

KETEMA SMASHES WOMEN'S RECORD AND ORARE FALLS SHORT

By George Banker

“It was a great run and you had to be here to see it. This race has grown a lot since the first year. I came here to finish”, stated Congressman Tom Davis of Virginia.

Congressman Davis was making reference to the **5th Annual PVI Runfest 5K**, which was held on Sunday, September 19, 2004 at Paul VI High School in Fairfax, Va. The community based race each year takes on an international flavor, which had runners from Ethiopia, Kenya, New Zealand, and Russia. The race is the most competitive 5K in Northern Virginia.

The two-loop USATF certified course started and finished in the school lot. The course had a couple of moderate hills. The top runners were racing for \$4,150 in prize money, which included a bonus for new event records. The record holders for the masters returned, John Tuttle (15:38-2001) and Maria Spinnler (18:35-2003).

A half-mile into the race, Valentine Orare, Kenneth Maiyo, Timon Biwott, and Nicholas Kurgat were in the lead with Chris Banks of Team Gotta Run 25 feet off the leaders. Atalelech Ketema of Ethiopia and Elena Orlova of Russia were matching stride for the lead going into the first mile. The lead men went through the first mile in 4:20 and women went through in 5:05. Kate McIlroy of New Zealand was at the heels of Larisa Michailova of Russia.

McIlroy is a member of the Wellington Harrier Athletic Club (WHAC) and has been in the sport since age 13. In 1997, at the age of 16 she was New Zealand Athlete of the Year. While attending Victoria University she ran track and field. In August 2003 she made her debut at the Trent 10K and took first place in 35:23. At the Kiwi Milers Club 1500m she placed first in 4:33.54 (January 2004).

Into the second loop Orare began to test the other runners as he began to break away. His move was not covered and the last hill was negotiated as the parking lot welcomed the 2004 winner in a time of 14:13, and he collected \$300, the third fastest winning time. The record of 13:54 was set last year by Mohammed Amyn of Morocco. There have been only two runners under 14 minutes in the history of the race. Kurgat was second with 14:25 (\$200) followed by Kenneth Maiyo with a 14:34 (\$100).

“It was windy and I was hoping to break the record and I was 4:20 at the first mile. I was waiting for someone to break through and on the second loop I took off. I was not worried about anyone catching me. My PR for 5K is 13:28. The course was not bad and it all depends on the day and how I run and train. You need competition to measure yourself”, stated Orare.

Into the second loop Ketema had been passed by Orlova and the two matched strides. Going into the last quarter mile Ketema closed the gap and once near the school year with 200 meters remaining, the final assault was made as she sprinted to the finish in record

setting time to collect the \$500 for a new event record of 16:21 plus the \$300 for first place. The old record was 16:36 set in 2002 by Martha Komu of Kenya. There have been only two females under 17 minutes in the history of the race. Elena Orlova was second in 16:24, the closest race finish.

“It was very competitive and I did the first mile in 5:05. I was leading up to the second mile when Elena caught me and I passed her back with 400 meters to go. I am happy today for the win; my PR for 5K is 15:55. This year I did not train that much,” stated Ketema.

She adds, “Today at two miles I was behind Elena but I wanted to be strong and I was thinking that I could win. If I didn’t feel good I was going to stay back and rest and then pass. I have been running for six years. I started in school and I use to high jump and run 800 and 1500 meters. I like the 5K best. If you train well and are in shape you will win. Everyone trains to win.”

Larisa Michailova was third in 17:07 followed by Kate McIlroy in a time of 17:14. The top seven females were under 18 minutes. Susan Graham-Gray of Greencastle, Pa., finished with 18:03 (8th place, 2nd 35-39)) and she is legally blind.

Chris Chattin of Columbia, Md., was able to claim the master’s title in 16:27 (14th place) over John Tuttle who finished in 16:40 (14th). The defending master’s champion was David Berardi of Baltimore, Md. (16:26-2003) who finished in 16:47- 17th).

“He (John Tuttle) went out hard and I caught him on the second loop. I ran my race and did a 5:10 pace and I knew it was going to be a showdown. I think going out slower pays off. The wind wasn’t a factor in my mind and I did pass quite a few people,” stated Chattin.

“I felt good the first mile (5:00) and it was real tough and fast. Chris went by me in a hurry and after that I was looking for the finish line. The memory is there of what I use to do. Chris ran a smart race today. Running is a sport where you never give up. There are little battles no matter where you are in the race. I always have the belief that I’ll be good again,” stated Tuttle.

Maria Spinnler was able to retain her title and was first in 18:53 (10th place) followed closely by Laura Freix of Team Pacers with 19:24. Julie Hayden of Potomac River Running was third in 19:41.

“I love the 5K, it was windy and the field was loaded. I thought I could beat my own record but I was running by myself. I was surprised to see al of the people out there. My kids go to a Catholic School and it’s fun to support the school,” stated Spinnler.

Betty Blank of Falls Church, Va., placed first in the 45-49 age group in 2002-20:38 (the fastest time) and in 2002-20:48. Also, she has placed first in the 50-54 age group with 20:58-2003 the fastest time and this year 21:27.

Patrick Griffith of Alexandria, VA, has dominated the age group 55-59 since 2001 with 18:27 the fastest time, 18:44-2002, 18:35-2004 and this year 19:29.

The PVI Runfest 5K is sponsored by Clarke-Hook Corporation, Metro Run & Walk and Nike, along with the Pohanka Automotive Group, Merrill Lynch, United Bank and The Business Bank and others.