

Cook shatters 5K record

By Chuck Thompson
Macon Telegraph and News

Kelly Cook, the 13-year-old defending women's 5-kilometer champion of Macon's Labor Day Road Race, returned to town Monday hoping to retain her title and set a new course record in the process.

She won again, but she didn't just shave a few seconds off the old record time of 18:02 — she shattered it.

The Atlanta native, pushed all the way by Hapeville's Connie Robertson, ran a blistering 17:36, setting not only a new Labor Day women's record but bettering the national 5K mark of 17:39 for her age group.

Cochran's Shelly Cranford, the second seed, won the men's division of Monday's 5K race with a time of 15:04, eight seconds off the Labor Day Road Race record of 14:56.

Cook finished only a second ahead of Robertson, 25, who shared the lead with the younger girl most of the race.

"Connie's a great runner," said Cook. "She ran right with me from the start."

Cook wasn't able to pull ahead until after the pair entered Central City Park and were in sight of the finish line.

"I didn't know if I could pull away from her or not," said Cook. "When we got to where there's just a tenth of a mile to go, I pulled in front and was able to stay there."

Cook said she doesn't know how much faster she can run.

"I just hope to improve my time every time I race," she said. "I felt pretty good today, and I really like this course. I wanted to win and set a new record here, but I didn't really know what I'd do. I've been running track this summer and had been in only one other road race."

Cranford, 21, had also not run a road race in a while — since the Peachtree Road Race in Atlanta July 4. But he had been training a lot for Monday's race.

"I've got a steep, quarter-mile hill near my house that I've been running a lot," he said. "And I've been running on the track some. That work on the hill really helped me. When I got to the hill here on this course (about 1.3 miles into the 3.1-mile race), I just took off and pulled ahead of everyone. It was all downhill from there."

It wasn't a breeze, however.

"That last mile was rough. I guess the humidity got to me a little because my legs started giving out. But I was in front so I just told myself to hang on and finish, and I did."

Cranford's 15:04 was his second-best time ever in a 5K, so he wasn't too disappointed he didn't set a new Labor Day record.

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"I ran a 14:53 on this course a couple of years ago in the Running Festival race, but it was about 30 degrees that day. It was too humid to do that today."

Finishing 16 seconds behind Cranford for second place was Alfie Crowin. Sam Shirley came in third

with a 15:33. William Bryant was fourth, 15:44, followed by Eric Smith, 15:55, Dennis Herendeen, 15:56, Roger Howard, 15:58, Dan Lassetter, 15:59, Larry Lanier, 16:07 and Luein Reeves, 16:20.

Behind Cook and Robertson in the women's division, Kimberly Nelson

placed third with an 18:20 time. Lyna Taylor was fourth, at 18:25, followed by Tracy Harrell, 18:30, Lyn Sanderson, 18:42, Betty McBrayer, 19:36, Patti Patterson, 19:42, Gloria Barron, 19:57 and Jennifer Hill, 19:57.

About 1,100 runners participated in the 5K race, with 985 making an official finish. This was the third year the 5K race had been included in the Labor Day Road Race, which began in 1977 as just a 10K race.

Steve Venable, Natalie Spalding win the 10K

By Steve Elkins
Macon Telegraph and News

A bunch of carpetbaggers from up North — the Atlanta area — came in and stole the show Monday in the 10-kilometer portion of the 11th annual Macon Labor Day Road Race.

Steve Venable of Roswell cruised to the men's title in 30 minutes, 27 seconds, 37 seconds ahead of defending champ Adam Pinkston, who was second in 31:14. Pinkston, formerly of Macon, now lives in Asheville, N.C. Natalie Spalding of Atlanta, who turned 42 years old Thursday, won the women's title in 37:57. And Phillip Griggs of Snellville was the wheelchair division winner in 28:35. All three 10K winners were first-time participants in the Labor Day Road Race.

The race, sponsored by the *Macon Telegraph and News*, was run in warm, humid weather. At racetime, it was 76 degrees, with a relative humidity of 97 percent. Race organizers said just under 2,000 persons ran in the race, about 1,100 in the 5K and approximately 900 in the 10K.

Venable, 28, finished 41 seconds off the race record, a 29:46 set by Kevin Moats in 1982. But Venable said winning the race was the main thing on his mind.

"The pace just wasn't there for a record today, but it is a fast course," Venable said. "I was exactly one minute off my best personal best. I always run for place, not time, so I'm very happy with the win. Coming in, I thought I had a pretty good chance, but I wasn't sure I would win. The defending champion was here, and there were several other good runners here. I was going to go in and see how the race shaped up and then make my mind up as to whether I could win at about the four-mile mark."

Venable, who ran collegiately at Troy State, said the early pace was slow, then the race picked up.

"We came out fairly conservatively in the first mile. I, Adam Pinkston and Paul Waldron went out together for the first mile. We finished the first mile in a little over five minutes. At the mile mark, Waldron dropped back. It was Adam and I after that. It

remained that way until the hill around four miles. I decided to make a break and see if he went with me. He didn't, and it was smooth sailing from then on," Venable said.

Waldron, of Tallahassee, finished third in 31:36, followed by Greg Thompson of Marietta in 32:21 and Mike Anderson of Atlanta in 32:40.

