

Marathon draws record number of racers

Steve Osaduik wins race for third straight year

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Maybe it was the special pre-race screening of the acclaimed documentary *Spirit of the Marathon* that inspired them. Or perhaps it was the rather fitting 1960s tune, *Keep on Running* by the Spencer Davis Group, that greeted the finishers at the line at one point during yesterday's 29th Royal Victoria Marathon. More likely, it was the quiet sense of achievement one gets in setting a goal and then realizing it.

Whatever their spur, a record number of 10,395 runners registered for the 2008 Royal Victoria marathon, half-marathon, 8K and kid's races under ideal fall conditions. This year's total was up 9.5 per cent from last year and gives the B.C. capital two road races - along with the Times Colonist 10K each spring - which draw in excess of 10,000 registered participants.

Of those registered, 9,176 crossed the finish line.

At the head of the surging pack of 2,474 runners who contested body and soul over the classic 42.2K full marathon distance yesterday was Steve Osaduik of Nanaimo, who won his third consecutive RVM men's title in two hours, 25 minutes, 31 seconds.

Osaduik, the two-time Canadian half-marathon champion who is gunning to represent Canada next year at the 2009 world marathon championships in Berlin, was more than three minutes clear of second place Todd Howard of Victoria (2:28:43).

"It was lonely out there," said Osaduik, of his position far ahead of the maddening crowd he left in his wake.

"But I'm happy with the threeppeat and would like to go for the record [Kelvin Broad's standard of five Royal Victoria Marathon titles] but I'll take that one



CREDIT: Adrian Lam, Times Colonist
 Nanaimo runner Steve Osaduik won for the third straight year.

year at a time," said the Dover Bay Secondary grad, who has also won the Times Colonist 10K three times.

Cheryl Murphy of Victoria, fifth last year at Ironman Canada and sixth this year at the world duathlon championships in Belgium, may want to ditch her Speedo and bike. Competing in just her second stand-alone marathon (outside an Ironman race), she won the RVM women's title yesterday in 2:43:01.

That follows up her first stand-alone marathon, in which she finished second at the Snickers Marathon in March at Albany, Ga., to qualify for the 2009 world championships in Berlin.

"I gave it my all today and it feels so good to win," said the 39-year-old physiotherapist and mother of two.

"The weather was gorgeous and the fans along the route were so tremendously supportive and lifted you with their cheering. It was really positive out there along the course."

Wendy Terris of Portland was second in 2:48:04.

The largest number of participants, 4,801, registered to contest the half-marathon with the men's winner Ryan Day of Vancouver across in 1:08:50 and the women's champion Lindsay McLaren of Calgary in 1:21:38.

The numbers running the 8K were 2,140, with Ryan McKenzie of Victoria the men's champion in 23:56 and Rachael Ruus of Richmond the women's winner in 28:39.

The biggest hit among the spectators were the more than 900 youngsters who took part in the kids' 1.2K run, in which 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics triathlon silver-medallist Simon Whitfield of Victoria joined the pack as official honorary kids' runner.

"I said: 'Whoa kids, slow down, you're going to run me over,'" chuckled Whitfield, who earlier clocked 24:30 to place third in the 8K.

"They are so enthusiastic that they go out hard, then hit a bit of a wall midway through, and then they see the finish line and get excited again and go all out at the end."

Among the throng were two second-place finishers from the Boston Marathon - American Dick Beardsley from 1982 and Vancouver's Art Boileau from 1986.

"You couldn't have asked for a better morning," said the 52-year-old Beardsley, who ran together with wife Jill - an organizer of the Austin Marathon in Texas - in the 8K with the pair finishing in 47:16.

"What a way to showcase the city," added Beardsley, among the famous past marathoners featured in Spirit of the Marathon.

"So many times, you just drive through cities. Getting out and running through them gives you a whole different perspective."

Boileau, 51, went the distance in clocking a highly-respectable 2:55:05 in the marathon, which wound its way over a picturesque course from Menzies Street through downtown into James Bay and Beacon Hill Park, along Dallas Road to Gonzales Bay and through the neighbourhoods of Fairfield, Oak Bay and Uplands before the turnaround and retracing of the route.

"The people cheering you along the course were great," said Boileau. "That really keeps your mind in the game. This is truly a great event. And getting ready for it keeps me out of the bar," he quipped.

Not that it stopped Michal Kapral of Toronto, the 'joggler' whose feat of keeping three balls aloft while running marathons has landed him in Guinness World Records. Kapral stopped many times along the route to entertain and amuse the crowd and even popped into the Hash House Harriers tent to quaff a beer en route. Hardly surprisingly, his time of 3:12:05 was well off his Guinness world record clocking of 2:15:12.

"The scenery was very distracting," smiled Kapral.

"This one was for pure fun. The crowd support was amazing. I had a blast." Betty-Jean McHugh, an 80-year-old retired nurse from North Vancouver, set the world record for the fastest marathon completed by a woman in the 80-plus class by going 4:36:52 to knock 13 minutes off the previous record.

In terms of quantity, Janet Green of Courtenay and Jon Mahoney of Vernon are hard to top. Do you think these two are hooked on marathoning? Green completed her 200th marathon yesterday in 3:54:02 and Mahoney his 300th in 3:44:46. Mahoney, a retired pilot originally from the Yukon, wore bib No. 300 to commemorate his special moment and Green, a doctor, wore No. 200 in honour of her accomplishment.

Then there was the Man of Steel, aka Duncan letter carrier Justin Point, who completed the marathon dressed as Superman with cape and all.

"This suit weighs three pounds but was 10 pounds by the end of the race because off all the sweat it soaked up," said Point, who ran as Elvis last spring in the Vancouver Marathon.

The sweat even ran into his sneakers and Point said he twice had to stop and change his squishy socks.

But it was all in a day's work at a colourful and vibrant 29th Royal Victoria Marathon.

"For our 30th edition next year, we're going to top this year's record number of participants," vowed race director Rob Reid, who as per his custom of 15 years again greeted every finisher with a handshake - gloved donned, of course - as they crossed the line.

"It says a lot for this event that with the economy the way it is, we could still attract so many runners to come here from outside the city [only about 2,500 of the competitors yesterday were from Victoria]."

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