

Jimenez and Parker meet challenge of rain and Velasco Bridge

FREEPORT—Not deterred by a light rain or the challenge of the Velasco Bridge over the Old

Brazos River, Lake Jackson Intermediate School student Xavier Jimenez, 13, set the pace, took the lead and never relented to finish first in the 18th annual Freeport

Flapjack 5K, just one of the weekend's Riverfest events.

The Flapjack 5K is unique: it includes "hills" that flatland Gulf Coast runners don't often encounter in local races. The USA Track & Field certified course begins in downtown Freeport, winds onto Brazos Street parallel to the Old Brazos River and the Shrimp boat docks, and snakes west onto Second Street. Runners then ascend the Velasco Memorial Bridge over the river and take Avenue A to loop around the Freeport Service Center and back onto Velasco to cross the bridge a second time. The course makes a turn back onto Second Street for the straightaway back into downtown Freeport and a finish at the fountain on Park Street.



Xavier Jimenez

"I was ahead the whole race," said Jimenez. "The rain had no effect on me, I had a 40 yard lead off the bridge, and the race

was not as difficult as last year."

Jimenez finished fifth overall in last year's contest in nineteen minutes and 26 seconds and crossed the finish line this year in 18:34,

improving his time by 52 seconds and averaging a 5:59 pace per mile. He fell well short of the

17:16 race record established by Brazoswood High School Runner Bryan Kerr in 2000.

Kevin Regis, 48, of Lake Jackson finished second overall in the contest in 19:00 26 seconds behind Jimenez.

"I was about 10 yards behind him in the first mile; I was just following him," said Regis. "I thought I might be able to catch him in the second mile, but I slowed down as I came off the bridge the second time."

Brett Puderbaugh, 48, of Surfside trailed Regis by 42 seconds to finish third overall in 19:42.

"We were all pretty close at the beginning, but those two (Jimenez and Regis) slowly but surely pulled away," said Puderbaugh. "I thought I would just hold what I had. By the time I got to the bridge, Kevin was topping it, and I knew I couldn't catch him."

Wendy Parker, 30, of West Columbia finished first overall in the women's competition for the second consecutive year. Parker finished seventh overall in 21:26, a 6:55 race pace.

"I ran mostly in the same position throughout the race," said Parker. "I run strong on the bridge. I like the rain, and the wind was not an issue this year. I rather it would be



Wendy Parker

raining than hot and humid."

Staci Arauz, 38, finished second overall in the female competition in 22:32. She was unavailable for comments after the race.

Kelly Colosimo, 30, of Lake Jackson, finished 14th overall in 23:58 to win third in the overall female competition. She improved her time from last year's Flapjack 5K by two minutes.

"I was way behind Wendy," said Colosimo. "But I love the bridge and the hills."

The Flapjack 5K has always included a run across the Velasco Bridge and is a Freeport tradition that goes back to 1990. The race has survived while other 5K Freeport contests have perished; the race did experience a one year hiatus in 2002 when

the Velasco Bridge was closed for construction.

The Texas Society of Professional Engineers started the race in 1990 as part of the Freeport Riverfest. The original race route began in the parking lot of Brazosport High School and looped around the river via Avenue A, the Velasco Bridge, onto Second Street then Hwy. 288 north and wound up in Municipal Park. With the beginning of the Freeport Main Street Project, the city took over the race in 2000 and moved the starting point to downtown Freeport. Daryl Beatty,

Brazosport Area Road Runners Association director of road racing and a credentialed USA Track & Field course designer and certifier, designed and certified the course.

To highlight the shrimp industry, the top three male and female winners and male and female masters (40 plus) winners receive trophies and a pound of shrimp in a Main Street cooler. The top three male and female finishers in six age groups from 12 and under to 60 and over also receive a pound of shrimp. B & B Seafood and Windswept Restaurant provided the shrimp



Flapjack 5K winners, front row, Xavier Jimenez, first overall male; Wendy Parker, second overall male; Brett Puderbaugh, third overall male; and Kelly Colosimo, third overall female. Back row, Laurie Fisher, first female masters; Susan Lorms, second female masters; and Richard Romero. Not pictured are Staci Arauz, second overall female; Mark Girouard, first male masters; Lenord Burns, second male masters; and Marilyn Koons, third female masters.

this year. All participants have stacks of flapjacks and fruit waiting for them at the finish line to feast on after the race.

Mary Stotler, Freeport Main Street director, directed this year's race, her fourth.

"We have different challenges every year," said Stotler. "But I have great cooperation and help from the people from the streets and works and the parks department and the

police and wonderful volunteers. They do a great job, and the people, the runners, are so patient with our getting the results done."

Male masters winners in this year's contest were Mark Girouard, 52, fourth overall in 20:10; Lenord Burns, 61, sixth overall in 21:25; and Richard Romero, 40, in 23:17. Female masters winners were Laurie Fisher, 43, 24th overall in 27:40; Susan Lorms, 61, 28th overall in

28:50; and Marilyn Koons, 60, 30th overall in 29:34.

Ten game youngsters showed up for an earlier BASF-sponsored Kids Run before the 5K and received T-shirts and finishers medals.

Overall race results and age group winners are posted on www.barrahome.net.