

Hitting his stride as a master

By Fiona Green

The annual Fillie Trot in Grapevine is one of the most enjoyable 5K races in the area. Organized to raise funds for the Grapevine Fillies Dance Team, the event offers an accurate course, helpful volunteers, dozens of door prizes, handsome trophies and post-race hot dogs!



Participating in this year's event (Feb. 3) were a large number of students and athletes from Grapevine High School, many of them impressive cross country runners. However, the second place winner with a strong time of 16:37 was not a high school athlete but an unassuming Masters runner with children of his own.

Ken Hall, 42, decided to take part in the race because his son, Collin, had purchased an entry but was unable to participate. Having run the Houston Marathon two weeks ago, Ken thought it might be a good way to get his legs moving again as part of his recovery. Judging by this race, his recovery process is working well!

Ken ran track in high school (Abilene High), specializing in the 400 meters, but never ran any distances longer than that. After college (where he didn't run), he worked for a few years in Atlanta where his company would participate in an annual Corporate Challenge 3.5-mile race. As a member of the team, Ken felt obliged to put in some training for the event. But once the race was over, his training would stop.

It was only at the age of 34 that he decided to take up running again in an effort to get in shape for playing soccer. He later moved back to Texas and began training with a Runtex group in Austin, working his way up from 5K distance to the half marathon. In 2005, he moved to Colleyville and joined the Lake Grapevine Runners and Walkers club (LGRAW), where he trains with Craig Minyard, Jeff Garber and Rick Hanson.

Ken has run all his PRs within the last year - a 16:30 for his 5K, 27:46 for his 8K and 34:42 for his 10K. He also ran an impressive half marathon in 1:18:34 and a 2:44 for his marathon in Houston.

Balancing a family life that includes five children and a demanding job as a consulting engineer can make it difficult to find time to train, but Ken simply sets his alarm a little earlier and manages to squeeze in his workout while most of us are still asleep. Like many runners, he uses his time on the road to think, convinced that the rhythm and effort of running clears his mind and relieves stress. As well as the friendly rivalry of racing, Ken likes competing against himself and enjoys discovering new ways to improve his performance. One of his most memorable race moments was winning the Waco marathon

in 2005. Future goals include running a negative split marathon, participating in more trail runs and moving up to a 50K distance or more. He also adds "And I want to lower all of my PR's...I'd better hurry, because I don't think I am going to be getting much faster at my age."

After Saturday's race, I wouldn't be so sure!