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Millen's Joyce Hodges-Hite, 68, will attempt to complete a 50-mile run Saturday.

The longest run for Hodges-Hite

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Local Sports

One lap around a track was how it all started for Joyce Hodges-Hite. One lap was all she could run back in 1980. Hodges-Hite was 43 at the time. Skip forward 25 years and in that span, Hodges-Hite has added considerable mileage to her one-lap start.

She's run 103 marathons, six 50ks and on Saturday, Hodges-Hite will run a distance most people would shake their head at in amazement, even more so when the runner is a 68-year-old grandmother.

There's a race called the JFK 50-miler, taking place in Hagerstown, Md. and Hodges-

Hite will be on the starting line at 7 a.m., attempting to run those 50 miles.

"I think I can do this," said Millen's Hodges-Hite,

The national record for her age group is just under 10 hours. That's probably out of her reach but not unconceivable. Hodges-Hite has run a 50k (31 miles) best of five hours and four minutes. But that was 14 years ago. Her latest marathon (26.2-miles) time is 5:22 and her most recent 50k time was six hours, which, by the way, was a Georgia record. Hodges-Hite ran that race just two weeks after running her

100th marathon.

Hodges-Hite said the motivation to run a 50-mile race at her age, has to do with age. At the JFK race, there are cutoff times at various distances. Fall short of the times and your day is finished. Hodges-Hite will be wearing the cutoff times taped to her arm to monitor her progress.

"The more I thought about it, I'm going to be slowing down and they are not going to want me in these races," said Hodges-Hite.

This race will be a new experience for Hodges-Hite. She's never run for more than seven

hours and that was a 50k in Indiana through a course covered in snow and ice.

The 50-miler will wind through parts of the Appalachian Trail and on dirt roads passing by small Maryland towns.

"It will be through woods and trails, which is more fun than running down the street," said Hodges-Hite

Bodycopy: Getting started

Hodges-Hite took up running after her then husband suffered a stroke. They played some tennis together before his illness.

"I couldn't play tennis but I could run by myself," said

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Hodges-Hite. "I just started out running a little bit and added on."

And on and on. Hodges-Hite runs 4-5 marathons a year but said she went "berserk" one year, running eight.

Hodges-Hite is not one of those plodders who just want to finish the race.

"I've always been competitive," she said. "If I was running

and saw some young girls running on the sidewalk, I couldn't stand it unless I could get past them."

Injuries over the last 3-4 years have cut into her race schedule. She enters the 50-miler with questions lingering about a hip injury. She started running just two weeks before her last marathon in early September and was only able to

finish half the race.

"I knew I was not ready but had already signed up and had plane tickets," Hodges-Hite said.

As usual, Hodges-Hite has been adding on mileage and on her latest long run logged 22 miles. She's been tapering for the last week, alternating daily between running 7-8 miles and walking 3-5 miles.

If one wanted Hodges-Hite to sum up her running philosophy, here's how she would put it.

"If running is fun, more running should be more fun," she said. "My coach Benji Durden told me one day that we weren't going to do hard work outs, just run 30 minutes. I told him I'm just getting started at 30 minutes."