

## RUNNING SHORTS

### **Huntsville cross-country teams running strong so far**

By Darren Grant

Last Thursday was one of those hot and muggy days that just wasn't enough—not hot enough, not muggy enough—to really make you fuss. You just shrug your shoulders, as if to tell Mother Nature: “That’s all you’ve got?”

So things were pretty lively for the Huntsville Invitational Cross Country Meet going on at Kate Barr Ross park that afternoon. A dozen teams were out there, and hundreds of kids milling around.

I don't know. I realize that it is a competition, but I just can't get that worked up about times and places so early in the season. You have to keep things in perspective. I look for other things—attitude, mostly, and enthusiasm. Those tell you a lot about where things are headed.

So it was great to see Huntsville High School's Head Cross Country Coach, Kathy Lehman, in such good spirits. She and her assistants, Chris McCall and Carlos Lopez, have assembled a mammoth team this year: 64 runners, by my count. It is the next step forward for a program that has steadily grown and will continue to grow.

Key to that growth has been the recruitment of crossover athletes, who run in the fall to prepare for another sport in the winter or spring. That is one reason soccer coach Robert Taylor sends his kids out to run. “Then they spend time together—and there is no substitute for that for team-building.”

“Cross country is a mindset,” says Lehman, referring to the mental toughness required to succeed in the sport. “So the more students we get to do that and cross over, the better off we are.”

It was working for sophomore Fargo Wells. “I like track better,” she said, “but cross country is catching up.”

The kids kept things in perspective, too. I visited with one varsity runner, Tahj Sykes, as the junior varsity races were underway. He wasn't worried about his upcoming race. Mostly, he was intrigued that an adult with no kids on the team would come out to watch the meet.

Good question, Tahj! Why do I hang out at cross country meets? For a change of scene. This is what my days are like at work.

First professor: I would like all the rights and privileges appertaining thereunto.

Second professor: It's “thereunto appertaining,” you nitwit. You wanna piece of me?

Third professor: I invented a cough syrup that drinks itself!

There was a little more intensity among the team's leading runners: senior George Thuita, for the boys, and freshman Jenin Borbor, for the girls.

I remember Thuita as an eager and enthusiastic freshman, and could see how he has grown through experience. “He really has taken on a leadership role,” says Lehman. “I depend a lot on him.”

Borbor prepared for the season by running before dawn this summer. She was unfazed by the 3.1-mile race distance, a big step up from middle school. “It only seemed a little longer than two miles,” she said.

“It seemed like five miles,” said Fargo Wells.

As the afternoon wore on, the freshmen and junior varsity runners finished their races and turned to other pursuits. For some, that was cheering on their varsity teammates. For others, it was horses.

Kate Barr Ross borders the back of the Wynne Unit, and its horses and the runners didn't take long to discover each other. Once they did, a great love-fest commenced along the wire separating the prison from the park. Many teams were from the suburbs of Houston, where the space and the animal life we have in Huntsville are scarce.

I did not take part in that. My job was to cheer on our Hornets. How many ways can you say "Come on, Huntsville" to a runner mid-race? Many, it turns out!

"Come on, HUNTsville. Come on, HuntsVILLE."

"COME on, Huntsville. Let's GOOOOOOOOOO."

I never expect a reply. These runners are occupied at the moment! So I was quite surprised, during the first lap of the varsity girls race, to see senior Wiam Sehlaoui meet my "Come on, Huntsville" with a thousand-watt smile that shone until well after she had passed by me. Then, on the next lap, I'll be dog-goned if she didn't do it again!

It was then, for the first time in a very long time, that I truly remembered what it was like to be young, to drink it all in, deeply—the competition, the camaraderie, the little glories of the day. Talk about enthusiasm. It's going to be a great season.

(Ken Johnson compiles the race results for this column. Send him yours at 1941runner@sbcglobal.net.)

### **Recent race results:**

#### **Labor Day Run, Huntsville, Sept. 3**

##### **10K (6.2 miles)**

Emily Garner, 38	47:41
Jacob Gautreaux, 46	49:29
Jody Slaughter, 55	56:06
Lin Salmon, 64	1:04:01
Jose Morcio, 57	1:05:34
Gretchen Dixon, 40	1:06:47
Art Morgan, 53	1:06:50
Bill Moeller, 62	1:07:40
David Keithley, 36	1:09:48
Bridget Moeller, 61	1:35:16

##### **Various Distances (3.1 to 5 miles)**

John Slate, 62	26:24
Marti Okech, 11	35:54
Ethan Chernosky, 11	35:54
Gene Gaskins, 59	36:26
Mikey O'Donnell, 9	37:18
Miles O'Donnell, 7	37:18
Jessica O'Donnell, 34	37:19
Seth Brown, 11	37:51
Darren Grant, 53	38:12

Cy Brown, 13	39:49
Ken Johnson, 77	41:00
Marsie Grant, 56	41:32
Shellie Geer, 68	44:31
Jose Avelar, 56	46:33
Baily Okech, 9	46:41
Karen Miller, 42	46:56
Siomara Avelar, 30	47:56
Jackie Gamero, 21	49:26
Isai Diaz Melendez, 7	49:27
Adam Chernosky, 29	53:47
Cheryl Reader, 55	53:47
Joseph Chernosky, 8	53:48
Becky Kemp, 45	54:48
Kevin Gaulty, 67	54:54
Sisi Diaz Melendez, 16	57:09
Yudith Melendez, 39	57:11
Mia O'Donnell, 11	1:01:55
Valerie Okech, 7	1:01:56
Christine Okech, 40	1:01:58
Laura McDonald, 56	1:08:31
Scott McDonald, 54	1:08:49

**1-Mile**

Amos Brown, 7	11:01
Tonia Brown, 42	13:34
Sheila Gaskins, 57	17:15
Lisa Johnson, 47	25:35
Marilynn Johnson, 72	25:35
Velvia Keithley, 44	30:53

**Sunday Night 5K, The Woodlands, Sept. 2**

Ken Johnson, 77	40:16
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**Kolache 5K, West, Sept. 2**

Megan Foley, 32	37:53
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**Bayou Bucket 5K, Houston, Aug. 26**

Dan Byrne, 60	19:33
David Keithley, 36	33:03

**Run the Woodlands 5K, The Woodlands, Aug. 25**

Ken Johnson, 77	41:34
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**Upcoming races in Huntsville:**

September 30 – Texas 10 Series, 10-Mile, 5-Mile, 1-Mile, SHSU campus  
September 30 – Bearkat Bolt 5K, SHSU campus

October 20 – Huntsville Half & Quarter Marathon, 5K, Walker Co. Fairgrounds

For more information about these races and others in the area, visit the Seven Hills Running Club website at <http://www.7hills.us> and click on Race Schedule.