

## Running Houston for a Cause

*Cora Turner of Alvarado chose to run her first half marathon in Houston on Jan. 14 because her older brother has liver problems and part of the proceeds benefits the American Liver Foundation. She said her brother has improved, but is still day-to-day. Here's her report:*

In late June (of 2006), we learned that my older brother was in liver failure. It was very upsetting seeing him in this condition, and I felt helpless and at quite a loss.

I was searching the Internet, trying to understand exactly what "liver failure" meant when I came across the American Liver Foundation's website. On their site was a link to the Houston Marathon. I had previously set a goal of running my first half marathon in 2007, and since Aramco Houston not only benefited, in part, the American Liver Foundation, but was also on my brother's birthday (he turned 39), I just felt like I should be running Houston.



It was only after I had registered that I discovered what a big deal this race was. It would have several elite athletes, and was the USATF Half Marathon Championship race. So, I pretty much threw any idea of placing out the window.

I wasn't sure what time I should be shooting for, but based on my 5K and 10K times, I figured somewhere around 1:30.

On the advice of my more experienced and knowledgeable running friends, my training consisted of one long run per week, one speed session, one tempo run and the rest were recovery runs. That plan fell apart in September when I sustained some type of injury that was making my foot swell. That had me down for a couple of weeks, and I had to alter my training, and re-start my distance build.

In the fall, after posting some sub-par 5K and 10K times, I discovered I was slightly anemic...something that has plagued me in the past. But I never gave it much thought until my race times started to fall. I that under control and everything seemed to come together as Houston neared.

I got my long run up to 15, albeit painful, miles. But it was doable.

The weather for Houston was perfect. It was in the mid 50s, very little wind and no rain. With the exception of one small hill early on, Houston's course is flat and fast. Mile splits were called clearly at each mile. Crowd support was great. They even called your name because it was printed on the race bib. There was ample water and Gatorade all along the course.

I felt surprisingly well, and kept waiting for some type of discomfort to set in. But other than two blisters forming on my feet at around mile 9, I was never in too much pain.

I finished in 1:25:39, which surprised me, but considering how flat the course was, and how few twists and turns there were, it made sense that my pace was faster than I had expected.

Even though I love this distance, I'm a little leery about entering another half because I know my time will be slower on a more challenging course. With what little experience I have, I would suggest Houston for a first-timer. But I do have to say, as far as race presentation and environment, it paled in comparison to White Rock or Cowtown. And Houston is not a very hospitable town, or at least not where we were.

Two really cool things about Houston were the finishers shirts, which were supplied by Under Armour, and the commemorative timing chips, which we were allowed to keep after the race.