



#10

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Kate Farrington

This summer has been an exciting one for us. FinishLynx continues to make its mark on the world of sports timing, as we finished another busy outdoor season, supplying thousands of athletes with fast, accurate F.A.T. times for literally hundreds of championships.

We were thrilled to make our debut at the Olympic level by timing the U.S. Cycling Road Trials, the U.S. Cycling Track Trials, as well as the Canadian Olympic Track and Field trials in Montreal.

But, perhaps, the major event of the summer was our move to fantastic new office facilities about a mile away from our old home. With our new, upgraded, phone system we hope to continue to improve our Customer Support services. Also, three very talented and motivated people have joined the staff, and the mood here is exuberant as we continue our best year ever.

The next few weeks will see the debut of the Windows NT version of FinishLynx, and the complete reconstruction of both the Finish-Lynx Web site and the CyberScoreboard. Watch for a special issue of FINISHLINES to announce these events.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT. . .

Innovation Expo 1996

In the whole wide world, the state of Massachusetts is famous as a birthplace of technological innovation.



*Innovation
Expo 1996*

Developments such as the vulcanization of rubber (right here in Woburn by Charles Goodyear!), the steam engine, and the personal computer first emerged here.

Recently, Lynx System Developers, Inc. was recognized and showcased as being part of that great tradition at the Innovation Expo 1996, held in Waltham, Massachusetts at the Charles River Museum of Industry this past May. Area companies such as Polaroid, Genzyme, Powercell, Raytheon, and a host of other cutting-edge companies demonstrated to bus loads of children and the general public new products that promise to "shape the future".

Our booth was one of the favorites of the Expo, as we set up a 15 meter balloon-lined race course complete with photo-beams and a running time clock. Passers-by were encouraged to line up with our cap-gun starter and run the course (in high-heels or sneakers alike) and then come into the booth to view the photo-finish image and get an explanation of the technology used to create it.

Everyone from the Lynx team participated, giving us the unusual chance to talk about FinishLynx in non-sales terms. Especially rewarding was talking to young kids who "wished they came up with the idea." One notable seven year old walked up to the keyboard and in a matter of minutes learned the rudimentaries of running the system. See "Hall of Frames" on the back cover for some sample pictures. Our only regret was not getting Ken Olson, the founder of Digital Equipment Corp. and keynote speaker, to try his speed on the Lynx track. . .

NEW PLACES - NEW FACES

Lynx continues to grow.

In June, North Dakota State University acquired a FinishLynx system. This marked a significant milestone in the growth of the company, for with this sale we achieved a major objective: a FinishLynx System all 50 states. Now we are looking at every Area Code in the U.S., and every Nation in the World! In order to help us achieve these goals we have brought in some new people: Bill Riggs from Georgia Tech - as a Consultant; Giles Norton from the University of Colorado - as Director of Communication; and Andy Barnett from RIT - as a software development intern.

Below is a picture of Doug DeAngelis and Giles Norton overseeing the timing and the results integration with European television of the World Junior Short Track Speed Skating Championships in Courmayeur, Italy.



THE WORLD TOUR CONTINUES

Olympic Trials and Cycling Tours highlight the Lynx itinerary this Spring

While at Le Critérium Dauphiné, a major pro-cycling tour in France earlier this month, Lynx president, Doug DeAngelis was reading "L'Equipe," Europe's major sports newspaper, and noticed that five different events featured in the paper were timed by FinishLynx. There is no question that Lynx has arrived on the World sports scene. Interestingly, the first two IAAF Grand Prix meets of the season (in Jakarta, Indonesia and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) were timed by Lynx customers.



Closer to home, Lynx was proud to be the official timer of the United States Olympic Team Trials for Cycling held in Trexlertown, PA (track) and Charlotte, NC (road); and the Canadian Olympic Trials for Track and Field in Montreal.

Earlier in the spring, Lynx showed its stuff at the NAIA Championships at Life College in Atlanta, and was on hand for our third annual timing of the Tour DuPont, America's premier cycling race. *All event results were posted "live" to our Internet Home Page (found at <http://www.finishlynx.com>), where we won over many new fans to our unique CyberScoreboard.*

HY-TEK / LYNX INTEGRATION

Get the Link going

One of the greatest advantages to digital photo-finish is the ability to integrate F.A.T. data with meet management data. There are many commercial software programs on the market today that integrate with FinishLynx, but one that has recently gotten a lot of attention is Hy-Tek's Meet Manager.

There are three ways to link Hy-tek and FinishLynx: file-swapping on the same computer; data exchange over a network; and data exchange over the serial ports of two computers connected via null-modem cable. By far the best link between Lynx and Hy-tek is with the serial link as it requires minimal set-up, it is relatively cheap, and it can be used with either a Macintosh or a PC Finish-Lynx computer. Meet Manager software developer Charlie Hodgson agrees: "The serial method is extremely fast. Data is up to the second accurate, real-time data."

The hook-up is simple. An RS232 cable is connected between the two computers, and three settings in each Hy-tek and FinishLynx are set (detailed in respective User's Manuals). Start lists and results can then be instantly exchanged.

If a serial communication error still occurs however, Hodgson has the following advice: "First check to see if either the serial port is bad or the cable is bad. This can be done by using a communication software program such as Procomm to verify that the two computers can talk to each other. Using MS Diagnostic (type `c:/msd<enter>`) also checks to see how many serial ports are available. Be sure that any internal modems are disabled if they interfere with the open com port."

We commend Charlie and the rest of the Hy-tek staff for their responsiveness to problems and recommend Meet Manager as an excellent product for track and field.

THE WALL OF FAME

Immortalize your event on the Lynx Wall of Fame.

