



E-Newsletter | May 2016

Runner and Athletes

On May 7, 2016, the inaugural Women's Right to Run 19k will be held in Seneca Falls, New York, the birthplace of women's rights (where the first women's rights convention was held in 1848). The unusual distance of 19k was selected to acknowledge the importance of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that enfranchised women. In the home of the National Women's Hall of Fame and the Women's Rights National Historical Park, inductee Kathrine Switzer (the first woman to run the Boston Marathon and the woman credited as being the driving force for getting the women's marathon as an Olympic event) will serve as the celebrity host of the 19k. This month's e-newsletter features two other women runners and athletes of note: Joan Benoit Samuelson and Jackie Joyner-Kersey.



Joan Benoit Samuelson

The first women's marathon Olympic event was held in 1984 in Los Angeles. Joan Benoit (later Samuelson), a member of the U.S. team, won the event by more than a minute over the nearest competitor. An athlete who hails from Maine, Samuelson began running track when she was in high school while recovering from a broken leg. She received All-American honors in cross country and track during college. Samuelson won the 1979 Boston Marathon, setting a course and American record. She won again in 1983, setting a new world record. Her 1984 Olympic gold medal was a prelude to her winning the Chicago Marathon in 1985 where she set an American record.

Samuelson published two books, serves as a motivational speaker, and conducts

clinics around the world. She established a race in Maine that attracts runners from all over the world and whose proceeds go to charity. In 2008, she participated in the Olympic marathon trials and, in 2009, completed the New York Marathon. She was in her fifties and still finished both in under 2 hours and 50 minutes.



Jackie Joyner-Kersey

Heptathlon athlete Jackie Joyner-Kersey is considered one of the greatest athletes of all time. With three Olympic gold medals, one silver medal and one bronze medal to her name, Joyner-Kersey was the first American woman to win the gold medal in the long jump and the first woman to accumulate more than 7,000 points in the seven-event heptathlon (100-meter hurdles, high jump, shot put, the 200-meter dash, the long jump, javelin throw, and the 800-meter run).

Joyner-Kersey excelled in sports early. As a teen, she won the National Junior Pentathlon Championship four years in a row, and received many high school honors in several sports. With her full college scholarship, she was able to excel in track and field events and decided to focus on Olympic training. She would go on to medal in the 1984, 1988, 1992 and 1996 Olympics. Today, she works to encourage youth to pursue sports.

Samuelson and Joyner-Kersey are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Their accomplishments inspire us and remind us how important it is to continue to tell women's stories.

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Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America
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