



## Toying with a Hill

The purpose of the Toys For Tots 5K in Arlington on Dec. 9 was to collect toys for needy children this Christmas through the Marine Toys For Tots Foundation. But the talk among the finishers inside Randol Mill Park focused on THE HILL that greeted them after Mile 1. As one participant was overhead saying: "We should have expected that with the Marines sponsoring this." It was indeed a Marine-kind of test.

Jason Mitchell of Mansfield sort of summed up the feeling of most of the approximate 700 participants: "It was incredibly difficult," he said. "I train on mostly flat courses, and this was a killer. I was trying to break 23 minutes, and I couldn't do it on this course." He missed by about 12 seconds.

And not only did the participants on the chilly morning (temperatures in the 40s) have to cope with the long hill where Millwood turns into Riverview Dr. after

the first mile, they also had to go back up to the finish after passing the second mile.

"That was the most disappointing thing," Mitchell said. "After we did the main pigtail in the middle, I thought we were done. But when I realized we were heading back the way we came (which was downhill on Westwood Dr. and Randol Mill), and it was all uphill, I about gave up."

Even though there were many sighs of relief at the finish, there were some runners who actually enjoyed the course, including women's winner Rachel Aubert of Wills Point. The 18-year-old said she "enjoyed" the course because of the hills. "It was fun," she said after finishing in 20:23. And she was smiling as if she really meant it.

Well, fun for one person might not be exactly the same for others, though they were laughing about the challenge. Mike Pryal of Grand Prairie said ``It was very difficult. It was downhill the first mile, but the second mile and last mile were difficult. The big hill...I barely made it up there. But I did."

Paul Davila of Grand Prairie said the hill was ``very tough on the legs. It was very tough. That was a killer hill. I had to stop a little bit on it."

Robert Wright of Mansfield said ``It was pretty tough. That first hill...ah, that was pretty tough. Tougher than I thought it would be. That last mile's not easy, either."

Donald Crawford, shown heading up the big hill behind the lead police motorcycle, won the men's race in 19:39.



A pile of toys were collected for the Marine Toys For Tots Foundation. The event started and finished at Randol Mill Park.



The long climb begins for the Toys For Tots participants after they passed the first mile on Millwood Dr.



Besides the big hill after the first mile, participants had to go up Westwood Dr. and Randol Mill Rd. for most of the last mile of the 5K race.



The finish was a welcome sight for the Toys For Tots participants.



Santa Claus helped some of the 1K participants warm up with some pre-race exercises and aerobics.



The Steve Hill trio was part of the entertainment on the chilly morning.

