

## ROCKING AT PVI RUNFEST -- KORIR...KOMU AND FREIX ALL SET NEW RECORDS By George Banker

“You have good days and bad days and you have next weekend to run again. It’s not like politics, if you loose you have to wait another two years. I do about 20 races a year, this gets a little bigger every year. I am always thankful that I can run and this is a good community oriented event and you have the fellowship of the other runners”, said Congressman Tom Davis (D) of Virginia.

Congressman Davis was talking about the race which rocked the school yard of Paul VI High School in Fairfax, Va., on Sunday, September 22, 2002 where he finished 27:57 at the 3rd Annual PVI Runfest 5K. The event was sponsored by Metro Run and Walk and Nike in conjunction with sponsorship from Clarke-Hook Corporation, Franey, Parr & Muha, Merrill Lynch, SequoiaBank and others.

The field of local and international athletes were eager to run the revised out and back, two loop course which was over slightly rolling hills. The top runners were going after the \$2,250 in cash awards split equally between males and females in the open and masters division. In addition, a \$100 bonus in the open and master for new event records.

The records were all set last year, open 14:42 by Eliud Barngetuny of Kenya (Chapel Hill, NC), 17:16 Carole Zajac-Tynan of Sterling, VA. The masters, 15:38 by John Tuttle of Douglasville, Ga., and 20:07 by Win Persina of Washington.

The open and master women event record holders were back to defend their titles, Carole Tynan and Win Persina . All of the existing times were going to be tested. Ben Cooke of Silver Spring, Md., had raced against Anthony Korir and David Kipngetich both of Kenya, now living in Chapel Hill, NC. At the Rocky Mount 5K in Roanoke, Va., last weekend, Korir was first in 14:44 and Kipngetich was second in 15:00 and Cooke was fourth in 15:21. Korir had ran a 23:38 at the George Sheehan Classic 5 Miler last August and Henry Kopchirchir ran 23:43, Thomas Omwenga ran 23:46 and David Kipngetich ran 24:34. Cooke was coming off a win at the Kentlands/Lakelands 5K with a time of 14:52, a new event record.

The runners left the school yard and made their way on to Lee Highway, there were a pack of eight with the leaders being, Kipchirchir, Korir and Omwenga and Coke was in the middle. Making the turn off Lee Highway onto McLean Avenue the pack of eight were in tact with Cooke trailing by seconds in ninth place.

The lead females were Hannah Njeri of Kenya, out of West Chester, Pa, she finished 12th at the Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Miler in 55:56 and was 11th at the Philadelphia Distance Run Half-Marathon in 1:17:20. Team mate, Martha Komu was off her shoulder and a few seconds back was Tynan and Lory Gray of Alexandria, Va.

The lead masters were Simon Karori of Kenya, residing in Chapel Hill, NC and about a minute back was Dave Berardi of Baltimore, Md. Laura Freix of Team Pacers was holding in close behind Gray followed by Betty Blank of Falls Church.

Going into the second loop along McLean Avenue, the pack had unraveled due to the speed and it was down to a pack of three, Korir, Omwenga and Njuguna. Cooke had advanced to sixth place. It was a tactical race to the finish with one remaining hill in the last mile and a 400 meter straight away back to the school yard. The three were coming towards the yard and all were under the prior record. It was still anyone's race and it was down to the last 50 meters, Korir proved to have the stronger kick to collect the \$300 plus the \$100 bonus for first place in 14:12. Omwenga was given second a \$200 and Njuguna was given third and \$100 with the same time of 14:13. Cooke finished in sixth place in 14:50.

"The pace was fast, we were pushing each other. The course was flat and no hills, it was nice and I really enjoyed it. I feel okay, I wasn't fighting too much. Now that I know the course I can run faster. My best time is 13:46", said Korir.

"I came out for the competition and I got that and much more. I hope that we can get some local guys to run with them. I raced three of them in West Virginia. The pace was fast for everyone, I just pushed through it. I try to be as tough as I can. It shows that every body has his day. I'm not disappointed", said Cooke.

"I came to race against some of the best in the area. My goal was to hang with them as long as I could. I wanted to run the entire race hard. I felt like I did a good job", added Cooke.

