

Racing systems owner retiring

Marty Leicht, owner of Integrated Racing System, said he is retiring after two decades of timing and helping conduct events.

Leicht indicated his become too stressful both physically and mentally since recovering from a severe head injury after a fall from an almost 20-foot scaffold in October 2004. His IRS company has been a fixture in the Metroplex at many top road racing, cycling, high school and college and triathlon events since he began in the mid-70s. He credits Bubba Thornton, former high school and TCU coach, and now UT-Austin coach, with getting him started. Marty said he'll continue through September to fulfill his obligations.

“Physically and mentally, I just can't do what I was doing,” he said. “I'm slower getting things done and I'm having hire people to do things that I once did.”

He said he now wants to spend more time with his 5-year-old daughter Jade and his wife Di. “I lost a year-and-a-half watching my daughter grow up and now I want to take as much time with her as I can,” he said.

Leicht's IRS company helped improve road-race timing and event organization in the Metroplex during the years when running began to boom. Among the things he's credited with changing are providing consistent and uniform age divisions and prompt starting times.

“Age divisions were all over the place,” Leicht said of the scattered events in the area. “And some of the races would start whenever.”

Leicht brought plenty of running knowledge to his company. He was a top high school runner at Keller, competed at the University of Oregon, where among his teammates was the renowned Alberto Salazar. Leicht could run a mile in the low 4-minute range during his heyday. He also was a good cyclist and swimmer, and among his achievements was competing in the Honolulu Ironman.

Because of his running background, he conducted events by trying to give what he believed runners wanted. “I think I did that,” he said.

As a testament to the loyalty of his working staff (all of whom have other full-time jobs), they pitched in along with Di to assure that scheduled road races were timed while he was recuperating from his injury.

Reflecting on the Metroplex running scene, Leicht said he especially liked the Dash For The Timber at Amon Carter Museum. “They were nice people (to work with), and it was a fun event,” he said of the now-defunct race.

The best organized event he said is the Secret Service 5K in Irving. The Secret Service is as big a stickler about starting on time as Marty. He said the Secret Service has everything timed so perfectly that the start was set one year for when a helicopter's blades stopped after it landed near the starting line. "As soon as the propeller stopped, we started right on time," Marty said.

Among the "craziest" people, he said, were the first group that began the Dino Dash in Dallas. He first met the women in charge as they were preparing to attend a gala. "They were dressed to the hilt," Marty said, noting their evening dresses and jewelry. "They said they wanted to do a run at Fair Park and in January." It didn't sound like the best plan, but Dino Dash just celebrated its 13th year, though the event moved from January to May in 2005.

Marty said he has always enjoyed the Squirrel Run in Fort Worth, and will be there for the event's final run this year.

The event was scheduled to raise money for the Botanic Garden's Boardwalk. It has been paid for, so there's no reason for the race to continue after this year.

Marty said he still might conduct an event or two, but don't expect to see him at many events. If he is, expect to see his daughter with him and with her running attire on.