

Jimenez wins Race for a Cure

By Bill Shaw

Special to *The Facts*

Published April 5, 2009

WEST COLUMBIA — On a perfect day for racing, Lake Jackson Intermediate student Xavier Jimenez surged to the front of the pack early in the fourth annual Race for the Cure 5K. He romped the road out to Varner Hogg Plantation and back and crossed the finish line first overall, more than a minute ahead of his closest competitor.

Jennifer Kucera of Van Vleck finished a strong 17th overall in the pack of 46 and first in the overall female competition with 1 minute, 15 second lead over the second-place female.

Jimenez, 15, finished the USA Track & Field certified course in 17:20, a 5:35 mile pace. Brazoswood High School sophomore Josh Raymond, also 15, finished in 18:28, trailing Jimenez by 1:08.

“Josh stayed with me for the first half-mile, and I started picking up the pace,” Jimenez said. “After the first mile, he started drifting behind me farther and farther. I pretty much lost him and didn’t see him again.”

Jimenez finished in 18:17 last year, second to record-setter Jay Johns of Clute, who won the contest in 16:09. Jimenez said he did better this year because there was no wind.

“We took out pretty hard, and I was feeling pretty good,” Raymond said. “At the mile mark, he (Jimenez) broke out. He was pretty far ahead at the second mile. I tried to pick it up and catch him, but it was too late.”

Local runner Greg Jones, 33, finished third overall in the male competition in 20:25 and improved his last year’s time by six seconds.

“At the turnaround (at Hogg Plantation), Xavier was coming out of the loop as I was coming in. After that, I never saw him again,” Jones said. “With the bends in the roads, I didn’t see either one of the lead runners.”

Jennifer Kucera, 37, set her sights on finishing the contest in less than 26 minutes. She made the 5K distance in 25:47, a 7:22 race pace. She came from behind to finish first in the overall female competition.

“Two ladies were ahead of me in the first mile,” Kucera said. “By the second mile, I had passed both of them. I did what my 7-year-old said, ‘Start slow, mom, and save it for the end.’ This was a fabulous course.”

Only three months after giving birth to her daughter, Blakely, Allison Bennett, 29, of Richwood, finished 21st overall and second in the female competition.

“I’m training for a half marathon (in Oklahoma) and needed a 5K race today, so I signed up and ran,” Bennett said. “It was a beautiful day.”

Still stinging from missing third place in the Jan. 31 Spectacle Spectacular 5K in Angleton by two seconds, Stephanie Purnell, 14, of Brazosport Christian School, ran shoulder-to-shoulder with Tiffany Mixon, 28, up to the finish line.

“I could hear her right next to me,” said Purnell, who surged in front of Mixon by three seconds at the finish line in 27:48, 23rd overall and third in the female competition. “I was faster because I didn’t want to lose (third place) again.”

Purnell’s friend and mentor, Laurie Fisher, 45, of Lake Jackson ran with her up through the second mile and hung on to finish 27th overall and first in the female masters (40 and older) competition in 28:27, a 9:11 pace.

“There was someone neck-and-neck with me and had me at the end,” Fisher said. “I smiled at her near the finish line and said ‘go’ at the end, and she beat me.”

Paul Cooley, 58, of Houston won his second consecutive male masters title in 21:31, a 27-second improvement over last year. He finished fifth overall.

“I did better this year because last year I was recovering from an injury,” he said.

Spenser Hurley, 46, of Brazoria, sixth overall, placed second in the male masters competition in 22:41. Clark Courtright, 49, finished eighth overall and third in 23:16. Linda Law, 47, finished 29th overall and second in the female masters competition in 29:40. Christina Mendler, 54, finished 39th overall and third in 38:50.

Sharon Law, 46, finished first in the female 5K walking competition in 40:52. Jordon Squires was second in 43:56, and Paula Goodman, 41, finished third in 44:02. Gary Law finished first in the male walking competition in 39:10. Bart Squires, 33, finished second in 44:04, and Patrick O’Brien, 16, finished third in 47:37.

“The race went really well this year; the weather was perfect,” said Teresa Holland, race director and a cancer survivor. “We set it up so families could sign up this year, and we had several families.”

Holland estimated the contest raised about \$1,800.

ConocoPhillips sponsors the contest. Stewart’s Food Stores Sweeney, Bustillos & Associates, L.L.C., the city of West Columbia, Don’s Guns and Supplies, Billy’s Garage. H-E-B West Columbia, Fish Matagorda, Baywood Foods Freeport, Alexa and Branden Westbrook, Nicole Jones Photography and Lauren and Gage Dannelly also provided support for the contest.

Race results are posted on www.barrahome.net.