

RUNNING SHORTS

Races provide extra motivation for running

By Ken Johnson

Running is great for you and some people even enjoy running. Making it a priority and finding the time to run is rather easy for those who enjoy the sport. However, for some of us, running is just an exercise we endure to stay fit and healthy. While we know the benefits of running, the problem is finding the motivation to run when we really rather be doing something else. Races are a good source of motivation. Sign up early and use the race as a goal, whether you want to compete with others for speed or just finish the distance.

Let me first explain what races are all about. Races are put on by a wide range of organizations to raise funds for some worthy cause. Distances vary, but the most popular distance is 5K (3.1 miles). Examples of other common races distances are 10K (6.2 miles), half marathon (13.1 miles), 25K (15.5 miles) and a marathon (26.2 miles). Ultra marathons are races longer than a marathon in distance. This includes 50K (31 miles) and 100 miles. You can find at least one race on any weekend in Houston or other city in southeast Texas.

To enter a race, sign up in advance by mailing in an entry form or, in some cases, sign up online using a credit card. For a list of and links to races in southeast Texas, go to the Seven Hills Running Club web site, <http://www.7hills.us>, and click on Race Schedule. For a 5K, the entry fee is usually \$12 to \$20. When you arrive at the race, pick up your packet, which will include your race number, safety pins, race T-shirt and maybe some other goodies. After the race, refreshments are provided free and awards are presented to the overall winners and usually to the top three males and females in each group. Some races also offer door prizes. All in all, you will get your money's worth. A good portion of the race income comes from commercial sponsors obtained by the race committee and that allows the race to make a profit for whatever charity they are supporting.

If you have never participated in a race, do not be intimidated or feel like you have to win the race. You will find runners of all capabilities at races and you will enjoy the social experience. Many races are advertised as a run/walk, which means walkers are welcome to participate. Sign up for a race and use it as a training goal.

One of the best races around is the Polish Pickle 5K Run in Bremond, Texas on June 23. The race draws about 500 runners and walkers, including many from Huntsville. Bremond is a small Polish community an hour and a half drive from Huntsville. Go north on I-45 to Centerville and take a left on Hwy. 7. When you get to Kosse, take a left on Hwy. 14 and Bremond is 10 miles. The race starts at 8 a.m. amid a Polish Pickle Festival, with booths lined up on both sides of the main street and a parade later in the morning. At the post-race party, you can feast on Polish food and other goodies and enjoy a traditional Polish beverage. Even if you do not win a medal, you may win the main door prize, which is a heifer (or \$500 cash). The race T-shirt is always great. All this for a \$12 entry fee.

If you cannot make it to Bremond, try the Stu's Country Mile 5K in Centerville on July 4. Also, the Seven Hills Running Club puts on a 5K race in Huntsville every month and the public is invited to participate.

If you want to set your sights higher, sign up and commit yourself to run a longer race in the fall. Here are some: Huntsville Half Marathon, October 13; Rocky Raccoon Trail Run (25K and 50K), Huntsville State Park, November 3; Sunmart 50K and 50-mile, Huntsville State Park, December 8; Houston Marathon, January 13, 2008 (registration is now open).

Congratulations to all the Huntsville area runners who have recently participated in races.

Jan Parks, 50, of Point Blank placed 2nd in her age group at the YMCA 5K Trail Run in Conroe on May 12. Her time was 30:55. Ken Johnson, 65, placed third with a time of 36:56.

Anne Sigler, 73 of Huntsville, and Liz Nestor, 60 of Trinity, participated in the Danskin's Women's Triathlon (swim, bike, run) in Orlando, FL on May 12. Sigler finished in 1:33:42 and Nestor in 1:21:13.

Four Huntsville area runners participated in the Cucumber 5K in Bremond on May 19 and all placed in their age group. Jerry Flanagan, 67, ran a 25:40, Ben Johnson, 23, 28:12, True Cousins, 73, 34:15 and Ken Johnson, 65, 35:04. On the same day, Robert Duncan, 47, ran the David's Dream 5K in The Woodlands and placed 2nd in his age group with a time of 19:28.

Fifteen runners and walkers participated in the Memorial Day 5K Run in Huntsville on May 28:

James Spencer, 26	21:16
Robert Duncan, 47	21:19
Niki Swearingen, 20	22:30
Phillip Clark, 43	24:17
Sara Seale, 22	25:18
Curtis Barton, 28	25:41
Jerry Flanagan, 67	26:18
Christopher Wilson, 57	26:46
Hans Jaeger, 59	26:55
Jan Parks, 50	30:08
Lavonne Zaiontz, 39	30:56
True Cousins, 73	37:38
Don Ortloff, 61	37:38
Colleen Spencer, 55	38:50
Casey Spencer, 51	41:40