

## White Rock telecast welcome, but still lacking runner information

By Charles Clines



Once again for those of us who didn't venture to Dallas for the White Rock Marathon, we were able to tune in to WFAA, Channel 8 and follow the action from 8 to 10:30 a.m. from our couch. Hosts Todd Whitthorne and running great Frank Shorter again provided an entertaining and feature-packed telecast.

However, and I hope this is taken as constructive criticism, the telecast still lacks something. In my previous critiques, I have wanted the telecast to include the names of the elite runners flashed on the screen and for more information to be provided about them. If this information were available during the telecast, I could see how to spell a runner's name and look for information on the internet. The name of women's winner Svetlana Ponomarenko was the only name that was shown, or at least the only one I saw.

Shorter throws in some information about a few of them, such as winner Henry Serem was some 20 minutes off his personal best because of the high winds that slowed everyone. But that was about all there was on Serem or about most of the elites.

Most of the elites, if not all, are brought in by Larry Barthow and from the AmeriKenya Team that's based in Santa Fe, N.M. It shouldn't be difficult to provide bios about these runners. Some of us would like to know more about these runners, though the telecast did include a feature about the perils the Kenyans face in their country, where they are subject to being robbed because of the money they bring back. Sometimes, as shown in the movie "Spirit of the Marathon," their family members are murdered and property destroyed.

Yet, there was much to be enjoyed from the telecast. The features about the patients who have overcome physical challenges after being treated at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children are always the highlight of the telecast. The free services provided by the hospital has improved the quality of life for numerous patients. Other features and interviews keep the telecast interesting for those who aren't necessarily runners. Shorter also does an excellent job of describing what the runners might be thinking, and gives insights about their possible strategies.

Barthow and WFAA reporter Juli Henner were on the course, with Barthow following the marathon men's leader and Henner the women. They both did credible jobs considering they can see only a few runners at a time.

Sadly, one runner died only three miles from the finish in the marathon. Erin Lahr, 29, of Austin collapsed and was taken to Baylor Medical Center, where she was declared dead about 20 minutes later. It was the first time the race has had a participant die in its 39 years. As sad and tragic as the death was, hopefully this won't scare off people from running. You know, when there are 16,000 people gathered anywhere, there could be a death, whether physical activity is involved or not. Running certainly has numerous health benefits. Her death, though, should be a reminder to all runners to have annual physical checkups and to remain adequately hydrated during a marathon.

On the brighter side, Cody McCasland, 7, of Colleyville, who has prosthetics for both legs, ran the final yards of the marathon with fellow Scottish Rite patient Aaron Gill and Rudy Garcia-Tolson, who's a two-time Paralympic gold medalist in swimming and triathlon. Garcia-Tolson ran approximately 13 miles, including the final leg of a Team Cody relay. More than 35 family and friends of Team Cody participated in the marathon, half marathon and relays. Cody was featured on WFAA before the marathon, and watching him train and run should have provided an inspiration for anyone.

in the back of the open press truck (in cold and rain) numerous times when writing for the Star-Telegram, so the couch feels good. However, I do miss Spider Bynum's doughnuts that he tosses to the media early in the race.