

# Love in the air at marathon

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Since the Surfside Beach Marathon/Half Marathon fell on Valentine's Day this year, race director Daryl Beatty recognized running couples. Every couple who completed a race received an award. The couples with the top three cumulative times in both the half marathon and the marathon received a special award.

The two top couples in the half marathon were Grant and Wendy Parker of West Columbia and Donnie and Abbie Artley of Lake Jackson. Grant finished eighth overall in the half marathon and first in his 20-29 age group in 1:34:06. Wendy finished 27th overall and first in her 30-39 age group in 1:46:02. Their 3:20:09 was the best couples' finish.

Abbie Artley finished 16th overall and first in the overall women's competition in 1:40:21; Donnie finished 17th overall and third in his 30-39 age group in 1:41:11. The Artleys' combined time, 3:21:33, earned them second place in the half marathon couples' competition.

Non-runners and oftentimes the spouses or significant others of runners see nothing romantic in running. Romance in sweaty, exhausting exercise? What a crazy idea. Not so for the Parkers, the Artleys and many other addicted and passionate

runners.

One problem with young running couples like the Parkers and the Artleys, however, is it is difficult to train together with small children. Running the same race also involves getting baby-sitters. Wendy sometimes runs pushing a runner's stroller with the younger child; she's such a good runner that she beats those without the handicap of pushing a child through a 5K.

"We don't train together because we have a 4-year-old," Donnie said. "It's a complicated schedule between the two of us, but we get it worked out. It's especially complicated because we both do triathlons, and we have to swim and bike as well as run."

"We always have something to talk about, and we understand each other's need to run," Abbie said.

Older runners John and Kelly Colosimo of Lake Jackson do have the freedom to run and train together.

"It used to be a separate thing with the kids, but now the kids are older, we can do it together," John said.

Running couples can plan romantic weekend getaways. After helping with early-morning tasks Saturday in Surfside, the Colosimos were headed to the Austin Marathon.

"Running makes us both happier," said Sandy Clevenger, a veteran runner who, along with her husband Druce Crump, served as a Surfside volunteer Saturday. "Running helps with stress; I'm an endorphin junkie. Running gives us common inter-

ests, like conditioning and training."

"Running gives a good overlap with the same friends, like those in the running club," Druce said. "It gives us a common running language we both can understand that other non-runners can't, like 'splits' and 'fartleks.' We can go on get-away trips from the area like the romantic vacation we had in Portland, Ore., when we went up there to run a marathon."

What about competition? Does beating a spouse or significant other lessen the love? Grant Parker consistently finishes faster than Wendy with no consequences. In fact, in many races, Grant wins first overall in the male competition, and Wendy wins first overall in the female competition. Kelly Colosimo is the faster runner and finisher in races, and that doesn't trouble husband John or hurt his male ego. It's no problem with the Crumps, either.

Not so with the Artleys.

"I would love to beat her, but I want to sleep in the same bed," Donnie said.

Kelly Colosimo sees another distinct advantage in running with John.

"He can't talk or carry on a conversation while we run, and I can," Kelly said. "I win all the arguments."

Romance on the road: Running can be sweaty, sexy and strengthen relationships.

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