

Take your pick of a race; maybe try something new in '09

By Charles Clines

Despite high gas prices and a slight hike in most road-race fees, most races in the D-FW area didn't suffer from participation in 2008. If anything, many showed increased participation.

Maybe people are growing more health conscious and see running as the quickest and best way to get and stay in shape while improving overall health. It's also a good way to meet new friends.

So, I'll raise my wine glass to a toast for '08 and will hope the trend continues in 2009.

Many veteran runners probably will be looking for something new to try in '09. Sometimes, it seems races become too alike and to maintain interest, so it's nice to have a race with a new twist.

And if not a new twist, it's nice to run at a different venue to test a new course. Some of the upcoming runs this year include the Lake Benbrook Half on Jan. 31. Besides having a challenging course, it's always interesting to see what the weather will be like. Runners usually can expect to don something warm. This race is a good test for those training for an upcoming marathon, such as Cowtown. Another good test that comes at a good time is The Texas Half at White Rock Lake. And for those who have yet won a ceramic buffalo, then you might want to run the Haltom Stampede on Feb. 14 to possibly earn one and to get that last speed work done before Cowtown.

Of course, there are a bunch of races in between, including the Too Cold To Hold 5K, 15K on Saturday, Jan. 17, the Fort Worth Runners Club's Einstein Run on Jan. 25, and the Dallas Running Club's Tal Morrison Classic on Jan. 31.

There are others to consider, too, and maybe if you've competed in the ones I've mentioned, you might want to consider one of the others that you haven't tried before. One thing that the D-FW is blessed with is multiple choices each weekend.

New runners hardly can go wrong in choosing a race. The excitement of entering a first race is something they'll probably always remember. For veteran runners, maybe '09 is the year to break away from previous venues and try something new. Sometimes that can be a memorable experience -- good or bad.

Anyway, here's wishing everyone a healthy and injury-free New Year and a PR for everyone.