

The Facts Ramsey finishes 1st, Smith sets new record.

By Bill Shaw

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LAKE JACKSON — Last year Brazoswood runner Lauren Smith fell only nine seconds short of the Brazosport Area Road Runners Association Firecracker 4 female record on a rainy day. Undeterred by the July morning heat and humidity, Smith pushed harder this year in the 34th annual contest, finished fourth overall behind first-place male runner Bret Ramsey, and broke the overall female contest record by 41 seconds.

Smith, 17, romped the 4-mile course through Lake Jackson and finished in Dunbar Park in 23 minutes, 50 seconds, a 5:57-mile pace.

Angleton native Ramsey, 35, now of Richmond, finished the contest first in 23:22, a 5:50-mile pace, only 28 seconds ahead of Smith. Ramsey was 2:45 short of the male contest record and finished third in last year's race in 23:51.

"I started out with the leaders and tried to stay with them," Smith said. We were all together. I ran with Xavier (Jimenez) the first 3 miles. I did better this year, I guess, because I trained differently. The run went by fast."

Jimenez, 13, dropped 30 seconds behind Smith to finish sixth overall to earn second in his 13-19 age group in 24:25.

Ramsey, like Smith, went out with the leaders and paced himself prudently. He let the



Bret Ramsey crosses the Firecracker 4 first, making the 4-mile course in 23:22 for a 5:50 mile pace. Photo by Bill Shaw.

Alvarado youngsters from Houston, George, 17, and Brian, 16, take the lead and raced with Grant Parker, 26, of West Columbia.

"I ran the first mile in 5:45," Ramsey said. "Jorge's two sons (George and Brian Alvarado) passed me right before the first mile. I was in fifth place at 21 1/2 miles. Grant passed me at the third mile. With 200 meters left in the race, I passed all of them and felt strong and finished as the top male in the winners circle."

The younger and faster Alvarado youngster, Brian, wanted to run at a pace that would allow his brother George to finish the contest first. His strategy backfired.

"My little brother usually gets first, but he wanted me to win," George said. "The weather was too hot. I'm not the kind of person who likes to run in this kind of weather. But this was my best time for a 4-miler. I'll be back next year."

"If I hadn't slowed down for my brother, I would have definitely won the race," Brian said.

George had to settle for third place. Grant Parker, 26, of West Columbia, edged him by one second and his brother by two seconds in a sprint for the finish line with a 23:31 finish, a 5:25 pace. Brian had to settle for first in his 13-19 age bracket.

"When Bret passed me at



Lauren Smith crosses the line and breaks the contest record by 41 seconds. Photo by Bill Shaw.

Abbie Artley, 32, of Lake Jackson, finished 22nd overall and third in the overall female competition in 27:43, a 6:55 pace.

Kevin Regis, 40, of Lake Jackson raced to his second consecutive male masters title by finishing eighth overall in 25:08, a 6:17 pace. He finished six seconds faster than last year, but he was 1:28 short of the male masters record.

“Jorge (Alvarado, George and Brian’s father) passed me at one-quarter mile, and I just tried to stay in contact,” Regis said. “Jorge was running strong the first 2 miles, and all of a sudden slowed down. I passed him after the 2-mile mark. I was pretty much by myself the last 2 miles.”

Mark Girouard, 52, of Galveston and Dan Connelly, 45, of Lake Jackson, also passed

the third mile, I slowly caught up with the leading boys, and I sprinted past them at the end,” Parker said. “I found some competitive spirit at the end of the race; I’ve been missing that.”

Susie Walters, 43, of Wallis, who holds the Firecracker 4 female masters (40 and older) record, finished 10th overall and second in the overall female competition in 25:39, a 6:24 pace, just eight seconds short of her record. Walters finished in the top female competition for the ninth consecutive year.

“Lauren was way ahead. After the first 200 yards, she was out of sight,” Walters said. “The weather was so much better than last year, and it wasn’t all that hot. But the older I get, the farther I get into the race, the harder it gets.”



Grant Parker surges and beats the Alvarado brothers at the finish line to capture second place. Photo by Bill Shaw.



Susan Walters finishes as second female overall. Photo by Bill Shaw.

Alvarado, and finished, respectfully, ninth and 11th overall and second and third in the male masters competition in 25:34 and 25:40, for 6:23- and 6:25-mile paces. Alvarado dropped to 16th overall to finish in 26:48 to earn second place in the 40-49 age bracket.

Area runners garnered the trophies in the female masters competition. Linda Young, 44, and Kathy King, 54, finished, respectively, 37th and 48th overall in 30:23 and 31:59 with 7:35 and 7:59 mile paces, for first and

second. Kim Runge, 49, of Surfside finished 62nd overall and third in the female masters competition in 34:57, an 8:44 pace.

Fifteen walkers started with the 118 runners for a 2-miler, however, an error in marking the walk route pushed them closer to 2.5 miles.

Anne Stunz, 9, Brenda Raymond, 51, and Andrea Stunz, 40, all of Lake Jackson, won the awards for the top female walkers with finishes of 33:16, 35:35 and 34:02. Roel Benavides, 62, Jacob

Veselka, 12, cities unknown, and Al Day, 65, of Lake Jackson won the top male walker awards with finishes of 37:27, 38:49 and 39:56.

In an earlier BASF-sponsored, non-competitive Kids Run for youngsters 12 and under, more than 20 youngsters received T-shirts and finishers' medals.

BARRA coordinates the race, and this year's sponsors were BASF, Ward Chiropractic Center, Park Place, Jack Taylor Insurance, Your Healthy Alternatives and Ralph, Dave and Dan. ConocoPhillips provided a number of door prizes.

Bob Sipple, BARRA member and mayor of Lake Jackson, presented the trophies to the top overall and masters runners and walkers and medals for the first through third age group finishers in eight age brackets from 12 and younger to 70 plus.

Full race results, including age-group winners, are available at www.barrahome.net.

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