Spalding was an inspiration in the women's 10K. She's battled back from a major hip injury and a thyroid operation in the last year to reach her peak as a runner. Monday's race was by far her best ever. Her previous best time was a 38:44, 47 seconds slower than her time Monday. The women's race record is 34:43, set by Shirley Silsby in 1980.

"I was very happy with the time," Spalding said. "It's a major personal record for me. My coach, Mike Caldwell from Atlanta, has really helped me a lot this year. It took almost one whole year to get back in shape. I had all this therapy. Then I thought I was getting back into shape, and I go into the hospital to get my thyroid removed. That had been slowing me

down all year."

Nothing slowed Spalding down Monday. She won against a field which included much younger women with more experience. Spalding, who has been running competitively for just five years, was ecstatic after the win.

"Running just makes you feel so good. It's hard to explain. It's a miracle that I ran that well. I feel like a different person. I feel like I can get somewhere now," she said.

Spalding took the lead a little past halfway in the 6.2-mile course.

"Jenny Glapinski, a marathoner from Atlanta, led early," Spalding said. "I guess I went ahead at about the 3 1/2-mile mark. I don't think anybody was close (late in the race), but I didn't look back."

"It's a great course. I'm real weak on hills, but I didn't feel bad at all on that first hill because it comes at a real good place, about halfway through the first mile. I've been training a lot on hills and that helped."

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Spalding said she hopes the win is a sign of good things to come.

"This is my first race as a 42-year-old so hopefully it'll be a good year for me," she said.

Barbara Balzer-Ednoff of Tallahassee, the 1983 winner, was second in 38:41, followed by Glapinski in 38:52,

Phyllis Pierce of Warner Robins in 38:54 and Gwen Jones of Juliette in 40:43.

Pre-race favorite Linda McLennan of Atlanta didn't show up for the event.

Griggs, who came into the race with the best personal record of the

wheelchair participants, grabbed the lead early and led the rest of the way.

"I was in first after we topped the first hill," Griggs said. "I felt in control the whole way. It was pretty much flat out the whole race. I had to pick it up on the hills. The course has got some long steady uphill, but once you crest the hills, you've got some pretty steady downhill, too."

Griggs, 32, had a previous best in the 10K of 29:50.

Along with 1,700 other runners, four ministers found the finish

By Ed Grisamore
Macon Telegraph and News

Tim Dunahoo not only got to run in his first Labor Day Road Race Monday morning, he got to run the final part of the race course.

Dunahoo, one of four ministers from Mabel White Memorial Baptist Church running the 10K race together, took a wrong turn in his only practice run on the course last week and ended up way off target.

During a practice run with associate pastor Joe McDaniel and youth minister Denny Brinkman, nature called and both Brinkman and McDaniel had to make a pit stop at the Burger King on Vineville Avenue.

They told Dunahoo to go on ahead without them. "I thought we could catch him up by Vineville Baptist Church," said McDaniel.

But once Dunahoo reached the top of the hill at St. Paul Apartments on Forsyth Street, he made a left turn instead of continuing straight on down to Cotton Avenue.

"I ended up on Riverside Drive," said the 29-year-old minister of music.

There were no such wrong turns Monday morning. With Mabel White running mates McDaniel, Brinkman and pastor Steve Johnson at his side, and the footsteps of more than 1,900 other runners around him, Dunahoo stayed right on course.

The Mabel White team fell short of its goal of breaking 50 minutes, but it wasn't too far off with a 51:05. That put the foursome eight minutes shy of catching their four wives, who walked the 5K portion of the course together. Fourteen other runners from the church participated in the 11th annual race.

"They held back for me," said Dunahoo, said of Johnson, McDaniel and Brinkman. "I had a little trouble with that first hill at the beginning of the race, but Joe (McDaniel) kept telling me to keep my head down and keep my arms going. After that, I was OK until we got to Cotton Avenue. I started hurting a little bit, and that's where they

wanted to pick up the pace."

Dunahoo was not the only first-time Labor Day Road Race participant who was all smiles at the finish line.

Aside from the humidity, the only real complaint was a typical one — the severity of the two major hills on the course.

The infamous "Heartbreak Hill" near Rivoli Crossing Shopping Center immediately greets 10K runners, while the hill at St. Paul Apartments can be a pain for novice 5K runners near the 1-mile mark in that race.

"You don't think of that hill as being so steep when your riding up it in a car," said Tom Eck, of Warner Robins, who ran the 5K race with Dianne Langle, also of Warner Robins.

"The hills always get you," said 41-year-old Denny Hoard of Jackson, who ran in his first Labor Day race with his 18-year-old son, Barrett.

Then, he laughed. "I'd much rather run down a hill — like Stone Mountain."

The impressions Macon native and 10K runner Kevin Bridges got from his first Labor Day race were that "there were a couple of good hills, especially at the start where everybody is bunched up. But the rest of the course was downhill and pretty easy."

Stephen Rosenberg, who moved to Warner Robins in January from Atlanta, where he ran in several Peachtree Road Races, said he liked "getting the hill out of the way early" in the 5K race.

Likewise, Celia Armstrong of Macon said the first 5K hill at St. Paul "got me primed to do the rest of it."

But for cousins Sandra Phillips of Warner Robins and Marcia Pennone of Warner Robins, both entered in their first-ever race, the big hill was an adventure.

"We've been walking together about four times a week since April," said Pennone. "But we've been walking on a flat track. We're not used to hills at all."

Said Phillips: "After the first mile, I thought I'd done two."