

When pedes are seeds, it's serious

Top eight men's, women's teams will enjoy head start in '89 Breakers

By Dwight Chapin
EXAMINER SENIOR WRITER

The centipedes are coming. Again. And they'll be running for a world championship, as usual, in the 78th Examiner Bay to Breakers May 21.

But it may not be the every-insect-for-itself sort of scramble that

often has marred Breakers centipede competition in the past.

After a trial run last year, race organizers have decided to seed the top eight men's and women's centipedes, which will start at the rear of the race's seeded section. Unseeded pedes will start back in the pack with the "fun" runners.

To qualify for seeded status, all individuals in a centipede will have to meet and present written proof of the following qualifying times: a 32:20 10-kilometer, a 42:30 12K or a 2:44 marathon for men; a 37:30 10K, 48:47 12K or 3:08 marathon for women.

The change, plus a few other stricter rules, just might take some of the sting out of the continuing rivalry between the 10-time men's champion Aggie Running Club and the Berkeley-based Powerpedes, who dethroned the Aggies amid controversy in 1987.

The Aggies stumbled at the start after colliding with several people, including Examiner columnist Art Spander, and finished behind not only the Powerpedes but the Bohos, a team made up largely of former Aggies.

The Powerpedes, who had some on-course troubles themselves, pooh-poohed the Aggie slip. But Dwayne "Peanut" Harms, the Aggies spokesman and organizer, said the stumble made all the difference between victory and defeat.

Last May, the Aggies regained their title, which led to a good deal of gloating by the winners and a serving of sour grapes from the losers.

Powerpedes spokesman Brian Maxwell, after a jibe or two at Harms, said the Aggies won with "the best runners money can buy."

And so it went in the strangest division of what is always the most eclectic of foot races.

For the uninitiated, adult centipede teams must consist of 13 connected individuals plus a floater, who runs alongside and substitutes for runners who lose a shoe, need to make a pit stop or drop out of the race. To win or place, a centipede must have 13 members connected at the finish line.

There are some other, more esoteric rules, set by the International Centipede Congress. Such as:

- "Twinkie feelers" are required for the first person in each centipede, and the entire team is encouraged to wear them.

- The end of each centipede is required to have a stinger of at least six inches in length.

- The centipede must be no



A TOTAL of 5,358 runners have already signed up to run in the 1989 San Francisco Examiner Bay to Breakers.

The race will start at 8 a.m. on Sunday, May 21 at the intersection of Spear and Howard streets and finish 7½ miles later near the beach on the Great Highway.

Entry fee for the race is \$10, which entitles each runner to a Bay to Breakers T-shirt.

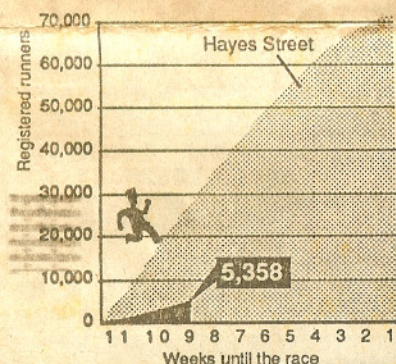
An entry form appears on this page Sunday and daily in the sports section of The Examiner.

Deadline to enter the race is Friday, April 21.

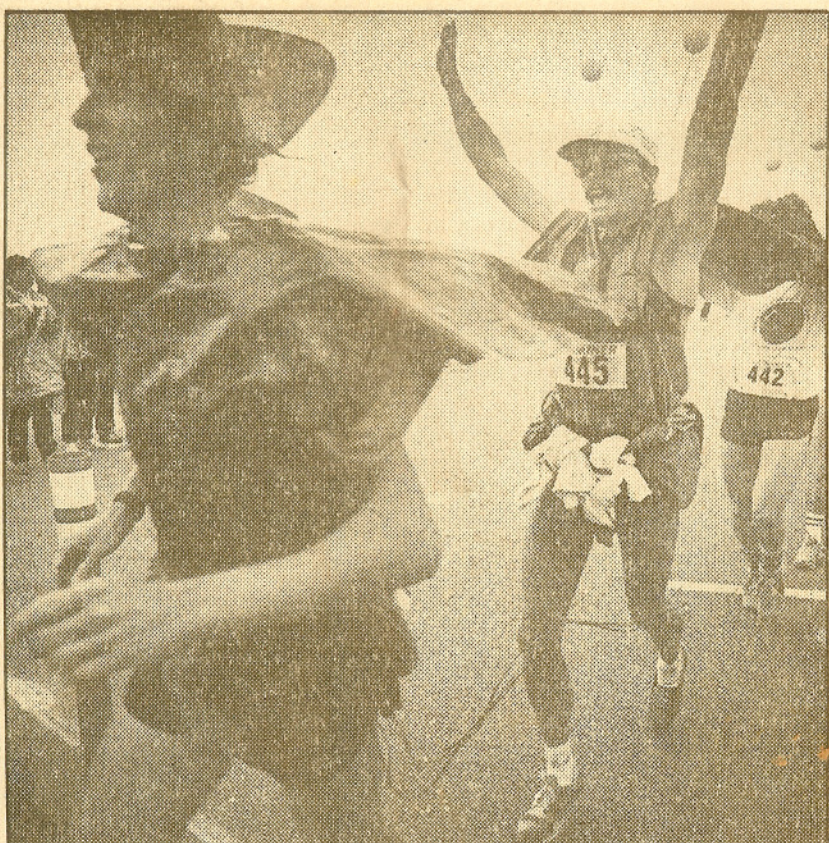
If you are interested in working as a volunteer at the race, call 824-6301.

For more information on the race, call the Breakers Hotline at 777-7773.

COUNTDOWN



EXAMINER



EXAMINER PHOTOS/CHRIS HARDY

The Aggies, above, will be back to defend their centipede crown in Examiner Bay to Breakers, while the 49ers, below, will return three teams.



more than 60 feet long, allowing at least 4 feet between leg segments, and each centipede will be measured from nose to stinger by race officials prior to the start.

The seeded centipedes also will get a break on the Breakers' Lenichi Turn, a 360-degree loop made famous by two Eastern European runners, Oscar and Igatoo Lenichi, in the 18th century. Old rules required that all centipedes execute the turn around the totem pole at

Lindley Meadow in Golden Gate Park — just beyond the six-mile point of the race. New rules make the Lenichi optional for seeded pedes.

The field is still forming for this year's race, but the 49ers reportedly will enter three centipedes again, including a "fatties" pede that may or may not include an offensive lineman known for putting on weight in the offseason.

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