

Bird is top woman

It's no contest for Milliman

By Steve Elkins

Macon Telegraph and News

High drama and surprises were not the order of the day in the 10,000-meter portion of the Labor Day Road Race Monday.

Jeff Milliman and Kim Bird saw to that.

Milliman ran away from the field with a time of 30 minutes, 57 seconds to win the men's title, and Bird led from start to finish to capture the women's division in 36:38.

While neither of the winning times set a record, there was a record for runners in the ninth annual event. More than 1,800 people entered the two races, and 1,613 officially finished. In the 10K race, 968 runners were officially timed at the finish. In the 5K, 625 finished. The old record for finishers in the Labor Day race was 1,365, set in both 1981 and '83.

The 26-year-old Milliman, who had set his sights on a course record, fell more than one minute short of the mark of 29:46 set by Kevin Moats in 1982.

Two-time defending champion Tony Bateman of Charlotte, N.C., finished second in the men's competition with a time of 31:20. Americus' Mike Mead placed third in 32:15. Mead finished second behind Bateman in '84. Following Mead were Gary Jenkins of Lithia Springs (32:30) and Michael Murphy of Macon (32:53).

Ron Albea of Lilburn and Ann Lukens of Atlanta were the winners in the 5,000-meter event, held as part of the road race this year for the first time. Albea won the men's title in 15:25, and Lukens was the women's winner with a time of 18:02.

MILLIMAN, WHO HAS lived in Macon for almost a year and has become the area's top middle distance runner, was disappointed with his time and sounded like anything but the winner of the race.

"I was hurting. I was really tired. I thought I'd feel a lot better. I'm just lucky nobody was running with me. I kept looking for Tony Bateman behind me," Milliman said.

But neither Bateman, who won last year in 30:12, nor anybody else ever made a serious challenge.

"Nobody went with me right from the start. The heat was a factor. It didn't seem that bad, but it was very humid," Milliman said.

"Compared to what I've been running recently, my time was a little slower. Nine days ago, I ran in the Maggie Valley race in North Carolina. The next day, I felt pretty good so I ran 20 miles. After that, I was really

hurting. I definitely overtrained. I thought I had backed off enough, but apparently I hadn't."

Bird, of Austell, came into the race as the top seed and had an easy time in the women's competition in her first Labor Day race.

She said her time, which was almost two minutes off the women's course record of 31:43 set by Shirley Silsby in 1980, would have been better if she hadn't run the first mile so slowly. Much of the opening mile of the course is uphill.



Bird: Top women's time

"I RAN THAT first mile in about six minutes. I took it slow because I'd been warned about that hill. Now I wish I had taken it faster," Bird said.

The Labor Day course, which before the race was labeled by many of the top runners as a fast track, didn't yield the kinds of times that had been expected. Approximately the final 1½ miles is downhill.

"My time was a lot slower than I anticipated. I'm not really a downhill runner. The downhill part didn't help me much at all," Bird said.

Bird beat second-place finisher Lucia Geraci of Atlanta (37:02) by 24 seconds. Last year's women's winner, Sherry Langlais of Columbus, finished third with a time of 38:30. Her winning time last year was 37:34. Karen Ammons, also of Columbus, was fourth in 40:20. Nancy Peterson of Macon was fifth in 40:28.

The 10K men's team competition was won by the Athletics South group headed by Mead, Greg Thompson (32:53) and Robbie Hollister (33:02). The Overhead Door team of Bird, Langlais and Ammons captured the 10K women's title.

The 10K men's masters (40-and-over) winner was Richard Boggs of Barnesville in 34:08. The women's 10K masters winner was Brenda Marshall of Macon (46:27). The men's Athletic Attic masters team of Boggs, Felton Watson (38:33) and Alan Davis (40:36) won the 10,000 meters title.

Jimmy Baughan of Forest Park captured the 10K wheelchair division in 39:13.

Geno Smith of Newnan won the men's masters 5K in 16:23. Sarah Smith of Forest Park captured the women's masters 5K in 21:32. The 5K wheelchair winner was Phillip Mann of Musella (16:26).

The 5K men's team winner was Athletics South, led by Hunt Brown (15:52), Johnny Krueger (15:58) and Stuart Harvey (16:34). The women's team competition was won by the Athletic Attic squad of Phyllis Pierce (19:28), Tandi Pressley (19:57) and Shelia Wrobel (20:47).

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Albea, Lukens win

By Chuck Thompson
Macon Telegraph and News

Ron Albea of Atlanta, doing exactly as expected, used his experience and endurance to win the first-ever Macon Labor Day 5,000-meter road race Monday.

