

Close runs away with men's 10K

By Chuck Thompson
Macon Telegraph and News

The Tallahassee connection came back to claim the Macon Labor Day Road Race Monday morning.

In the early years of the race, Florida State University track star Herb Wills was one of the top performers in the 10,000-meter run. He finished second in 1978 and then won the race in 1979 and 1981. (He missed the 1980 race with an injury.) Wills was the first person (and remains among the only three) to finish in less than 30 minutes, with a time of 29:59.7 in 1981.

In recent years, however, Tallahassee, which remains a hotbed of racing, hasn't been well-represented in the Macon race. But a suggestion from Wills changed that this year.

"I train with Herb in Tallahassee, and he suggested we get a group of guys together and enter a team up here," Jesse Close said. "So four of us came up and entered, and we did OK."

That's putting it mildly.

Close won the 13th running of the Labor Day Road Race 10,000-meter race Monday in 30 minutes, 38 seconds. Tallahassee teammate Michael Curcio finished second in 30:56. And the other two Tallahassee runners, Hoze Droze and Bill Crooks, finished sixth and seventh, easily giving them the team championship.

Deanna Stouder, a 33-year-old Indiana native who is now working on her doctorate in biology at the University of Georgia, won the women's 10,000-meter race with a time of 38:17. It was the first time she had run in the Macon race.

"Some friends told me it was a good, fast course, so I decided to try it," Stouder said. "I really enjoyed it. I've run 10-kilometers faster, but this was my fastest time in an official race."

The Macon race is not new to Close, although he hadn't run here in seven years. "I ran over here in '80 and '81 when I was in the Army at Fort Stewart and did all right," he said. His top finish was eighth with a 31:21 in 1981.

Close, 30, ran sprints in high school, then took up distance run-

Results from Monday's Labor Day Road Race were not available for today's newspaper. We apologize. The complete results will be carried in Wednesday's editions.

ning in 1979. He stuck with the sport until 1983. "I got married then and quit racing, wanting to devote my time to my family. But there are a lot of good runners in Tallahassee, and they stayed after me, telling me I should come back. So I started training again in 1986 and started back racing."

He considers marathons his strong suit, but Close says he's been running well in 10,000-meter races recently.

Although he was the winner, Close's time was not his best. "I ran a 30:18 a long time ago."

Nor was his 30:38 that fast for the Macon course. It was the slowest time for a winner here since Jeff Milliman won in 30:57 in 1985, and the fourth slowest ever. The men's 10,000-meter record in the Labor Day Road Race is 29:46, set by Kevin Moats in 1982.

Stouder's time was also slow. Only Joylan Garverick, who ran a 41:47 in the first Labor Day Road Race in 1977, has won the women's 10,000-meter race in a slower time than Stouder's 38:17. The women's record in Macon is 34:43, set by Shirley Silsby in 1980.

Still, Stouder was considerably faster than her competition Monday. Susan White finished second in 39:52, more than a minute and half behind Stouder. Deb Baber was just behind White, finishing in 39:59. Kay Williamson was fourth in 40:59, and Betty McBrayer was fifth in 41:19.

Close and teammate Curcio ran together through the first four miles of the men's race.

"Mike was leading, with me right behind him, until we got to the top of that last big hill," Close said. "But my strength is running hills, so I had more left after we got to the top."

Finishing third in 31:28 was John Devine of Beaufort, S.C., and Jef Burns of Albany was fourth in 31:43. Macon native Adam Pinkston, who won the race in 1986 and now lives in Asheville, N.C., finished fifth in 31:45.

Fun run lived up to its billing

By Kamon Simpson
Macon Telegraph and News

Most ran. Some trotted. Others simply walked.

The idea of the race, after all, was fun, as the name implied, and the 1989 Fun Run accomplished its mission for all its participants, from the first to the last finisher.

The race, enjoyed by 107 this year, consisted of one lap around the Central City Park track, or the circuit, as proclaimed by the official who called into the bullhorn to signal the start of the affair.

The younger participants filled the starting line, inching their way forward with anticipation before finally being allowed to let their little feet fly.

Given the green light to run, this group of eager legs and flapping arms set a blistering pace as they spewed forward like water from a busted dam. That surge soon dissipated, however, and by the lap's first turn the serious enthusiasts were beginning to separate themselves from the also-rans.

First across the finish line was Roger Howard, who took several minutes to recover from the long strides that brought him in more than 20 seconds earlier than a group of preteens.

"I haven't raced in a one-mile run in, well, probably three years or more," said Howard, a physical education teacher at Greenville Elementary, whose time was 5:01. "I got here too late for the 5K, so I decided to come down and try the mile. It's a lot different. You've got to straight go get it in the mile. A lot depends on the competition and what time you shoot for."

And for Howard, and a lot more of the older runners, a lot depended on how they avoided the younger runners, who presented a hazard unique to this type of event.

"It was hard getting out there because of all the kids," Howard said. "I had to weave through them. That added five or 10 seconds to my time. But I wanted to break out early and press the pace and see who would stick with me."

Most racers were congregating around the finish line, talking about the run, laughing and having fun when an almost unnoticed pair crossed the line.

They were mother and daughter and they were the final two finishers: Irma Penn and Jamilla, who, at age 2, was the day's youngest runner, who completed the run in 19:56.

Does she like to run, this young trotting toddler?

"She likes to run when she gets attention for running," her mother answered. This was, in fact, Jamilla's second race, her first coming two months ago in the Fort Valley Hospice Run. "Her dad runs all the time. After she got old enough to run, we decided to enter in some races."

