

Cowtown makes a good move

By Charles Clines



There have been a few complaints from church-goers about The Cowtown moving its three long-distance events to a Sunday next year, but most of the response I've heard has been in favor of the move. I'm on their side.

Rather than having all six of Cowtown's events on a Saturday, beginning in 2011, the Adult 5K, Kids' 5K and The Shack 10K will be conducted. The Half, Marathon and 50K Ultra will be the next day.

This is a good move for several reasons. One is that there will be less confusion on race day as the growing number of runners and walkers try to find their various starting lines. This also should relieve much of the burden of churning out six sets of results for the timing company. A couple of other benefits include less auto and human traffic to contend with (the Cowtown had a record 21,000 who registered this year). Downtown eatery businesses should benefit, too, by having potentially large crowds Saturday and Sunday. There might be several runners who decide to compete on both days, too.

There, no doubt, are some negatives, too. Adding a day will increase the workload of many volunteers. However, if some volunteers work both days, they won't be spread as thin and there might not be a need for as many. If anyone has conducted a race, though, they can attest that it's difficult to have too many volunteers. Other negatives: Several downtown streets and others across town will be affected for two days rather than one. Police will need to be paid for two days rather than one, and the clubs and other individuals who provide support on the courses will be asking individuals to be available an extra day.

No doubt, Cowtown officials had to weigh all pros and cons, and the scale came down on the pro side. They and I will be proved either right or wrong next February.

It seems barefoot (or almost) running is gaining in popularity and I've seen several who are wearing the sock-like "shoes." One of them is a fairly new runner, Bob Ventimiglia. Bob, 63, who has been running about 18 months, said he has been experimenting with barefoot running since last November when he discovered low heart-rate training by using Dr. Phil Maffetone's training methods.

For many heart-rate and barefoot running tips, he has gone to a forum -- www.runningahead.com. ``I was looking for a way to get my gait and foot-fall to change

from over-pronation to mid-foot strike and as a way to avoid injury," he said. He said new shoes he wore last spring caused shin splints until they were broken in. At the end of his runs, he would switch to his running socks in an effort to adjust. Then recently, he ran completely barefoot and ``loved it." He said he had no calf ache and began wearing Tom's shoes, which are very minimal footwear. ``When I first got the Tom's, my calves ached like when I did my first quarter-mile barefoot. So, I've worn them more often as a way to strengthen feet and legs."

Bob said he's intending to increase his barefoot mileage now that the weather is warming. ``So far, so good," he said.