

White Rock telecast strong on features

By Charles Clines



One great thing about watching the MetroPCS Dallas White Rock Marathon on TV on Dec. 5 in my "computer" room is that it's warm and the coffee is handy. At Fair Park, where the event was being conducted for the first time after moving from its American Airlines Center venue, it was about 35 degrees and I doubt if the coffee was nearby.

This year's version on WFAA-TV again was strong on features, especially those of patients at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, which the event donates proceeds.

Probably the biggest change this year was the absence of Olympian Frank Shorter, who provided the color in past broadcasts. This year, the two main studio announcers for the Dec. 5 event were Todd Whitthorne and Juli Henner-Benson, whose accomplishments include being a 1996 Olympian in the 1,500 meters.

Among those on the course or at Fair Park included Joe Gumm, Shon Gables and Troy James. Some of the remote attempts were sometimes garbled because of transmission problems.

The announcers promoted the high school relay team that was attempting to beat the marathon winner with its 16 runners. The boys on the team ran 2 miles each and the girls 1 mile. But these talented high school runners still couldn't beat winner James Kirwa and runner-up Edward Tabut, last year's champion. But they finished a solid third. Kirwa earned an extra \$1,500 for beating the teens.

Keith Pierce, the three-time Cowtown Marathon winner, gained the early spotlight by jumping out to an almost two-minute lead for much of the first half of the race. Apparently the announcers didn't have a lot of information on Pierce, but did note his previous two marathon efforts. But they had some wrong information and said he had run a PR 2:17 at San Antonio last month. He actually ran a 2:23:15.

Pierce, who had bolted from the starting line with the half marathon leaders, kept the lead in Dallas until about the 17-mile mark when the Kenyan runners passed him. Pierce finished a respectable seventh with a 2:24:40.

This year, more information was available about the elite runners, though their names still aren't being flashed on the screen. If there was one disappointment is that there were never any updates on the elite females. So, TV viewers were kept in the dark about who was leading, etc.

Yet, the telecast had enough human interest stories to keep even a non-runner interested in the telecast. Who knows? Seeing all those runners, a record 22,000, taking off on their marathon or half marathon treks from Fair Park might have inspired some to begin running.