

New champs at at the Fort Worth Marathon

The morning was cool (in the 40s), there was some fog in the background, but there was little breeze and the conditions were almost perfect for the fourth edition of the Fort Worth Marathon on Nov. 14.

The marathon, which also includes a 20-mile and half marathon events, attracted a record 703 registrants, who started and finished at LaGrave Field after a trek that was conducted mostly on the Trinity Trails with out-and-back courses.

Joe Beisner of Irving and Maria Martinez of Fort Worth won the marathon male and female divisions on the warming, sunny morning. Beisner making what was essentially his marathon debut, easily won after taking command after three miles and finished in course-record 2:34:53.8. He previously had said he would make his debut at the Rock 'n' Roll San Antonio Marathon, but opted for a smaller venue because he was leery that he might get caught up in the excitement at San Antonio, which also features several elite runners, and go out too fast. He didn't want to suffer a burnout, much like he did when he attempted the White Rock Marathon a few years ago when he crashed near the 20-mile mark.

Maria set a marathon PR with her 3:26:22.8 in her "fourth or fifth" marathon effort. Her previous best, she said, was at the same race last year when she ran a 3:30:24, which gave her a runner-up finish in the female division. She had to overcome a dry water spell of about eight miles, though, as three water stops were late in setting up. But she said after the turnaround that "there was plenty of water."

The male defending champion, Kiplimo Chemirmir of Flower Mound, said he had to slow his pace about the 3-mile mark when his hip and back began hurting -- two problems that he has been dealing with for several weeks and finished in 2:50:58.4. That was still about seven minutes faster than his time last year, when he also struggled with an injury. However, Kiplimo said he still was planning to run the Williams Route 66 Marathon in Tulsa on Nov. 21 and the White Rock marathon on Dec. 5. "I'm fortunate that I have a body that heals itself pretty fast," he said.

Last year's female champion Camille Riggins didn't compete.

Winning the 20-mile male and female were Lowell Koppel of Flower Mound and last year's female champion Vanessa Kelley of Keller. Vanessa came in with a 2:22:38 while Koppel finished in 2:22:33. Both probably had added about a



Jihn Yu of Arlington ran the half in her Vibrams and finished in 2:05:31.



Heather Johnson's dog was first for a four-legged animal in the half. Heather's husband, Jerry Johnson, the 20-mile runner-up, said it's not unusual for the dog to go on 16-mile training runs. Heather won the women's masters title in 1:41:29.3.

minute to their times after getting ``lost" on the course.



Maria Martinez



Joe Beisner

Lowell said male masters winner Jerry Johnson saved them from even a worse fate by yelling to them and getting them back on course. Johnson, manager at Luke's Locker at Montgomery Plaza, said his was more of a training run after he competed at the DRC Half on Nov. 7 and with plans to run the White Rock Half on Dec. 5. Lowell said he's preparing for his first Boston Marathon in 2011.

In the half, several runners commented about a lack of course monitors and were unsure where to go. Male winner Ivan Pinal (1:18:16) of Fort Worth said the half marathon field probably ran a longer route because they didn't run the course correctly near the start when they left the road to climb the levee onto the Trinity Trails. Pinal, a former soccer player who attended UT-Arlington, said he was recruited in high school by the track coach because of his stamina built up playing soccer. ``I found out I was good at it (running, and I've been running ever since," he said. This was his first effort at the half.



Ivan Pinal



Julie Sandoval

Female winner Julie Sandoval of Fort Worth (1:30:40.6) said she might have run a shorter or longer course, but wasn't sure of either. She noted the confusing mile markers and the lack of course monitors.

Even Beisner was somewhat unsure of where he was going until a lead bicycle rider, who had left earlier with a group of walkers, came back and joined him at the 3-mile mark. He led Beisner the rest of the way. ``If he hadn't shown up, I wouldn't have had a clue where to go," he said.



Jerry Johnson



Vanessa Kelley

Race founder and director Steve Looney said several people he had counted on either didn't arrive or were late getting to their stations. Some runners in the half, for example, missed seeing the turnaround marker on the trail and continued before realizing they had gone too far. Looney said there was supposed to have been a sign at the turnaround.

``Some things you have no control over," Looney said.