The top seeded runner in the 3.2-mile run, Albea took the lead at the crest of the big hill at St. Paul Apartments, which is about the halfway point of the race, and never looked back. He finished in 15 minutes and 25 seconds, beating second-place finisher Joe Van De Water by 18 seconds. Van De Water, a 17-year-old senior at Macon's Stratford Academy, was seeded 161st. Jack Durkin, Van De Water's track coach at Stratford, came in third, crossing the finish line six seconds after his student.

Ann Lukens of Atlanta was the top female finisher with a time of 18:02. Macon's Lyn Floyd was second, finishing in 18:38.

The 5K wheelchair winner was Phillip Mann of Musella (16:26).

Albea, 35, has been running for about 10 years, he said, adding that this was his biggest victory. "I've won some small races, but this was the first time I've won a big race like this."

He said he expected to run well Monday, but that he was surprised to find he was the top seed. "I was really surprised by that. But when I saw that I was No. 1, I felt I had a good chance to win. I ran real well here last year." Albea finished third in the Bud Light 5K last November, which was run over the same course as Monday's Labor Day race.

HE FELT THE key to his victory was his endurance. "I run too many races a year, about 40. And I run all distances. I'm not a speed runner, but I'm strong. I was in fifth when we started up the hill. It was very humid today, but my endurance helped me last up the hill. Once I got in front, I felt I could hold everybody off."

Van De Water was one of 10 members of Stratford's new road race and cross country team that participated in the race Monday.

"We're trying to get something going for the long distance runners," said Durkin, who is coaching the new team at Stratford as well as the regular track program. "There aren't any long distance races in the SEAIS now, so we're running the TAC events. Joe is really developing into a good distance runner. We're hoping to get him into an Ivy League school as a runner if he

can keep improving."

Van De Water, who has been running for only three years, had run the 10K Labor Day Race the last two years. He switched to the shorter race because "the 5K is the longest distance race any high school programs run," said Durkin.

"This was my best time in a 5K," Van De Water said of his 15:43. "This is a fast course, and I really like to run it."

THE STRATFORD senior took the early lead and held it for the first mile. His coach then went ahead as they began climbing the hill. "Then the other guy (Albea) passed us at the top of the hill," said Durkin. "Once we reached the crest of the hill, we weren't in it anymore."

Lukens, who was 30th overall, was a last-minute entry in the 5K race. The 26-year-old, who has been running for about eight years, had signed up for the 10K race, the normal distance at which she competes. But a recent bout of laryngitis, which still has her talking in a whisper, forced her to switch to the shorter race.

She also ran a personal best for a 5K, something she wasn't expecting considering her illness. "I won the Bud Light 10K here two years ago, so I knew it was a fast course. But with my laryngitis it is a surprise to win," Lukens said.

Floyd, who had not raced seriously in about a year because of a knee injury, was thrilled with her performance. She had been a top five finisher the last three years in the Labor Day 10K race. "I wanted to get back to racing, but I wasn't ready yet for the 10K," she said of her decision to switch to the shorter race.

"THIS WAS the first time I've gone all out in a year, and I was only 10 seconds off my best time in a 5K. It felt great to be back out there," added Floyd, who was the 40th finisher overall.

Rounding out the top 10 men finishers were Hunt Brown, who finished in 15:53; Johnny Krueger, 15:58; Roger Howard, 16:05; Larry Lanier, 16:17; Tom Crofton, 16:18; Geno Smith, 16:25, and Stuart Harvey, 16:37.

Following Lukens and Floyd in the women's division were Connie Robertson, who finished in 18:56; Anne Wright, 19:24; Phylliss Pierce, 19:28; Tandy Pressley, 19:58; Karen Raines, 20:29; Ruth Massey, 20:48; Christine Edwards, 21:50, and Sheila Wrobel, 21:52.

If you finish, you're a star

By James Palmer
Macon Telegraph and News

The front-runners were in the Labor Day Road Race to win. But the majority of the 1,800 runners who started the race — and the 1,613 that officially finished — participated in the 10K and 5K races Monday weren't after ribbons or records.

For those who came in well after the winners crossed the line, the rewards were simple but well-received.

Just finishing was reward enough for most. The satisfaction of beating the personal demons that begin to fight you with each stride you take as the race reaches its end left most with smiles on their faces as they neared the finish line at Central City Park.

A fresh, dry towel and a kiss from an appreciative wife who was waiting at the end of the run seemed all one man in his mid-30s could have asked for as he came in well back in the pack.

And for most, the running couldn't have been as much fun as talking about it afterward.

"YOU PULLED me through," one sweat-soaked man said to his younger running partner. "It's the worst race I've run in a long time. I should have stuck to the 5K."

Yes, the harsh realities reared their heads for some of the folks who struggled to the end and spent several minutes under the fire hose's spray cooling off. As one put it: "I get older and older, and it gets harder and harder."