"She stopped a couple of times on the track," her mother explained. "She wanted to go off and play, so we had to think up some games to keep her going, like I'll catch you, you catch me."

"It was fun," shrieked the little girl as she looked up at her older race companion.

It was so much fun, in fact, that when Irma turned away from Jamilla to listen to her time, Jamilla kept trotting along, some 50 or so yards by herself, oblivious to the fact that the race was over.

Her mother quickly raced along to retrieve the girl, but she couldn't get her to walk back. She could merely turn her around, and as they trotted back to the finish line, the young competitor, 2 years old and less than two feet tall, smiled all the way.

After all, anything this fun was never meant to end.

Wheelchair champion wins again

Results, page 7D

By Kelly Villiers

Macon Telegraph and News

A record nine wheelchair racers entered Monday's Labor Day Road Race, and they ranged in age from 16 to 61.

But neither 16-year-old Jayson Knowles of Brooks nor 61-year-old Glenn Brewer of Fayetteville were able to dethrone Jimmy Green of Loganville, who zipped through the 10,000-meter course in a record 25:09 to win the division for the second straight year.

Green was one of several wheelchair racers entered as a team, called the Peachtree Spinners, in Monday's race. The team was put together by the Shepard Spinal Center in Atlanta, where a lot of the wheelchair racers have met.

One of the Spinners' newest members is Brewer, a retired Navy pilot who was paralyzed in a hang glider accident in Pennsylvania three years ago. Upon moving to the Atlanta area, he met Macon's Eric Maxwell at the Shepard Spinal Center and decided to give wheelchair racing a try.

"I thought I was too old to get into wheelchair racing," said Brewer, who finished eighth with a time of 39:21. "The nice thing about it is you've got all these chairs here and there's not a cripple among them. (Racing) changes your whole attitude about wheelchairs."

Knowles, however, is not old enough yet to join the Peachtree Spinners. But he can join when he turns 18. Monday was his first road race, although he had raced track courses in the past. Knowles finished seventh with a time of 37:00.

The race was scary for Knowles at one point, as he was watching a runner in front of him and almost completely missed negotiating a curve in the course.

"But I loved going over that bridge at I-75 and zooming down that hill," he said. "I want to do a lot more road races."

Green is one of the top wheelchair racers in the nation. Last year, he finished 20th in an elite field of 200 at the Wheels of Fire race in Seattle. He was pleased with Monday's performance, which was 2:35 faster than the record he set last year.

Maxwell, a second-year law student at Mercer University, is finding less and less time to train with the increasing pressures of school. But he was still pleased with Monday's fourth-place finish and 30:12 time.

"I guess the professors think all you ought to do is be studying and no activities outside the classroom," he said. "But you have to set your priorities. The time wasn't as good as last year, but the course was a little slower."

Records shattered in 5K, but winners not satisfied

By Steve Elkins

Macon Telegraph and News

Both winners in the 5,000-meter portion of Monday's Labor Day Road Race shattered records, but they weren't satisfied.

Marty Flynn, a distance running coach at Clemson University who is from Longford, Ireland, won the men's 5,000-meter race in 14 minutes, 19 seconds. Flynn's time was 25 seconds faster than the previous record set by Sam Shirley last year.

Marcia Wentworth, a graduate student at the University of Florida, ran the course in 16:58 to win the women's 5,000-meter run. Her time was 33 seconds better than Connie Robertson's record time of last year.

Flynn, a 26-year-old graduate student in business, pulled away at about the two-mile mark and cruised to the win, seven seconds ahead of runner-up Jeffrey Wentworth, Marcia Wentworth's husband.

"I was basically planning on running out in front from the beginning," Flynn said. "Jeff Wentworth was alongside me at about two miles. I opened up about a seven-second lead there, and no-

"It's a very fast course. That's why I'm disappointed in my time."

- Marcia Wentworth, women's 5K winner

body made a move after that. It was more or less over at that point."

Flynn was disappointed that he didn't better the 13:38 that he ran on the course when he won the 1987 Macon Running Festival. Flynn, who ran in the Labor Day Race for the first time Monday, said he was tired after winning a 5,000-meter race in Clemson on Friday with a time of 14:30.

"I really wanted to beat that time I ran here in 1987. But it was a cooler time of the year. I think this is one of the fastest courses in the country. That's why a lot of people come here, to try for a personal record."

Carlton Law of Atlanta came in third with a time of 14:34, followed by Mike Allen of Huntsville, Ala., in 15:07 and Shelly Cranford of Cochran in 15:22.

Marcia Wentworth, 29, pulled

away from a pack of runners about ¼ of a mile into the race and was never threatened. She beat second-place Jolie Greenway of Douglasville by 29 seconds.

"There were a couple of runners right on my tail. I was surprised because everybody said nobody (fast) was going to be here. But it was obvious there were some good runners because they actually pushed me."

Wentworth said she was somewhat tired after finishing fourth Friday in a race in Anderson, S.C. Her Macon time was 28 seconds off her personal record of 16:30.

"It's a very fast course. That's why I'm disappointed in my time." But I broke the face record by a good amount, so I'm pleased with that."

Wentworth, a native of Colts Neck, N.J., started her running career after graduating from the University of South Carolina.

"I didn't run in college. I was fat from drinking beer and eating pizza."

Kim Drosky of Lithia Springs was third in 17:39, followed by Susan Rogers of Gainesville, Fla., in 17:58, and Phyllis Pierce of Warner Robins in 18:20.