

2019 Relay Team Profile: The Hammptions

For two brothers from a family that loves running, the opportunity has finally arrived to team up as a duo for a popular long-distance relay race.

Later this month, John and Paul Crowe will run the 50 miles of the Tussey mOUntaiNBACK 50 Mile Relay and Ultramarathon as a two-person relay team. Both grew up in State College. John Crowe now lives in Pittsburgh and Paul Crowe lives in Milford, NJ.

“This is our first time doing the Mountainback,” said John Crowe. “Our dad has always been involved in some capacity, whether hosting runners or competing on teams, so it has always been on our radar.”

It’s pretty well known in the local running community that Crowes are not the type to shrink from a challenge. Their father, Rob Crowe, has run numerous races over the years, including the Boston Marathon, and still actively races in the local community. Their mother, Sue, was a standout runner, including multiple wins at the Nittany Valley Arts Festival race.

But this kind of race is often out of bounds for students who run for cross country or track teams.

“Unfortunately we never had the opportunity to participate in it while we were in high school and college,” said John Crowe. “Now that we are both trying to get back into running competitively again, this seemed like the perfect race to do together.”

The course’s 12 segments on the roads of Rothrock State Forest are of unequal length and difficulty, so when these two runners switch back and forth to run every other segment, one will run a total of about 22 and the other about 28 miles.

Inquiring minds might logically ask – why?

“We were looking for a fun and exciting way to really challenge ourselves,” said Crowe. “We have always enjoyed running with one another, and decided that this would be the perfect excuse to meet up for a weekend and knock out some quality miles in our hometown.”

The family’s natural competitive spirit may play a part, too.

“We’ve run a lot races together over the years,” said Crowe, “but never anything even remotely similar to this. Plus, we also felt obligated to one up our dad and a few of our siblings who have been on relay teams in the past.”

Training for an event like this can involve a variety of workout choices and logistics.

“I’ve personally been training all over Pittsburgh,” said John Crowe. “Paul has actually been coaching me since this spring when I ran my first marathon, so I just jump out the door and do whatever workouts he tells me to do. Fortunately (or unfortunately) it is impossible to avoid hills out here, so I think I have been able to get in some pretty good training for the Mountainback. Paul has been embracing the hills of New Jersey and attempting to whip himself back into shape the last couple months.”

Relay teams also choose a name for their team. This team is call the Hammptions.

“We named ourselves after our all-time favorite beer, Hamm’s,” said Crowe. “It’s a delightful beverage that we are looking forward to enjoying after a good 50-mile effort.”

Proceeds of this year’s event will support Centre Volunteers in Medicine, a free medical and dental clinic that provides access to primary and preventive care for qualifying individuals living or working in Centre County who live in surrounding counties that do not have a free clinic or programs to meet their needs. For more information about Centre Volunteers in Medicine, visit <https://cvim.net/>.

Photo: John Crowe racing for Bucknell University.

