

RUNNING SHORTS

In Texas, there's more marathons than ever

By Ken Johnson

Just 10 years ago, there were fewer than 10 marathons a year in Texas. Now, there are over 30. This growth is consistent with a national trend. Simply put, more people are taking advantage of the sport of running and racing and challenging themselves with longer distances.

As any runner would know, a marathon is always 26.2 miles. Any race longer than 26.2 is referred to as an ultra marathon. Any race shorter is referred to by its distance (i.e. 1 Mile, 5K (3.1 miles), 5 Miles, 10K).

Most ultra marathons are run on trails and the number of these have also grown in recent years as many experienced marathon runners have sought new challenges. Huntsville State Park hosts several ultra marathons annually, two 50K's (31 miles), one 50-miler and one 100-miler.

Most marathons are accompanied by a half marathon (13.1 miles) and there has been a tremendous growth in the number of half marathons, especially in the last 5 years. The Huntsville Half Marathon each October is the third oldest in Texas. This year will be the 34th edition of the race.

According to Running USA, 518,000 runners completed a marathon in the U. S. in 2011, compared to 143,000 in 1980 and only 25,000 in 1976. There has also been a gender shift. In 1980, men comprised 90% of those completing marathons. In 2011, that was down to 59%. In the half marathon distance in 2011, 59% of the finishers were women.

In Texas, the marathon season used to be in the winter months. Now, you can run the new Panhandle Marathon in Lubbock in September or the Bear Chase Marathon in Groveton or the Big D Texas Marathon in Dallas in April. Some Texas marathons have caps and sell out early. The Texas Marathon in Kingwood next January 1st sold out several months ago and for several years, the Houston Marathon has sold out.

Running a marathon requires months of training and ultimately physical and mental endurance. While few runners will ever complete a marathon or ultra marathon, all runners enjoy the physical benefits that come from running.

Recent race results:

Sunday Night 5K, The Woodlands, July 1

Leah Koester, 46	26:04
Kim Vanwagner, 39	30:57
Ken Johnson, 71	36:52

1-Mile

Haley Vanwagner, 10	16:23
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Polish Pickle 5K, Bremond, June 23

Jose Torres, 19	17:31 (2 nd in age group)
Robert Duncan, 52	19:13 (3 rd in age group)
J. C. Guzman, 40	19:14 (1 st in age group)

Steven Wright, 30	20:20 (1 st in age group)
Max Montes, 20	21:43
Kas Kramer, 25	22:50 (1 st in filly)
Gerald Johnson, 56	27:17
Skipper Nethery, 63	29:53
Ken Johnson, 71	35:44 (2 nd in age group)
John Lewanddowski, 41	39:06
Jerry Flanagan, 72	42:49
Brendan Flanagan, 8	42:59
Martha Anderson, 59	49:03
Marilynn Johnson, 66	61:21

Run the Woodlands 5K, The Woodlands, June 23

Steve Bickford, 51	23:47
Cathy Bickford, 50	Untimed

Upcoming races in Huntsville:

July 14 – Dog Days 5K & 1-Mile Run/Walk, Forest Hills Subdivision

August 25 – Heat Wave 5K & 1-Mile Run/Walk, Veterans Mem. Parkway

September 22 - Fall Fun Run, 10K, 5K & 1-Mile Run/Walk, Veterans Mem. Parkway

October 27 – Huntsville Half & Quarter Marathon & 5K Run/Walk

For more information about these races and a link to registration, visit the Seven Hills Running Club web site at <http://www.7hills.us> and click on Race Schedule.