

2006 races to its finish

By Bill Shaw

The Facts

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Merry Christmas!

I started this column at a slow slog ascending the Brazos River Bridge in the fourth mile of a 5.3-miler at about 7:30 a.m. Thursday, the winter solstice. On this day, the Druids assemble at Stonehenge and the Closet Runners Anonymous World League and the Women's Entourage of the Closet Runners World League congregate at the Chapel of Perpetual Fitness to celebrate the longest night of the year.

With one serious setback, it's been a good year for me. I finished 13 races, including five triathlons. I finally braved two open-water swims without the security of the pool wall after each lap. Then, there was my darned hamstring. ...

It's also been a good year for local racing. The Brazosport area hosted 11 road races and two triathlons in 2006. The Surfside Beach Marathon/Half-Marathon had a second successful running. Danbury and West Columbia introduced two new races. The Brazosport Relay Triathlon increased participation. And Freeport staged a triathlon.

The continued success of the Surfside Beach Marathon/Half-Marathon highlights 2006. The Brazosport Area Road Runners Association set the limit

at 300, and we had to turn runners away.

Three records fell in the 26.2-mile marathon distance. Samantha Sanders of Houston broke the open female record by 3:10 in 3:44:39, Terry Erickson of Hampton, Ill., broke the male masters record by 12:12 in 3:09:46 and Patti Muck of Richmond, a friend of mine and fellow journalist, broke the female masters record by 7:54 in 4:06:46. This year, BARRA increased the registration limit to 500 for the Feb. 10



contests.

The most exciting news of the year was the inaugural Summertime Blues Festival Triathlon in Freeport. Through the efforts of my fellow columnist Mary Lee Stottler — who is Freeport Main Street project director — and the entire Freeport community, Freeport hosted a premier event that included a 500-yard swim in the Old Brazos River, a 15-mile bike ride out to the Quintana County Park and back, and a 3-mile run around the river.

The event drew 179 individual and four team finishers. Many of the triathletes promised to return for next year's contest.

Runners broke three other records this year on the road. Last year's rookie of the year, Lauren Smith, won seven races, including the Surfside Beach Half-Marathon in 1:34:05 for a 7:11-per-mile pace. The Brazoswood sophomore broke

the January Spectacle Spectacular 5K record by 3 seconds in 19:52, a 6-minute mile pace. In the October Monster Dash, Smith ran her best 5K, and the fastest of the year, and broke the previous record by 1:07, in 17:43, a 5:29 mile pace. Smith went to the state 5A meet in Austin in November, finished second and won all-state cross country honors.

Jose Laura of Houston ran the fastest 5K in 2006 in the Brazosport Regional Health System contest. Another Houstonian, Luis Armenteros, ran the fastest 10K in the Spectacle Spectacular 10K and broke the record by 43 seconds in 32:15, a 5-minute race pace. Melissa Hurta of Jones Creek ran the fastest local 10K, 41:55 in the BRHS 10K.

Susie Walters of nearby Wallis broke her own 2005 Firecracker 4 4-mile female masters (40 and older) record by 21 seconds in 25:31, a 6:21 pace, perhaps some compensation for Smith's breaking her Spectacle Spectacular 5K record.

Out-of-towners posted the fastest masters marks in the 5K contests: Ramond Cruze finished the Spectacle Spectacular 5K in 18:44, a 6:00-pace, and Sabra Harvey finished the Mosquito Chase 5K in 21:51, a 7:03-pace.

Our 2007 racing season gets under way with the Spectacle Spectacular on Saturday, Jan. 27. Join the camaraderie and excitement. I shall break no records, but I shall see you at the starting line.