But the aches and pains were soon forgotten as old acquaintances were re-established and new friendships were made. The running took less than an hour for most. The milling around and talking after everything was over took much longer.

The snatches of conversation that drifted over the grass in Central City seemed to have a common theme. Half the

folks who showed up for the race hadn't trained properly. "This was the first race I've run since the Tar Baby."

"Me too."

And the other half had gotten up so early Monday they had to sleep-walk half the race's distance.

"I've been up since 5 this morning."

"Me too."

It's the kind of event that everyone who enters, and finishes, wins. But there were also special winners — like Jimmy Baughan. The 26-year-old was the winner of the 10K wheelchair race, finishing the 6.2-mile course in 39:13.

"IT WASN'T so fast a time. I shouldn't say anything. It was a couple of minutes off what I normally do, but I've been kind of sick lately," Baughan said. "I'm not sure if anybody else was in it except Emily (Quinn)."

Actually Baughan, who is from Forst Park, and his friend (Quinn) were the only two entrants in the 10K wheelchair division. There were three entrants in the 5K race. Those five entrants were the most wheelchair racers the Labor Day Race has ever had.

Baughan said he'd been racing for only a year, so it was his first experience in the Macon race. But it won't be his last.

"I didn't know what kind of field they would have, but I like the course. It's a nice place," he said. "I hope to bring a lot of people with me next year."

For someone like Baughan, the race certainly was a special one, giving him a memory to cherish. But for most, the fun was simply in the run.

"You didn't see that guy barfing his brains out at the finish line did you?" one man asked his friend as they walked away from the finish line.

He was smiling as he said it, probably not at someone else's misfortune. He was just thankful it wasn't him suffering the embarrassment.

These Masters are still in the fast lane

By Tina Saland

Macon Telegraph and News

Who said as you get older you slow down?

If that's true, someone forgot to tell the four masters division winners in Monday's Labor Day Road Race.

Newnan's Gene Smith, 40, crossed the finish line of the 5K race in 16 minutes, 23 seconds, just 1:03 off Ron Albea's winning time.

Sarah Smith, 41, of Forest Park, finished the 5K race in 21:32, less than three minutes behind the women's division leader.

Forty-year-old Richard Boggs of Barnesville completed the 10K course in 34:06, 3:11 behind winner Jeff Milliman.

Brenda Marshall, 42, of Macon, finished the 10K race in 46:27, 9:49 out of first place.

THE SURPRISING thing about these runners is that, with the exception of Gene Smith, none of them has been running competitively for more than four years.

Gene Smith has been running "nearly all my life," he said, and has run competitively for about 10 years.

Monday's race was the third Smith had run this past weekend. He competed Saturday morning in Newnan and Saturday night in Atlanta. Although one might think he would be tired, Smith set a personal record, or "PR" as the runners call it, at the Labor Day Road Race.

"It's a good course," said Smith, who didn't even appear winded. "I tried to catch the guy in front of me. He beat me by about 10 yards."

Smith, who has run races up to a half-marathon (about 13 miles) distance, said he trains "on a grass path on my farm," running 40 to 60 miles per week.

Boggs, the 10K masters winner, has been running for eight years and competing for four.

ALTHOUGH HE has run five marathons, he said the 10K is his favorite. Boggs, whose best 10K time is 33:04, said his time was slower than he would have liked

because of the heat and wind.

He said he started running to "stay in shape" and has since dropped from 175 to 136 pounds. He said he tries to run a race every other weekend and is thinking about running in the Macon marathon. If he decides to run the marathon, he said he would increase his weekly mileage to "at least 60."

Sarah Smith, who won the masters 5K, has been running for a considerably shorter length of time than the other masters winners. She has been competing only about a year, and her goal was to finish in less than 22 minutes. Her 21:32 is her best time.

Smith, who got involved in running as preseason training for softball, said the secret to her success is her coach.

"You have to be serious," she said. "And you have to get a coach to help you and push you."

Although Smith said she has always been active and doesn't think her overall health has improved, she said, "It sure feels great when you win."

MARSHALL, THE 10K masters winner, was older than the others when she began running. She was 39 when she started running "to lose weight."

Now, she runs six miles per day and 13 miles once a week. She finished a marathon in 4 hours, 3 minutes last November.

Like Boggs, Marshall said the heat and humidity slowed her down.

In addition to running, she takes aerobics classes and lifts weights three times a week.

According to Marshall, it's never too late to start running. She advised other women older than 35 who want to begin running to "start slow and take your time until your body gets built up."

"If she thinks she can do something (such as compete in a race), she shouldn't be afraid to try," Marshall continued. "If she has to slow down, do it. The longer she's at it, the stronger she'll get. Don't ever think you can't do something just because you're 39."