

Albany's Whitehead wins 10K at Macon Labor Day Road Race

By John Kosater

sports@macon.com

After winning the 5K event at the Macon Labor Day Road Race a year ago, Patrick Whitehead decided to move to the 10K event for a couple of reasons this year.



"A lot of the runners from my team, The Good Life City Runners from Albany, decided to run the 10K, plus Macon is a great place to come and get my butt kicked," Whitehead said with a smile.

But that didn't happen as Whitehead took the lead around the two-mile mark and never looked back as he cruised to a two-minute win over second-place finisher Tim Adams. Macon's Walker Middlebrooks finished third.

"This is just a great 10K, and I love running through downtown," Whitehead said. "I would say that it was a good hard run, and I was able to enjoy the scenery and the crowd support. I think it was a good run for not really being challenged at the end, and my legs definitely hurt more than my lungs. I am coming off of a 50K last weekend so I did not run my normal 50 or 60 miles last week, but overall I am very pleased."

Whitehead battled through a foot injury during the last year and now runs in sandals, which have helped ease the pain while running.

"I went to the Luna running sandals about eight months ago, and they are really more popular in trail running when people really aren't going for speed, but they have been very good for me," Whitehead said. "I was hoping for someone that would run around 34 or 35 minutes, and I was a little disappointed that I wasn't really pushed, but I guess I was humbled enough last weekend in the 50K in Atlanta."

Kathy Wiegand, one of three winners from the Atlanta Track Club, struggled at the end of her 10K but also coasted to a win, beating Macon's Megan Sapp by 47 seconds.

"I didn't remember the 10K course being so hilly, and I felt good until I got to the 4 1/2 mile point, and then I just had to depend on all of my training," said Wiegand, who last ran the 10K course in Macon about 10 years ago. "By the time I got to the one-mile point, I knew I just had to keep going and put it all out there."

"I had looked at the times from last year, and I thought I had a decent chance to win, and I was glad I was able to stay ahead. This is such a great race, and the Atlanta Track Club has some great competition with the Macon runners."

Brent Fields, also from the Atlanta Track Club, won the men's 5K for the first time with a time of 15:33. Benjamin Davies finished second, four seconds behind Fields, while Steve Bell finished third.

"I was 45 seconds faster than last year, and for me to go this fast, everything has to go well," Fields said. "I think I took the lead at mile two or somewhere around it, and if I was running by myself, I wouldn't have been able to run this fast. It gets to the point where I was thinking, 'OK, it's only running down a street and the pain will only last for a few minutes,' and thankfully I was able to get through that pain."

Holly Ortlund, also from the Atlanta Track Club, won the women's 5K for the third straight year, finishing with a time of 17:26. That was 18 seconds faster than her winning time of a year ago.

Irma Betancourt finished second, six seconds behind Ortlund.

"I am not really in top running shape right now, but the cool weather definitely helped," Ortlund said. "I enjoy this course, and Macon puts on such a quality race, and it is just a great team event. I don't really think about winning when I come here, but winning is always nice."

Read more here: <http://www.macon.com/sports/article100062007.html>