

# Younger runners making strides

By Bill Shaw

*The Facts*

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**Y**outh and age highlighted the local spring running series in three races in four weeks in April.

Xavier Jimenez, 13, of Lake Jackson Intermediate School pursued veteran runner Carlo Deason around the campus and on the running trail in the Brazosport Gator Gallop on April 5 to finish second overall in 17:58, just 20 seconds behind Deason. In the wet and rainy Flapjack 5K in Freeport over the Velasco Bridge, Jimenez was uncatchable and beat his closest competition by 26 seconds in 18:34. Jimenez improved his 2007 Flapjack 5K time by 52 seconds and set a 5:59-mile pace even with the rain in the hills. This youngster shows promise for pacing the pack in future races.

Brett Puderbaugh, 48, now living in Surfside, returned to road racing in the Gator Gallop after a five-year hiatus. With just four months of training, Puderbaugh led the male masters (40 and older) competition in the Gallop until the stretch to the finish line when Stewart Crouch out-sprinted him. Crouch finished fifth overall in 19:16, Puderbaugh sixth overall in 19:17 for first and second in the masters

competition.

The following week in the Danbury Run for Jesus 5K, Puderbaugh improved his time by four seconds and finished first overall in 19:12 to break the course record by 3:30; he also owns the male masters record. Two weeks later on April 26, Puderbaugh, slowed some by the rain and Velasco Bridge, finished the Freeport Flapjack 5K third overall in 19:42. Brett's back and a contender in local masters competition.



Wendy Parker, 30, of West

Columbia won two of the three April races, the Gator Gallop and the Flapjack 5K. She posted her faster time in the Gallop, 20:52, a 6:27-mile pace; Parker finished the Flapjack 5K first overall in the female competition in 21:26.

Another 13-year-old, Stephanie Purnell of Angleton made her presence and competitive spirit known in the Gator Gallop and the Run for Jesus. Purnell finished third in the overall female competition in the Gallop in 28:47, then improved her 5K time to finish second in the female competition in the Run for Jesus in 28:16. Purnell, like Jimenez, will be out there with the frontrunners in future races.

Locals Max Royalty and Judy Lotzenhiser personify, respectively, renaissance and born-again runners.

Royalty, 73, well-known

to the elders of the Brazosport running community, dropped out of competition for more than a decade because of a physical problem. No longer plagued with the problem, he returned to road racing, like Puderbaugh, impressively.

Royalty finished 27th overall in the Gallop in 27:09, 10th overall in the Run for Jesus in 26:14 and 19th overall in the Flapjack in 26:06, steadily improving his 5K times. His comeback is phenomenal, and he is out there at the front of the pack ahead of runners half his age.

New to the local running pack, born-again runner Judy Lotzenhiser, 51, of Lake Jackson finished the Surfside Beach Marathon in February in 6:25:07, sixth in her age bracket. She finished second in the female masters competition in the Gator Gallop in 28:37 and second overall in the female competition in the Run for Jesus in 28:19 and broke the female masters record by 22 seconds.

These runners, young and old, will heat up the local summer competition as we move toward the mother of all Brazosport road races, the Firecracker 4, on July 4. Join them at the starting line or cheer them on at the finish. Register online at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com), download a registration form at [www.barrahome.com](http://www.barrahome.com), or pick up a registration form at a local physical fitness center.

**Footnote:** Race officials postponed the BRHS 5K/10K originally scheduled for Saturday. Officials will announce the race date when determined.