

TV coverage of White Rock improved this year

By Charles Clines



All right!! The telecast of the Dallas White Rock Marathon on Sunday morning (Dec. 13) inserted some of the features that have been neglected in the past. The telecast certainly set a PR in coverage. The main improvement is that the elite runners were interviewed and their names were flashed underneath their pictures, though a little too briefly.

I've watched the telecast the previous two years and always was disappointed that the elites were barely mentioned and, when they were, I had no idea of the spelling of their names because Kenyan names are somewhat harder to grasp (at least for me). There wasn't a lot, if any, background provided,

either.

This time the three male Kenyans that Scott Robinson, owner, agent and director of the AmeriKenyan Club, brought in to run were featured with short interviews. Color announcer Frank Shorter again provided a masterful insight into the race and a little background on the Kenyans -- eventual winner Edward Tabut, course-record holder Moses Kororia and Daniel Gakara. The 1972 Olympic gold medal winner, of course, knows his stuff. Robinson, following the leaders in the media truck, also offered many informative comments. He was much better than previous on-the-course commentary because he practically lives with the Kenyans who train at the AmeriKenyan Club in Santa Fe.

The only negative is there wasn't anything, or very little, about the elite women. Though Juli Henner Bensen began following the lead female runner after following the half marathon leader, her commentary was not coming through clearly. Besides the noisy communication, she had a tendency to speak too fast to understand much of her report. Though she said the female leader's name several times, I never did understand it. Maybe it was just my TV.

Some of the telecast became garbled, too. Or, at least, it was on my TV. Fortunately, I also was watching on the computer at ESPN.360 and didn't miss anything.

The good parts about the telecast -- interviews with several prominent officials, including White Rock race director Marcus Grunewald, sponsors; and features about children who have either been treated or are undergoing treatment at Texas Children's Hospital for Children; and inspirational features, such as the one on Amy Palmeiro Winters, who lost a leg in a motorcycle accident and was running the marathon, were outstanding.

Usually, a helicopter provides aerial views of the race, but because of fog, the helicopter was grounded. Yet, the telecast of the race actually was better from the cameras mounted on leading vehicles, which gave viewers a ground-view of the action. Viewers were able to see the three male Kenyans run together until about mile 18 when Tabut and Kororia broke away, and then at about mile 19 or so when Tabut pulled into the lead and continued to stretch his margin to the finish.

Announcers Shorter and Todd Whitthorne also informed the spectators that the runners had been notified that White Rock chairman emeritus Chuck Dannis had announced an addition \$10,000 for the first to break a course record. No one did, but it was an interesting lure for the elites.

Overall, the telecast made a big step forward. The main improvements could be to flash the elite runners names more than once and provide information about the elite women. But this seems so nit-picky considering that I could just sit back with a hot cup of coffee and a piece of toast and watch all of this unfold on my TV.