



**Inside today:
The Herald's
Rocket & Tiger
Winter Sports guide!**

**House OKs
whopping
\$1.1 trillion
spending
measure**

Page 3

**Asian carp
scare has
Great Lakes
officials
scrambling**

Page 13

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Dane to run 200-mile relay — alone

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In April, teams from all over the country will run in the American Odyssey Relay (AOR), which is an over 200-mile marathon broken up into 36 legs from Gettysburg to Washington, D.C.

Most teams will carry 12 runners, with each participant responsible for three legs of the race.

"A relay is by far the most fun anyone will have while running — and not just this race, but any relay," explained AOR race director Bob Fleshner. "It turns an individual sport into a team sport, which is a huge change because you don't want to let your team down."

Some squads are a little more motivated than others and have just six runners on the team.

As for Titusville-native Dane

Rauschenberg, well, he plans on running the entire 200 miles by himself — and no, that's not a typo.

Why would Rauschenberg take on such a monumental task?

"I'm bad at handoffs," he joked.

Actually, to Rauschenberg, it's all about giving himself a challenge.

"When you put your mind to it, you can do anything," he explained.



Dane Rauschenberg will attempt to run a 200-mile relay marathon from Gettysburg to Washington, D.C., without a team in April.

See RELAY, page 3

Dane . . .

From Page 1

Rauschenberg is familiar with conquering mind-boggling challenges. In 2006, the former Rocket completed 52 marathons in 52 consecutive weeks. But running one marathon per week, and almost eight at one time are completely different obstacles.

"They're definitely different challenges. It's a different beast running 7.8 marathons," elaborated Rauschenberg. "[When running a marathon per week], it's tough to wrap your mind around. There's constant planning; anything goes wrong and the whole endeavor is up in smoke."

To prepare for the AOR, Rauschenberg will run 50-mile and 100-mile races leading up to relay. He'll also doing a heavy amount of double running, which means he'll run in the morning and the evening in the same day. He figures he must grow accustomed to spending time on his feet, while staying in constant forward motion.

Since the AOR has a time limit of 36 hours, Rauschenberg won't have much opportunity for pit stops. Instead, his "rest time" will consist of walking up

every hill at a fast pace.

"Last year, there were four-to-five teams of six. We carefully examine each team because we want to make sure everyone can finish," said Fleshner. "They need to prove their physical capabilities."

Fleshner was quick to point out that Rauschenberg is in a league of his own.

"Dane is different story, he's on a whole different level," he elaborated. "By no means is it a guarantee he can finish. This is an incredible undertaking."

2009 was the inaugural year of the AOR, and Fleshner said the race has improved, despite a very successful first relay.

The AOR originally developed after Fleshner had participated in three other relays, and fell in love with the experience. He knew from the beginning that because of the monuments and the beautiful scenery, he wanted his relay to finish in Washington. However, it was a buddy's suggestion to put the starting line in Gettysburg.

"It was my friend's idea to tie together the history and the beauty. It makes [the

relay] more attractive," explained Fleshner.

Some of the proceeds from the AOR will go to The Wellness Community-DC, a cancer support services charity. Fleshner made it a point to choose a "local grass-roots charity," where they could make a big difference.

A big difference between the average person and Rauschenberg, is the constant drive to accomplish something that many believe to be unattainable.

"Don't mind me if I'm not listening, because I'm too busy doing," he said of his critics.

Whether Rauschenberg can complete the daunting task set in front of him, he's already in the midst of planning another extreme event: Running from Titusville, Pa., to Titusville, Fla., in one month.

"It would be neat to connect the two cities," he said of the endeavor, which he'd like to complete sometime in the fall of 2010.

Rauschenberg would also like to continue to be involved in the 2010 Drake Well Marathon, which he called a "smashing success" in 2009.