

Courtnall reaches hot milestone



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Good news, bad news for Victoria's Geoff Courtnall on Monday.

Good news was he overcame soul-sapping unseasonable heat to finish the legendary Boston Marathon.

Bad news was I had to tell him his old team, the Vancouver Canucks, had lost to L.A. the night before. So focused had he been on preparing for the marathon that even the Stanley Cup playoffs were out of the picture.

The 49-year-old finished in three hours and 14 minutes, overcoming nasty cramping on a dehydrating day. "I felt great the first half," he said, on the phone from Boston. But then the temperature — in the high 20s rather than the normal 13 C — took its toll.

"I was drinking as much as I could," Courtnall said. He was grateful when firefighters turned hoses on the runners.

Ran through conve-

Miss the Boston Marathon? You can still bike to work

niently placed lawn sprinklers, too.

Still, he feared the heat would knock him out as it did many others whom he saw drop away. "The last mile, my left hamstring started to cramp up. I thought, 'Oh, no, not now.' "

"That Heartbreak Hill was pretty bad, too," he said after the race, icing down aching muscles while watching a replay of the previous night's Nashville-Detroit game.

Monday's heat was so brutal that organizers urged participants not to push for a best time and offered to defer their entries until next year's race. About 4,300 of the more than 26,000 entrants skipped the marathon.

Putting off racing until 2013 wouldn't have worked for Courtnall, whose goal was to run the marathon before age 50. He had dreamt of doing so since playing for the Boston Bruins in the mid-1980s.

Courtnall ran the marathon to benefit the Neely Foundation — a cancer charity established by fellow Vancouver Island native and former Bruins teammate Cam Neely — and the Courtnall Celebrity Classic Foundation, set up by Geoff and his brothers

Russ and Bruce to further mental-health initiatives.

Kenyan Wesley Korir won the marathon in two hours, 12 minutes, 40 seconds, the second-slowest winning time since 1985.



The long-term benefits of such exercise were rhymed off by Dr. Richard Stanwick, the Island's chief medical health officer, at an event to promote Bike To Work Week on Monday.

Cycling cuts the risk of cardiovascular disease, reduces cancer mortality and benefits the brain, he told the crowd at Victoria city hall. "The best way to prevent Alzheimer's is to get on a bike."

On the flip side, he said, studies show driving in rush-hour traffic is almost as stressful as flying a jet fighter. Stanwick then fought mightily not to joke about the F-35 contract.

Improving cycling infrastructure has become a health issue. "It's about making it easier to do the right thing," Stanwick said.

With that in mind, organizers point to some of the road improvements in the past year: Cedar Hill Road near UVic got a new bike lane, as did Parson's Bridge

near Six Mile Road in View Royal. A push-button lets cyclists on Harbour Road in Vic West trigger a light to get onto the Johnson Street bridge. Part of the Galloping Goose Trail has been paved in View Royal, with more coming soon.

Saanich has scheduled an April 24 information session at UVic, where it will outline a plan that would see bike lanes on McKenzie Avenue from Shelbourne Street to Cadboro Bay Village. Bike lanes will be part of the new Craigflower Bridge, too.

And Ottawa's decision to match the province's \$7.5-million contribution to the E&N rail line should help fill some of the gaps in the E&N Trail, a 17-kilometre route running parallel to the tracks from Victoria to Langford. Last June, the CRD suspended work on intersections between the Johnson Street Bridge and CFB Esquimalt pending word on the E&N's future.

Bike To Work Week runs May 28 to June 3. More than 700 riders on 615 teams participated in 2011. Organizers say StatsCan figures show Victoria has the highest proportion of commuter cyclists in Canada.

> Kenyan prevails, D3