

### 3 stories that were so worth running

By Bill Shaw

*The Facts*

Published December 24, 2007

**M**erry Christmas Eve, and since my next column is Jan. 7, a happy, healthy and prosperous new year as well.

In my last column, I announced my All-Brazosport Runners of the Year. In this column, I shall concentrate on the top three local running stories of the year.

The top story of the year is the phenomenal rise of Brazoswood junior Lauren Smith as one of the best-ever local runners.

In January, Smith set the record for 15-year-old females in the Houston Aramco Half Marathon in 1:21:20, a 6:12-mile pace. Smith finished first overall in the female competition in all five local races she entered and broke Gallop Gallop 5K record by 1:13.

Smith won the state title at the Class 5A cross country meet on the 2-mile course in Round Rock on Nov. 10 in 15:40, a 5:38-mile pace. On Nov. 24, she finished ninth in the Foot Locker South Regional 5K in Charlotte, N.C., in 17:32. On Dec. 8, Smith finished 17th overall in 18:01 in the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championship 5K on the Balboa Park course in San Diego. She missed making All-American by two places.

The second running story of the year is the continued success of the Brazosport Area Road Runners Association Surfside Beach Marathon/Half Marathon on Feb. 11. BARRA increased the field limit for the third annual contest from 300 to 500 and met the limit a week before the contest.

Houstonian Stephen Baumgartner, who won the contest in 2005 and 2006, hoped to be the first to finish the marathon distance in less than three hours. He did and romped the 26.2-mile route from Stahlman Park to the San Luis Pass along the beach in 2:55:44, a 6:42-mile pace. He beat his previous 3:01:17 contest record posted in the inaugural race in 2005 by 5:33.

Three other records fell in the marathon. Ed Sturdivant of Missouri City finished second overall and first in the male masters (40 and older) competition in 3:09:34, a 7:14 pace. He broke the previous record by 12 seconds. Gayle Zorrilla, 35, of Denver, Colo., finished first in the open women's competition in 3:23:55, a 7:14 pace. She wiped out the previous women's marathon record by 21:44. Suzy Seeley of Houston broke the female masters contest record in 3:43:49, an 8:33 pace.

Two records fell in the half marathon (13.1 miles). Kurt Pepper of Missouri City finished in 1:27:00, a 6:38 pace, and broke the male masters (40 and older) contest record. Autumn Ray of Galveston finished first in the women's race and broke the

record in the open female competition in 1:28:33, a 6:46-mile pace.

The success of the Surfside Beach Marathon/Half Marathon and the financial support of title sponsor OverNite Software and founding sponsor ConocoPhillips lead to the third top story of the year, BARRA's scholarship awards. In 2006, BARRA awarded \$1,500 in scholarships to area students. In 2007, BARRA raised the awards to \$4,000.

Melissa Murray and Doneisha Perkins of Brazoswood High School, and Somer Robinson of Brazosport High School received \$1,000 each. Roel Rivera of Brazosport and Tra'Micha Young of Sweeny received \$500 each.

"Somer Robinson was very appreciative of the scholarship," said Sue Wheeler, BARRA presenter. "Ours was the only one she received, and she said it will make it possible for her to attend college."

In 2008, BARRA will award \$5,000 in scholarships to area students. Information and scholarship applications are available in all counseling offices. Applicants need not be BARRA members, runners or local race participants to be eligible.

This year has been a good one for runners and running. I hope 2008 will be even better.

**Bill Shaw's running column appears in The Facts every other Monday.**