

# Local couple hits the road together

By Bill Koch

Independent Staff Writer

**MATUNUCK** — As Brian Deal was reminded on Sunday morning, having a wife who doubles as your running partner can sometimes be both a blessing and a curse.

Deal was hoping to spend a lazy morning alone in bed until his plans were interrupted by his wife, Jennifer, who was scheduled to compete in the 9th annual Run 4 Kerri 4-mile Road Race. She gently asked her husband to join her at Matunuck Elementary School to take part in the race for the first time since the couple moved to their current home in Narragansett in January. Brian knew he wouldn't be at his best — his legs were still a little tired from last weekend's 39th annual Blessing of the Fleet 10-mile Road Race — but it didn't take him too long to agree to make a little sacrifice.

"I just said, 'Just come, run, and it'll be okay,'" Jennifer said. "He worked real hard last weekend."

"She kind of dragged me out of bed this morning and encouraged me to run," Brian said with a grin. "That's kind of the way the relationship

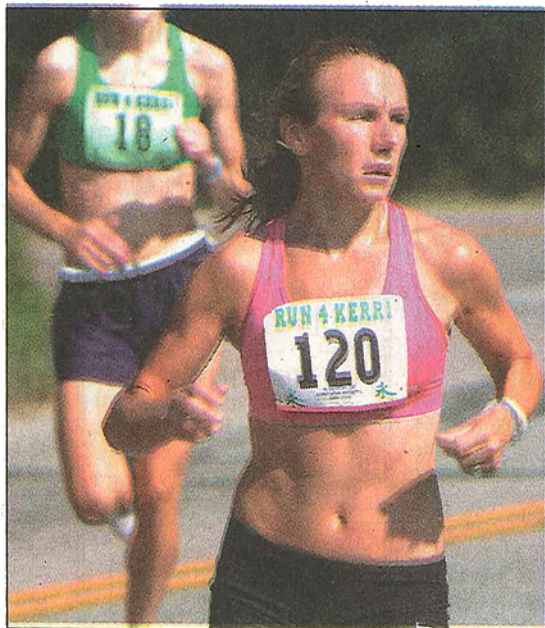


PHOTO: SELENA MILLARD

**Narragansett's Jennifer Deal was the top overall female finisher in the 9th annual Run 4 Kerri 4-mile Road Race on Sunday, an event she competed in with her husband, Brian.**

**Deals/B3**

## Deals continue to push one another

From B1

works. We both run and we challenge each other."

The decision turned out to be mutually beneficial for the former Appalachian State University standouts. Jennifer was the first woman to cross the finish line, clocking a time of 23:35.0. Brian was there waiting for her and the first person to congratulate her after finishing fifth overall in 20:47.6.

"It was great," Jennifer said. "It was fun — a good, rolling course."

"I felt a little tired from the 10-mile race, but it was good," Brian said. "Today was good. I was happy with the way I went out."

Brian and Jennifer met as undergraduates, both competing in the Mountaineers' track and field program. She transferred to Appalachian State's Boone, N.C., campus after spending her freshman year at Winthrop University and the two have been together ever since. Brian's job with Nike and Jennifer's hopes to return to

school to add to her undergraduate degree in graphic design brought the couple to Rhode Island, and they've wasted little time making an impact on the local running scene.

"I just wanted to keep racing and keep into it, so I'm here," Jennifer said.

Training together has helped keep Brian and Jennifer sharp and allowed them to enjoy the experience at the same time. Their backgrounds in the sport suggest that their natural talent will allow them to have many more days like Sunday in the near future. Jennifer was the West Virginia state record holder in the 800 meters when she graduated from high school and finished third while competing for the Mountaineers at the Southern Conference Cross Country Championships in 2007. A Georgia native, Brian led Appalachian State to the men's team title by capturing individual gold at the same meet and finished seventh overall in his first Blessing of the Fleet race.

"I have a great running partner, even though he runs a lot faster than I do," Jennifer said. "He's always good with the workouts, always there."

As for a match race between the two, it's not happening anytime soon. Jennifer conceded on Sunday that there wasn't any use in making a friendly wager on who would cross the line first — she knows that Brian has the lead for right now.

"He's way too fast for me — he leaves me in the dust," Jennifer said. "It's just good to come out with him to these races. It's fun."

Brian isn't so sure that's always going to be the case. The one thing he knows for certain is that he'll always have someone to measure himself against, and he doesn't have to look too far to find her.

"It's all I can do to keep up with her," he said. "I'm sure in a couple of years she'll be running faster than me and I'll be slowing down. I'm enjoying being a little bit faster than her while it lasts."