Lynx System Developers, Inc. has recently moved into a great big new office about a mile away from our old home. One of the first things that we were able to do at the new space was to begin our LYNX WALL OF FAME and the LYNX MUSEUM.

We want to display as many FinishLynx images of National Records and World records as we can. If you have timed a National - or World - Record in an event, send us a floppy with the Image of the finish on it. We will print the image, frame it, hang it on the LYNX WALL OF FAME, and we will send you an official, signed certificate verifying the record.

Also, we are collecting posters from around the country and around the world of events timed with FinishLynx. So send us your poster (rolled or framed, if possible); for the WALL OF FAME, and we will send you an item of official FinishLynx schwag.

One of the first contributors was Barcelona Olympian, Gwyn Coogan, who sent us a signed photo. Thanks Gwyn.

NEXUS SAYS

We want to hear from you

*I am waiting for
 tonight's results;
 yours-lets, or
 even Lynx results-
 see if you can
 stump me!*



NO, REALLY. . .Why didn't you get that start signal?

Browsing through the FinishLynx archives, I found a press clipping which contained these words from Roger Jennings,

"A discus cut my start wire..."

Can you do better? Send us your (genuine!) excuse and if we publish it we'll send you an extremely rare FinishLynx lapel pin.

FEEDBACK

We love to hear from you.

One of the benefits of e-mail is that we tend to get a lot of feedback from folks all over the world. From close to home, though, Bill McGowan of Boston, MA sent this account over the Internet of his experience as an official video recorder at the Eastern Sprints, a major championship for rowing:

"...I had the FinishLynx camera just inches in front of me, and (I) would climb down off the scaffolding where I was stationed to see the controller's computer screen and HIS results (as compared to MY results) and can say that I hope FinishLynx takes care of things officially NEXT year and for years after that as well...

"...The officials at the finish line, who still recorded the splits "the old-fashioned way" would cross-reference THEIR splits with the COMPUTER'S splits to see how close they (the officials) were to the computers. It was fun to see how well the manual method was still working, but the electronic way was much easier to "call-up". There will always be humans at the finish line, but it was great to have a video camera AND FinishLynx together."

Mark Ridenour from Angola (IN) middle school commented, "We just received our two camera remote system and are excited about getting it set up and using it this spring. Appreciate the help I have received so far ...keep up the good work."

And feedback on the CyberScoreboard came from Jack Farrell from Thousand Oaks H.S.: "Thanks for the help on figuring out how to retrieve prior races....Your system is great! I hope it appears at all the big meets."

While Tom Murrel from Bristol, TN commented on our home page, "Your opening statement ". . .we make a PC-based..." may lead some to believe the Macintosh platform is not supported, at least that was my first impression. The Reno meet results to the internet idea was very innovative. Please send me more information..."



A SHOCKING CONVERT TO NT

By Doug DeAngelis.

It has been described by the computer press as "inevitable" and "the death of Novell". It is big, both in the resources that it consumes and in the promises it makes. But for better or worse, with the sorry state of the Macintosh operating system, it is about to become the best commercially available operating system for your computer.

What is It? It is Windows NT. Unlike Windows 95 and the MacOS, Windows NT is a real, designed from the ground up, 32-bit multi-threaded operating system. What does that mean to you as a FinishLynx operator? A number of things:

It is incredibly stable. We have been running our web server under NT for 6 months and it has yet to crash.

It is really good at doing more than one thing at a time. Unlike Win95 machines or Macs, the naughty behavior of a single program (like, even a print spooler) is far less likely to bring your entire computer to a grinding halt.

Out of the box, it supports a wide assortment of networking protocols, allowing it to be quickly set up for use in a mixed platform environment (I can mount our web server running NT from my Mac, without buying any third party software or hardware).

About the only things that NT is missing right now are a reasonable user interface and "plug and play" addition of system components (like Win95 or Mac). The first of these is basically here in Version 4.0 of NT, while "plug and play" is still waiting in the wings. Once it has this, there will be no glaring deficiency in NT, and thus, no particularly good reason to use anything else.

No good reason except, of course, that it is a Microsoft creation. This, by definition, means that it is guaranteed to consume at least 4 times more computing resources than it would had it not been created by a company that actually has a hard time keeping their net profit under 30%.

In theory, NT will run on a machine with only 8MB, but in practice 16-32MB makes it a much happier beast to live with. So as you can see, the recent price crash in memory prices is perfectly timed for the release of NT 4.0 and FinishLynx for NT. So if you are thinking about buying a new computer, you should consider that at some point in the near future, you may want to run NT on it.

What does this mean to Apple and the Macintosh platform? Well, every time they delay the release of System 8 (or Copland, as it is known) they put themselves further behind the Intel crowd running NT. Apple seems to have succumbed to the realization

that a market that is 1/10th the size of the competition cannot support engineering effort that is 10 times the size of the competition.

The long term effect of this will probably be to move Macintosh to focus on niches that it is strong in (Desktop Publishing, for example) while forsaking the Mac as a "general purpose" computer. Even so, we are still committed to the Apple platform as a reasonable system to run FinishLynx on.

But with the latest botched "maintenance" releases of System 7.5 (.9a release 12 update 35 blah blah) the pitiful progress in the PowerBook line and the quality problems in recent PowerPC computers, we still find ourselves recommending 2 year old desktop Macs as the best platform for FinishLynx. It leaves one wondering if the Macintosh is too far behind to ever catch up.

BTW...This article was written on my PowerMac 7200 running Microsoft Word 6.0 (one of the most broken applications ever created). It has crashed twice so far today for various reasons beyond my ability to comprehend.

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