Komu began to open a gap going into the second loop over Njeri, the pace was demanding. Tynan and Gray had fallen off the earlier demanding pace. Komu was on a record pace and set the new record at 16:36 to collect her \$300 plus the \$100 bonus. Njeri was second in 17:04 which was under the old time. Defending champion, Tynan was third in 17:40. Gray was third in 18:33.

"I am happy with the win. It was a tough course, uphill and downhill. I was concerned about Hannah coming back. I felt comfortable and I ran faster the last mile. My best time is 16:01. We appreciate the race and I would be happy to come back next year", stated Komu.

"I felt flat today, it's a good start for the season. I'll come back next year, a good race and nothing ever goes wrong. This race is low key enough to get good competition. The breaking of my record is what it's all about. After two miles I knew I wasn't going to catch the leaders, I wanted to put in a good effort. My first mile was 5:25 and I have been training to hold that. It was quicker than I should have gone out", stated Tynan.

"I really did have a good time and I liked the course and the competition! The course was a little hilly but it's always good to throw a little challenge! I wasn't completely happy with my race. I really wanted to run under 18 or low 18s. "I felt sort of sluggish for some reason. Oh well, plenty of time and races to improve!!", said Gray.

Simon Karori maintained the pressure for the masters and was first in 15:44 and collected \$200. Dave Berardi of Baltimore, Md., was second in 16:14 and collected \$100 with Dan Lawson of Team Saucony/PowerBar in third with 16:25 and \$75.

“It was a fine course, my first mile was 4:35. If I get pushed I will improve my time. I need to run with other people to push me. I always feel that I run as a master and at some races I win overall. I have been running for 18 years. I came to the US in 1982 and I go back and forth to Kenya. I like to run in the US, it’s a nice country”, said Karori.

“I’m happy with the outcome. The course was just as tough as last year, an honest course. I thought I had kept up the pace and the second time around the hill was tough. I caught Dan Lawson at mile two. It takes an awful lot to come back from an injury. It’s truly nice to come back and get one under the belt. I passed the first mile in 5:08 and was I was 10:25 at mile two”, stated Berardi..

“It was a good course. If I can keep doing the speed work I can get it down to 16:30. Dave passed me at mile two. I was 5:04 at the first mile and 10:20 at mile two”, said Lawson. Collecting \$200 and the \$100 bonus was Laura Freix of Team Pacers of Old Town Alexandria finishing in 19:31 and fifth overall. Betty Blank of Falls Church, Va., was second in 20:48. Beth McCann of Falls Church was third in 21:00.

“It felt good. I ran a consistent 6:20 pace. I was sure that I could break the record. I felt comfortable about the other masters around me”, said Freix.

The City of Fairfax and Paul VI High School will never be the same again, it’ll be known as the “Speed Capital”, there were 10 new five age group records along with the three new event records. The top six males were all under 15 minutes and the top three females were under 18 minutes.

“My strategy was to stay with Dave Berardi. I’m stronger than I thought I was. At the World Police and Fire Games I did the half mile in 1:58 and the 400 meter dash in 51:00. I thought the competition was great. I ran harder because of the field”, said Dex Dixon of Owings Mills, Md., finishing in 16:26.

Monique Farah of Team Brooks stated, “I felt great and I am so glad I made it. It was nice to see all the “girls” and honestly to beat some of them !! I definitely need to work on my speed but I am very pleased with my race, 23 seconds than last year. Not to be compared with those Kenyans! Geez! Anyway, I can’t believe I ran after jus

Top age group winners defend their titles for two years in a row. Betty Blank in the 45-49 age group. Patrick Griffith of Alexandria 55-59 finished in 18:44. Ron Steele of Fairfax in the 60-64 age group finished with 25:48. Bill Osburn of Bethesda, Md., in the 75-79 age group finished with 30:42.

“Another successful event, we know this has become a major event in Fairfax City. This is good for the school and good for the community. It’s simply phenomenon to watch the folks run. This gets such great recognition for the school”, stated Karen Hanrahan, Director of Development, Paul VI High School.

“Each year we take another step. We could not do what we do without the athletes. I’m not going anywhere. Without our commitment from our sponsors we can’t make it worth while for everyone. I wanted the runners to crank out the best they could”, said Ed Zigo, Race Director.

A special thanks to the race committee and the volunteers.