

Bolder Boulder's Runner for the Ages

By [Grace Hood](#), 5/28/2012



Buried deep in the fine print of today's Bolder Boulder race results is a category that doesn't get much attention. "Beat Your Age" subtracts race time from age. Since it was started 5 years ago, one name has dominated the list: Libby James.

James, 75, who lives in Fort Collins, took the sport up four decades ago to create an escape from a house full of teenagers. Today she's run every distance from 5k's to marathons--across the world in Japan and Africa. She does it all with a laid back attitude and a smile. And for those who pour over race results and age categories, she's a bit of a rock star—although she wouldn't tell you that.

"I think what started all this fuss was a good time in a Bolder Boulder," she says. "It was a 48:50-something about 3 years ago now."

The "fuss" was James' recent induction into the Colorado Running Hall of Fame. And her 48:55 time was a national record for her age.

James didn't find out about it until [a writer for Running Times called her up](#).

"I was happy with it, but I didn't think it was anything special [at the time]," she says.

Older age categories are sometimes overlooked when race officials are making the tallies and looking for records.

In fact, it was James' daughter who figured out she had actually broken a world record in her age category last year for the 10-mile Aetna Park to Park in Denver. That same year she set a national record for the 5k in Fort Collins. And this month she set a new one for the Colorado half marathon. USA Track & Field has yet to rule that officially.

At 75 it's hard to keep up with her even on a casual run. With a petite thin frame, tights and sports sunglasses, James is free of gadgets and gizmos. Throughout the years, running shoes and a watch have been her trusty tools.

"I've never gotten near a heart monitor," she says. "I don't know how they work and don't want to know how they work."

She says consistency and determination are keys to running over four decades. But so is perspective.

"At this late date, it's interesting to see that it's starting to pay off," she says. "I do have to say this: I love running, it's a big part of my life, but it's not my whole life."

James makes cards and artwork with tea bags—something she calls "tea bag tampering." She teaches writing classes at the Larimer County Jail. She's also shopping a children's book about an older woman who decides to run a marathon. No research required.

"Writing is a lot harder than running," she says. "You have to sit down, you have to think.... and you have to be very persistent about being willing to revise what you've written not once but maybe 17 times."

Libby James has a great sense of humor and is humble. She's far from cocky about sweeping the Beat Your Age category for a 5th year in a row.

But she does have some advice for the 50,000 runners and walkers gathering in Boulder today.

"I would suggest that you go into Boulder and you get into the mass of humanity," she says. "Have as much fun as you possibly can."