

Erb Bounces Back In Big Way

Written by Mike Kelly
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It's been a tough year for Zap Fitness Foundation runner Esther Erb. The full-time resident from Zap Fitness in Blowing Rock, N.C., has been on the shelf the

last two months with an injury.

But Erb, who won the Division III national championship in the women's 10,000-meter run in 2008 at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, OH., bounced back in a big way Sunday by winning the Litchfield Hill Road Race in Litchfield, CT. She completed the 7.14-mile race in 40 minutes, 28 seconds.

"This is one of the top ten professional road races in the United States," said Zap Fitness coach Pete Rea. "There's a lot of very good professional runners in the field, but Esther ran a strong race. She had a good, steady pace. It was a great race for her. She's been pretty frustrated most of the season because of her injury. She was laid up for about eight to ten weeks."

It was Erb's first competitive race since she finished eighth at the Twin-Cities Marathon in Minneapolis, MN., last October. It was also her first win since finishing first at the Broad Street Run in Philadelphia in 2012.

Alissa McKaig of Zap Fitness ran the Boston Marathon on April 15, and despite some personal struggles, she ran a decent race and crossed the finish line in two hours, 45-minutes and two-seconds. She finished 480th overall, and 27th among the female runners.

Ironically, McKaig also crossed the finish line a little more than 90-minutes before the tragic bombings occurred that killed three people and injured 264 others. Those bombs exploded about 13 seconds and 210 yards apart, near the finish line on Boylston Street.

"And we were sitting in a restaurant drinking wine, about 300 yards from the finish line, if even that," Rea said. "I thought it was fireworks coming from Fenway Park. I said, 'The (Boston) Red Sox must have won (their Patriot's Day game against Tampa Bay).' But a guy sitting next to me, who was in the military said, 'That wasn't fireworks. I don't know what it was, but it wasn't fireworks.'

"Then we saw all these people running away from the finish line area, scared to death. There was a lot of confusion and commotion. It shook all of us up pretty bad. It was frightening."

Zap Fitness will also have four athletes competing at the USA Track & Field Championships at Drake University in Des Moines, IA., June 20-23. Sarah Crouch will compete in the women's 10,000-meter run and Mary Ballinger will compete in the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase. Ballinger is in her first year with Zap Fitness. She is from the University of Southern Indiana. Cameron Bean will run in the men's 10,000 and Tyler Pennel will run in the men's 3,000 steeplechase.

Photo Courtesy: Esther Erb, Zap Fitness Foundation