

Oak Openings Stampede

50K and 25K Trail Races, 5K Fun Run/Walk

Sunday, September 14, 2014

Submitted by Randy Ruch, Race Director

Under clear, cool skies, the 2014 version of the Oak Openings Stampede took place Sunday morning September 14th at the beautiful Oak Openings Metropark. The Buehner Center adjacent to Mallard Lake proved again to be a great setting for the day's events. A record 326 trail runners signed up for the 50K or 25K races on the scout trail or the 5K fun run/walk on the blue and red trails that started and ended at the lake. For some, this was their first time running "off-road" and they learned quickly they weren't in Kansas anymore. Although the trails were in great shape despite heavy rains during the week, the courses still presented many challenges besides distance with plenty of roots, twists and turns, ups and downs, uneven ground, and sandy stretches not found in road running. There were lots of comments on how tough yet beautiful the trails were and many converted to running in the woods. This was in spite of another uprising of bees on the scout trail that gave some runners more memories than they desired.

The 50K race started first at 8:30 with forty runners (30 male, 10 female) ready to prove once is not enough as they would do two laps of the scout trail. Thirty-four eventually finished and truly earned their finisher medals. The group was led by Bellbrook, OH runner Andrew Helmick who put some distance on the rest of the field at the four mile mark and led the rest of the way to finish as the Overall Winner. His time was an impressive 3:51:45 which is a 7:17 pace. Second place went to Kevin Troyer and third was the sandaled Joshua Mooney. The fourth place finisher and First Male Masters was Ann Arbor, MI runner Hiroyuki Shiomi.

In the women's 50K, Natalee Gooden-Burkard from Troy, OH returned and successfully defended her first place Female Overall title despite getting lost on the second loop of the run. Her time of 5:11:15 would have been much better without the mistake since her first 25K lap was completed in around 2:15:00. This is the second year Natalee has gotten lost during the race. Next year she promises to bring a map, GPS, and guide dog with her. Local runner Sarah Skilliter was the First Female Masters winner with a time of 5:19:17 and only bested her friend Ivy Hunter by one second. Let's hope they're still friends!

The 25K race hosted a large field with 175 runners (95 male, 80 female). The race started at 9:00 and within the first quarter mile was led by local speedster Matt Folk. Matt finished in 1:31:36 which is a blistering 5:54 pace on the trails. This was in spite of Matt doing a somersault around mile seven. Apparently a chipmunk ran across the trail and when Matt tried to slow down he lost control and ended up rolling in the dirt. When asked why he slowed down for a chipmunk, Matt replied, "I always brake for animals." You'll never find a nicer guy than Matt Folk. 😊

Following behind Matt were Trevin Flickinger, Kevin Egan, First Male Masters winner Rob Slater, and Brian Kaminski all under 1:45:00. They might have given Matt more of a challenge, but took a wrong turn around mile 9 and ran a half mile or more down a horse trail. Some hoodlums (not Matt!) had moved flags and turned arrows where the scout and horse trail crossed. (Ah youth is wasted on the young! – G.B. Shaw) The misdirection also impacted other runners until the race director learned of it, madly pedaled his bike to the spot, and fixed it...all in a day's work.

The women's 25K race was won by Rachel Lumbrezer in 1:55:25 (7:27 pace). She was 17th overall and was followed by the second female finisher and First Female Masters winner Cheryl O'Connor in 2:03:57 (20th overall). Nicole Candle was the third female in 2:08:13 followed closely by Courtney Kistler in 2:11:48.

As noted above, many in the 25K race were stung by bees which are a chronic problem in the park this time of year (even Sunday's horse riders stirred up a hive and were getting stung on the southern end of the park). Jane Patterson and Shannon Loar were stung nine times altogether, yet were still smiling at the finish. Next year they won't wear headbands that have flowers on them for obvious reasons.

The 5K fun run/walk went well with 109 signed up (42 males, 67 females). The course was marked better than last year and everyone (except for two individuals that I know of) stayed on track. The participants experienced the blue and red trails and a great diversity of habitats from hilly hardwoods, sandy oak savanna, lowlands, and a beautiful stream. The first runner to finish was BGSU student Joseph Zbasnik in 20:01. First female was Amy Farrar in 23:51 and first male and female masters were Dan Eble and Letha Zielinski in 23:04 and 27:11, respectively.

All of the finishers received a wood slice medal and pancakes and other edible goodies in the Buehner Center. Age group winners were awarded a fun campfire mug. 50K and 25K Overall and Masters winners were given laser-engraved wood slice plaques and gift certificates to Second Sole running store in Levis Commons, Perrysburg. The top two in the 50K also received a Suunto Ambit 3 GPS watch or Salomon hydration pack, respectively, from Given Brand sporting goods in Suffolk Square Plaza, Maumee. Proceeds from the race supported the organization SewHope which helps impoverished communities in northern Guatemala.

The event could not have taken place without the many volunteers. Special kudos go to Erin O'Connell who always has the hard job of finding and organizing the volunteers, Ed O'Reilly who set-up the start and finish and timed all three events for over 8 hours, and the folks from Josina Lott Industries who made the pancakes.

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at next year's Stampede!