

Tallman Club to be well represented in Saturday's Charleston Distance Run

By Bob Fretwell
For the Gazette

The Tallman Track Club extends its tentacles to runners, not to capture them as much as to embrace and nurture them.

This unincorporated conglomeration numbers Bill Rodgers among its 100-plus members.

On one of his infrequent Charleston Distance Run visits, the New York and Boston marathons legend ran the Saturday morning 15-miler and then broke bread, so to speak, with some brethren of the Tallman Track Club. Actually, they engaged in small talk.

"Boston Bill is just a regular guy," said Fred Waybright, an early beneficiary of the good will of Ken Tallman, the titular head of the track club.

In return, Waybright assembles three- and four-member teams, handles their finances and enters them in the Charleston 15.

The Tallman Track Club has been a major player over the years in the five-category team competition. The 30th running of the demanding 15-mile test, scheduled for an 8 a.m. start Saturday, promises to be more of the same.

Team awards are not given in the accompanying Charleston 5K run.

The Tallman logo appears at the top of at least six 15-mile teams. They are Tallman Female Masters, Tallman Elite Ladies in Female Open, Tallman Wannabes in Male Open and three in Male Masters — Tallman Old and Good, Tallman Elite Masters and Tallman St. Albans Boys.

Time is running out for a team to wear Tallman shirts in the corporate division.

Final Distance Run registration, at a steep price of \$35 per runner, comes tonight during the Verizon-sponsored pasta feed and the SportMart clinic at the Civic Center.

Tallman does not have the team market cornered, however.

Others in the team chase include Spartans Track Club of West Virginia, Boys of 50, Tuesday Night Racing Team, Pittsburgh Team, Farm Use, Charleston Area Medical Center, Copperhead Ridge Running Group, Charleston Ridge Runners, Life Quest, Bluegrass Runners, Midlifers, Pfizer, Blacksburg Striders and American Electric Power.

In contrast to Rodgers, the wife-husband pair of Tammy

and Don Slusser of Monroeville, Pa., usually are present and accounted for at the get-togethers. Tammy always places high in the distaff side of the Charleston 15.

So, just who is this Ken Tallman? A corporate lawyer by profession — and a near saint in Waybright's accounting ledger.

"He's a great person, not just in running," one of Tallman's prize pupils remarked. "Once when I was broke, he took me over to his car and pulled out a pair of shoes for me."

Tallman Track Club was born on a fall day in 1976 in the midst of a 10-mile workout by a small group. He was the oldest and later was accorded the title of President for Life.

By presidential mandate, an unwritten requirement that members drink beer was waived.

The club welcomes any and all. It is the oldest continuous running club in West Virginia.

Some of its members still adhere to the 10-mile workout regimen, but Tallman, now 64, is saddled with physical injuries and his form resembles the hop, skip and jump of a triple jumper.

"But he's still out there despite the pain," Waybright said. "He's our leader. We are going to keep this group in his honor."