

# It's almost hot enough for the Firecracker 4

By Bill Shaw

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“And what is so rare as a day in June?” James Russell Lowell wrote in *The Vision of Sir Launfal* (1848). “Then, if ever, come perfect days.”

However, July 4 is a rare day in Brazosport and the history and tradition of running. We runners celebrate Independence Day participating in or supporting the Firecracker 4, the mother of all Brazosport races. The Brazosport Area Road Runners Association Firecracker 4, the vision of the late Hal Stockton for an Independence Day run, celebrates its 34th anniversary on July 4.

I ran my first Firecracker 4 in 1987, and finished the 4-mile route in 31:57, a 7:55 mile pace. It is hard to believe I could ever run that fast.

The USA Track & Field-certified 4-mile course starts at the corner of Tanager Lane and Anchusa, winds through shady areas of Lake Jackson and ends in Dunbar Park.

Houstonian Gabriel Rodriguez posted the certified course record in 1996; Rodriguez romped the route in 20:37, a hot 5:09 race pace. Jones Creek local Melissa Hurta posted the female record in 1997, a 24:23 finish for a 6:06 race pace.

Brazoswood High School state 5A cross country champion Lauren Smith, who finished in 24:31 last year, fell

only eight seconds short of Hurta's record. Brazoswood graduate and Texas A&M freshman Weston Caceres finished first in last year's contest in 23:11, 2:34 short of the contest record.

In 2007, Susie Walters of Wallis finished her eighth consecutive Firecracker 4. In those eight years, Walters has won first in the overall female competition or first in the female masters (40 and older) competition. In 2006, Walters posted the female masters record, 25:31, a 6:23-mile pace. Brett Puderbaugh, now of Surfside, posted the male masters record in 2000, 23:40, a 5:55 pace.

The Firecracker 4 is a family affair, beginning with a BASF-sponsored noncompetitive Kids Run for youngsters 12 and younger with T-shirts and medals for all finishers. A 2-mile walk begins simultaneously with the 4-mile run.

All participants receive T-shirts. The top three overall male and female finishers and masters finishers receive trophies. The top three male and female runners in eight age groups, 12 and younger to 70 and older, receive medals. The top walkers also receive awards.

On line registration is available at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com), registration forms are available at area physical fitness centers and at [www.barrahome.net](http://www.barrahome.net).

Individual registration before June 30 is \$17 and \$20 after June 30 and on race day. The Kids Run registration is \$1 (voluntary). Families may register for a special rate of \$40. Race-

day registration begins at 6 a.m. at the Dunbar Park pavilion.

For additional information, see the BARRA Web site, [e-mail runwriter@sbcglobal.net](mailto:runwriter@sbcglobal.net) or call (979) 233-4362.

**Footnotes:** Congratulations to Lauren Smith, 17, Xavier Jimenez, 13, and Josh Raymon, 14, who finished the sixth annual Astros Race for the Pennant in Minute Maid Park on May 31. Smith was the first overall female in 17:58, Jimenez first in the 14 and younger age group in 17:47 and Ramon third in the 14 and younger age group in 20:05.

Congratulations also to the 2008 BARRA Scholarship Award winners, Courtney Dahl and Sarah “Caitlyn” Genzer of Angleton High School, Alyssa Aikman of Brazoswood High School and Dara Dalton of Brazosport High School. Each received \$1,000.

Dahl plans to attend the University of Texas at Austin and major in speech pathology. Genzer plans to attend Texas A&M and major in nuclear engineering. Aikman also plans to attend the University of Texas and major in French and Spanish. Dalton will continue her studies at Brazosport College and transfer to Texas A&M in Galveston or Corpus Christi to major in biology or engineering.

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