

Runners go the distance at Monster Dash

By Bill Shaw

The Facts

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LAKE JACKSON — Brazoswood High School graduate Weston Caceres and Brazoswood junior Lauren Smith led the competition by wide margins at the annual Monster Dash 5K on a perfect day for running. But a wide turn for Caceres and a wrong turn for Smith most likely prevented them from breaking the male and female contest records.

Caceres, 18, a freshman cross country and track runner for Texas A&M, romped the 3.1-mile course from the Lake Jackson Recreation Center, along the Bottomlands Trail, and then back to the MacLean Park pavilion in 16 minutes and 14 seconds — four seconds short of the contest record posted by Sweeny runner Randall Krauskopf in 2003.

Caceres' closest competitor finished 1:38 behind him.

"I wanted to go out easy and push hard in the middle," said Caceres, who finished his first mile in 5:06, his second in 5:19, his third in 5:17 and the last one-tenth of a mile in 28 seconds. "The circle turnaround at the end of the Bottomlands Trail slowed me down some. I think I could have beaten the record. My hamstring was bothering me some, too."

Smith, 16, on the heels of her District 24-5A cross country title Thursday, finished second overall and first in the female competition in 17:49, a 5:44 mile pace that put her 1:35 behind Caceres and 5:13

in front of her closest female competitor.

"But I went the wrong way after I came off the bridge from the Bottomlands Trail," said Smith, who estimates she lost 15 to 20 seconds because of the wrong turn. "I passed Carlo (Deason), Cliff (Wittig) and Julian (Arias) and stayed pretty much second through the whole race."



Weston Caceres

Deason, Wittig and Arias fought for second and third place throughout the race behind Smith.

Smith posted the contest record last year, 17:43, and might have broken her own record had she not made the errant turn.

Arias, 18, a Brazoswood senior, finished third overall behind Smith in 17:52 and won the fight for second place in the male competition. Wittig finished fourth overall and second in the male competition in 17:54. Deason, who beat Caceres by 17 seconds to win the Dash last year, finished fifth overall and first in his 30-39 age group in 18:02.

"Weston was way ahead and on his own," Deason said. "He was in another zip code."

"I passed Carlo with about a mile to go," Arias said. "Cliff got lost (on the same turn as Smith), so I beat him. Weston was on my team last year, so I know how fast he is."

Finishing 22nd overall in 22:52, Tiffany Whipple, 26, claimed second-place overall female honors. Brittany



Lauren Smith

Garner, 14, a Brazoswood cross country runner who finished 28th in the District 24-5A cross country meet, finished seven seconds behind Whipple in 22:59 to place third in the overall female competition. "We ran together until the end, and she passed me with about a half mile to go," said

Garner, who finished her first 5K.

Dan Connelly, 44, of Lake Jackson finished 10th overall and first in the male masters (over 40) competition in 19:49, a 6:23-mile pace.

"I ran with my son but picked up the pace when I heard the coach (Devin Theriot, Brazoswood cross country coach) behind me, so that motivated me."

Theriot, 43, finished 13th overall in 20:17 to win second in the male masters competition. Chris Connelly, 17, Dan's son, finished 14th overall in 20:22, and Jerry Gipson, 49, of Lake Jackson finished 15th overall in 20:24 to place third in the male masters competition.

Kelly McClendon set a personal 5K record with her 36th overall finish and took first-place honors in the female masters competition in 25:59, an 8:23-mile pace.

"This was my first Monster Dash, and I ran somewhere in the middle of the pack and didn't know anyone around me," McClendon said.

Second-place female masters finisher Laurie Fisher, 43, had McClendon in sight and finished 41st overall in 26:59.

Visiting from Louisville, Ken., Amy Jordan, 48, finished 48th overall and third in the female masters competition in 28:20.

"I am down here on business, and it worked out we



Monster Dash 5K Winners, front row (left to right): Weston Caceres, first overall male; Lauren Smith, first overall female; Julian Arias, second overall male; Brittany Garner, third overall female. Back row: Dan Donnelly, first male masters; Kelly McClendon, first female masters; Deven Theriot, second male masters; Laurie Fisher, second female masters; Jerry Gipson, third male masters; and Amy Jordan, third female masters. Not pictured are Cliff Wittig, second overall male; and Tiffany Whipple, second overall female.

could do this," said Jordan, who has never run a race with her father. "I would really like to see some local runners come up to Louisville for our Triple Crown of Running Series before the Kentucky Derby. Race information is available on the **I n t e r n e t .**"

Running shoulder to shoulder with Jordan, her father Max Royalty, 72, retired dentist and a well-known runner to area veterans, ran his first 5K in 18 years and finished first in the 60-and-over age bracket in 28:20.

Royalty retired from racing because he had a serious knee problem.

"I thought I would never run another race, but fate smiled on me," Royalty said.

Forty-one youngsters 12-and-under participated in a non-competitive Kids Run prior to the Monster Dash and received Halloween, glow-in-the-dark Monster Dash T-shirts and finishers medals.

All 82 finishers of the Monster Dash 5K also received the special Halloween T-shirts,

and the top three finishers in eight age bracket from 12-and-under to 60-and-over received awards.

Complete overall and age-group race results are available at www.barrahome.net.

Bill Shaw covers running events for *The Facts*. Contact him at runwriter@sbcglobal.net.

