with injuries after this run, including black

toenails from the dramatic down hills as their toes are jammed continually in the toe boxes of their shoes.

Jake kept up with me the whole way. Actually, he is a really fast runner and probably could have waxed me but he chose to bring up the rear. We were both tired afterward but I think we felt a real sense of accomplishment completing this course. I, personally, think this was more demanding than any running event I have done, including all my marathons and my 40 mile ultra. I really feel

that I accomplished something that very few have ever contemplated – 10 miles barefoot on a very tough rocky trail in sub-20 degree F with snow and ice covered conditions. I believe that God has given me a gift of endurance in this particular area of my life. The realization of this is driven home to my soul, more so everyday. By this, I feel humbled and blessed!

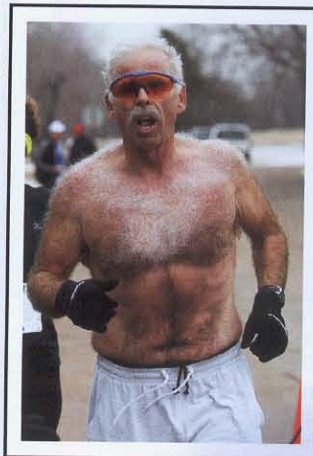


Jeff Behrends runs through the woods.

Postscript: Thanks to RD Ben Holmes who not only gave me a complimentary entry, but also created a BAREFOOT DIVISION of which I was the only one. Thanks Ben, for the nifty medal and shirt!

PHOTOS:

Right: Gene Wee, a reporter for [www.runlawrence.com](http://www.runlawrence.com)  
 Below: Bruce Filippi who runs every Topeka-to-Auburn race. The temperature for the day was 20 degrees!



**Topeka-to-Auburn Half-Marathon**  
 Photos: Dick Ross

**Female Winner: Christy Nielson-1:25:25**  
**Male Winner: Theodore Roundface-1:16:07**

**Race presented by the Sunflower Striders**



Race announcer BJ Taylor, Topeka Mayor William Buntten (race starter) and Brad Rhoden (race director)

[CLICK HERE TO GO TO BAREFOOT RICK'S BAREFOOTRUNNER.ORG](http://BAREFOOT RICK'S BAREFOOTRUNNER.ORG)