

RUNNING SHORTS

Running distance is all relative

By Ken Johnson

I spent some time at Huntsville State Park on February 7 and 8 watching runners from all over the U.S. and many foreign countries run the Rocky Raccoon 100 and 50-mile trail race. Even though I have run many marathons (26.2 miles) and 50K's (31 miles), I am awed by people who can run 100 miles. It made me start thinking. Years ago, I was amazed by people who could run a marathon and before that, I was amazed by people who could run a 10K (6.2 miles). Of course, it is all relative to the distance that we are currently running ourselves. If we do not run at all, one mile will seem like a long way to run.

The point is that we all start somewhere and we build our distance over time. Running a mile is just as significant for a new runner as 100 miles is for someone who has been running for years and building up their distance. Never let the long distances that experienced runners can run discourage you from starting a running program or striving for longer distances. We are all somewhere on a distance scale. Depending on what we are trying to accomplish with our running program, we can stay where we are on the scale or try to move up.

If you have the time or make the time to train, there is nothing to hold you back from running longer distances. Increase your running distance by no more than 20 percent and run the distance three times before increasing again. Set intermediate goals and a long-term goal. If you do not think you can run a long distance, go stand at the finish line of a marathon and watch the runners finish. You will see all shapes and sizes and ages and you will ask yourself about some of the runners, "How can that person complete a marathon?" The answer is that they took the time to train and had the will to endure. At age 71, Ralph Hirt of California ran the Rocky Raccoon 100-mile race in 25:48:39. Amy Dodson of Arizona has an artificial leg and ran the 50-mile race in 12:38:01. They did not start out running these distances. They built up their distance over a period of time.

Congratulations to Felix Montelongo, 32, of Huntsville for completing the Rocky Raccoon 50-mile race. He finished in 8:58:18 and was 24th overall out of 173 runners. Also, congratulations to Niki Bellnoski (Swearingen), 22, formerly from Huntsville, for completing her first 100-mile race. She finished in 25:14:05.

Other race results:

Austin Marathon and Half Marathon, Feb. 15

Marathon (26.2 miles)

Lindsey North, 24 4:30:31

Timothy Dubbs, 50 5:43:56

Half Marathon (13.1 miles)

Jessica Payne, 31 1:59:08

Kathleen Dubbs, 43 2:23:41

Doug Dretke, 50 2:30:44

Leslie Mooney, 23 2:41:43

Luis Larios, 23 2:57:23

Dee Dee Dretke, 48 3:17:20

Surfside Beach Marathon (26.2 miles), Surfside Beach, TX, Feb. 14

Ken Johnson, 67 6:04:39

East Texas Ultra Runners 25K (15.5 miles), Tyler State Park, Feb. 14

Andrew Husband, 23 3:36:21

Karen Husband, 23 3:36:21

Team Tommy 5K (3.1 miles), Panorama Village, Feb. 7

Robert Duncan, 49 19:12

Jerry Flanagan, 68 27:38

Mary Sweeten , 26 32:24

Ken Johnson, 67 32:27

Next race in Huntsville: Sweetheart 5K & 1-Mile, 2 p.m., February 28, Bowers Stadium Parking lot. For more information about this race and others, visit the Seven Hills Running Club Web site at <http://www.7hills.us>.