

September 7, 2015

Alan Black adds another Labor Day Road Race win



JASON VORHEES/THE TELEGRAPH Macon, GA, 09/07/2015: 10K winner Alan Black runs through Central City Park to the finish line during the 39th Macon Labor Day Race Monday morning. JASON VORHEES
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By JOHN KOSATER sports@macon.com

Alan Black has had a remarkable career as a runner but goes largely unnoticed for most of the year in the Middle Georgia area.

That is except for Labor Day weekend when Black makes a regular stop in Macon as the winner of whatever race he chooses to participate in at the Labor Day Road Race.

The 41-year-old Black won the 10K race Monday, his seventh title in that race to go with eight wins in the 5K race, defeating 22-year-old Rashaun Tanner by 41 seconds.

“If you told me almost 20 years ago that I would still be running in this race and winning against the young guys, I probably would have said there isn’t any way,” said Black who finished eighth in the 40-and-over division at the Boston Marathon this year. “I wanted to go maybe 10 seconds faster, but I really can’t complain because I am just back training after two months off. Running is something that I really love, and the competition just drives me to work harder.”

Black, who is currently back in training for the 5K national championships in New York and is currently running about 50 miles per week, admitted he will allow some time to relax. At least a little time.

“I won’t run anymore (Monday), and I will probably sit back and drink a few cold ones, but (Tuesday) I will start going hard again,” Black said. “It’s a little harder to come back from a break at my age, so the miles will start to go up this week.”

The women’s 10K had a first-time winner in Melissa Jones, a Macon resident, who cut more than three minutes off of her time from last year.

Jones outdistanced second-place finisher Katherine O’Quinn by 37 seconds.

“I wasn’t sure if I had won the race or not, so I had to ask someone when I got through,” said the 34-year-old Jones, who didn’t start running until she was in her mid-20s. “I took the lead at about the three-mile mark, and the spectators were telling me I was leading, but I just wasn’t sure. I had hoped to place in my age group, but winning the race just makes it a very special day for me.”

The 5K men’s race was hotly contested as Patrick Whitehead, Victor Breedveld and Matt Triick battled, but Whitehead had enough left to defeat Breedveld by four seconds and Triick by eight seconds.

“The thought of getting run down in the last 300 meters did enter my mind, but I still felt like I had enough left to stay ahead,” said Whitehead, who finished fifth a year ago. “It was great to have someone so close to me entering the park, because the social aspect of running is what makes it fun. I looked back one last time at about 50 meters, and it wasn’t until then that I knew I had won.”

Holly Ortlund won the women’s 5k for the second year in a row, beating second place finisher Irma Betancourt by 41 seconds.

Read more here: <http://www.macon.com/sports/article34291290.html#storylink=cpy>

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Macon woman sheds 103 pounds, draws cheers at road race



By JOE KOVAC JR. jkovac@macon.com

Tonja Jordan had tears in her eyes when she crossed the finish line at Monday's Labor Day Road Race.

Over the past year and a half she has lost 103 pounds.

Walking and jogging, Jordan, 46, who now weighs about 260 pounds, finished the 3.1-mile course in a little more than 51 minutes.

She hugged her 17-year-old daughter, Chanice, and others, including her personal trainer, Robin Castro.

As they embraced, Jordan told Castro, "I wouldn't trade you for cheesecake."

Jordan had just trimmed more than 10 minutes off her time in last year's road race, eclipsing the one-hour mark.

"This was a huge milestone for her," Castro said. "I'm just beyond proud of her."

Jordan, a secretary at a Macon hospital, embarked on a fitness regimen in March 2014. Her father had just died of complications from high blood pressure and diabetes.

She joined Weight Watchers and hired a personal trainer. At first, knee pain limited her to pool workouts.

“I could never have imagined doing something like this,” she said after Monday’s race.

Before losing the weight, it was hard for her to walk from her desk to go down a hallway at work.

In spring 2014 when she learned she was at risk for diabetes, she went home and cried. Then she hit the gym.

“The toughest part is being consistent,” she said.

Jordan grew up in Macon and played the flute in Southwest High School’s marching band.

“I’ve been overweight all my life,” she said.

Her weakness was cake. Any sweets, really.

She has found that plain sweet potatoes help her fend off cravings.

“You just imagine it’s a sweet potato pie,” she said.

Her daughter, Chanice, spoke of Jordan’s “late nights at the gym.”

Jordan’s stepfather, Curtis Roundtree, said her self-esteem “has gone up through the roof.”

He said, “I used to tell her the hardest thing about losing weight is to start.”

Now she exercises most every day -- two or three times some days.

“It’s a lifelong journey,” Jordan said. “This is my new life and I’m loving it.”

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