

Pinpointing the first Firecracker 4

By Bill Shaw

The Facts

Published June 22, 2009

Friday is “brick day” in my triathlon training. A brick is a bike ride followed by a run. I started this column Friday morning about 9:30 a.m. in the third mile of a 5K slog after a 101.2-mile bike ride. After fighting 15 mph wind gusts on my bike and the heat and humidity on my run, I needed to get my mind off my body to get through the last mile of my brick.

I thought about the Firecracker 4 on July 4 specifically, at first, the T-shirts. The color and design are the best ever. This year’s T-shirt will be a real collector’s item, a fit memento of the 35th annual running of the mother of all Brazosport races.

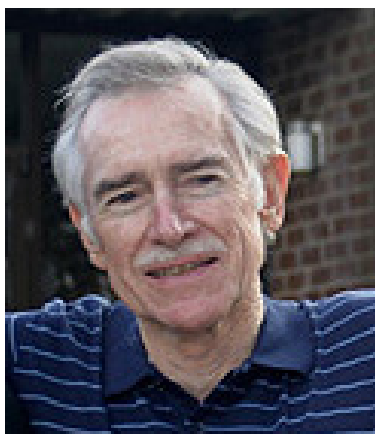
When I took over the steering committee for the Firecracker 4, I didn’t realize the numbering is not quite right. This year’s race should be either the 36th or the 34th.

The first Firecracker 4 4-miler celebrated our country’s bicentennial in 1976. Twelve unknown runners met at Dunbar Park to run “4 on the 4th at 4,” a 4-miler on Independence Day at 4 p.m. In 1977, Bryan Stockton finished first for the men in

23:50 and 30:32.

Counting the Firecracker 4 contests from 1976, the 2009 contest should be the 34th. However, if the sketchy history of the race tradition on July 4 is taken into consideration, the 2009 contest should be the 36th.

In 1974, Hal Stockton, founder of the Lake Jackson running club, organized a 6-mile race with nine runners and christened



it “The Firecracker 4.” In 1975, an unknown number of runners ran the second annual Firecracker 4 over a 6-mile route. If, then, that the inaugural 6-miler was the first “Firecracker 4,” this year’s race is number 36.

I am open to suggestions as to how to solve the numbering problem for good and designate next year’s race the 35th (again) or the 37th and count the inaugural race in 1974.

Whatever the number, the Firecracker 4 attracts runners from out of the area and is a local and family tradition. And this year’s T-shirts are great. The start time is 7:15 a.m. for the BASF-sponsored, noncompetitive run for youngsters 12 and younger and 7:30 a.m. for the 4-mile run and 2-mile walk through the shady, residential areas of Lake Jackson.

The entry fee for the BASF Kids Run is \$1 (optional), and all the youngsters receive one of those great T-shirts and finishers medals. The entry fee for individual runners or walkers postmarked by June 30 is \$17.

A special rate of \$40 is available for families. Registration is available online at www.active.com. A printable registration form is available on the running club Web site at www.barrahome.net. Registration forms also are available at local gyms and fitness centers.

Race-day registration and race check-in begin at 6 a.m. in the pavilion of Dunbar Park on Highway 2004 in Lake Jackson. All early entrants receive that great T-shirt, as do all other entrants as long as the shirts last. The top three open male and female and masters (40 plus) male and female finishers receive awards, as well as the top three male and female finishers in age groups from 12 and younger to 70 and older. The top three male and female walkers also will receive awards.

I hope to see a good crowd at the starting line to celebrate Independence Day.

Did I say that the T-shirts are great?

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