

Taking the second exit to Fair Park was right move

By Fiona Green, Women's Masters winner in the half with a 1:34:56

Having read on the Big D website that almost 2,500 runners were registered for the half marathon and another 600 for the marathon -- (not to mention the 5K) -- I figured arriving an hour ahead of race start time might be a wise move on Sunday (April 6).

Judging by the line-up of cars at the first exit to Fair Park, I was not the only one with this idea. As racing itself can be nerve wracking enough, I didn't fancy sitting in line for maybe 40 minutes, wondering if I'd even make it to the race in time, so I took the second exit.

There wasn't another car on the road, so I managed to avoid jumping out of the car and jogging to the race start, which was 7:30 a.m. Parking was certainly plentiful and packet pick-up was well organized, so there was time for a pre-race warm up.

My husband, watching the race from Jack in the Box, mentioned that cars were still parking well after the race start, so I imagine many people stuck in traffic were not so fortunate.

The cut-off start time of 7.40 a.m., although understandable, must have been very frustrating for anyone who, through circumstances beyond their control, didn't make the cut-off. I'd hate to train for the race, pay my \$85 entry fee, drive from out of state only to be told- 'sorry you can't run - it's now 7.41.'

Anyway, I digress. The weather was ideal for running with only a slight wind around the 10K mark. With a mix of flats and gently rolling hills through residential areas and around White Rock Lake, the route was interesting and crowd support, while nowhere near that of White Rock, was evident and certainly appreciated. The water stops were manned by generous and enthusiastic people, who did an excellent job. The incentive of winning additional cash for their organization no doubt contributed to their enthusiasm. I only wish there had been more information on voting for the best water station after the race.

The portion of the race down Swiss Avenue provided a welcome downhill stretch, but at around mile 11 (I think), I spotted a Ferris wheel and assumed the end was near -- not quite. The last portion of the race took forever. With little crowd support in the last 2 miles, this was the point at which I began to struggle. The finish line staff was very professional -- immediately asking runners if they required medical attention -- or was it just me -- did I really look that bad??

Post race refreshments were excellent -- pizza, beer, bananas, bagels, water and beer. Results were posted promptly and the awards ceremony started around 10,30, as planned.

All in all, it was a well-organized event. I'm just glad I took the second exit or it might have been another story.