

## **KURGAT AND ORLOVA DOMINATE PVI RUNFEST 5K TO HONOR KIRVEN**

By George Banker

The 6<sup>th</sup> PVI Runfest 5K, Sunday, September 18, 2005 was not all about running. The race took on a new meaning as a tribute was made to Marine Lance Corporal Nicholas Kirven. There was a stillness which came over the crowd as the Honor Guard posted the colors. On May 8, 2005 Kirven was faced with the ultimate sacrifice in defense of his beliefs, the loss of his life. He was a team leader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Kilo Company (3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Regiment). He was engaged in his first firefight in an area 60 miles east of Kabul in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Nick Collier stated the following in the base paper from Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, "I remember Nick giving out toys, candy, food, and whatever else he had to local kids while we were out on patrol," he recalled. "I remember him looking at their smiles and saying, 'See, it really makes it all worthwhile.'"

The above actions defined who he was and he will be remembered by family and friends as a hero and a Marine. In his own way he was making a difference miles away from home. Long live his memory and keep in mind that "Freedom Is Not Free".

The runners were lined up with honor and all were going out to give their best performance. The event has grown in the last six years within the community as the most competitive 5K in Northern Virginia. Since 2002 the international runners have been attracted to the PVI Runfest 5K and they leave their marks.

Nicholas Kurgat of Kenya, was going after to improve upon his 2004 second place finish in 14:25. Also, runner up Elena Orlova who finished in 16:24 was looking for top honors. Returning after five years, Alisa Harvey, now a master was in contention of setting a new record. She was the female winner of the first PVI Runfest in 2000 with a time of 17:36. Prior masters' winner's David Berardi of Baltimore, Md., (2003-16:26) and Chris Chattin of Columbia, Md. (2004-16:27) would be doing battle with Mark Stickle of Winchester, Va., in his debut at PVI Runfest 5K.

Two-time master's winner and record holder, Maria Spinnler of Cumberland Valley Athletic Club was on the starting line for a third time. She has been the only master to go under 19 minutes (2003- 18:35 record, 2004-18:53).

The certified out- and- back two loop course offered gentle rolling hills. Off the line it was a fast start with Kurgat and teammate John Kipruto Korir along with Michael Wardian of Team Pacers/Brooks of Old Town Alexandria giving chase. Wardian had won the Gulf Coast Relief 5K held in Alexandria the day prior in 15:48. Pushing less than five minutes a mile there was none who could hang. Going into the second loop Wardian was not to be a factor.

Orlova and teammate, Olga Romanova of Red Square Sports both took it out hard from the start and dared anyone to hang with them. Orlova had a score to settle and wanted the win. Alisa Harvey was the only runner within eyesight from the start but elected not to keep up the pace.

Kurgat was successful with his mission and took first place in 14:58 with the slowest winning time in the history of the race. He collected the first place of \$300. The event record was set in 2003 at 13:54 by Mohammed Aryn of Morocco. Korir placed second (\$200) in 15:14 followed by Wardian in 15:37 (\$100). The prize money was the same for the females.

Orlova was able to secure first place with a time of 16:49, the third fastest winning time in the history of the race. The event record was set last year in 16:21 by Atalelech Ketema of Ethiopia. Romanova was able to hold in for second in 17:02. In a record setting pace Alisa Harvey was third in 17:48 with a new master's record. She is the first female master to go under 18 minutes. She collected \$200 for the master's win and \$200 bonus for the record.

"The event was a race-race and I rested for it. There were some tough hills and they felt like hills. The down hills were hard. It's not a fast course and I tried to push myself. I was concerned about myself and Olga and my first mile was 5:41. I controlled myself today and ran comfortably", stated Harvey.

Mark Stickley ran away with the top honors in the masters by clocking 15:49 and fourth place overall. His first mile split was 4:58 followed by a 5:05 for the second mile. He had the third fastest winning time in the history of the race. The second fastest was Simon Karori of Kenya (2002-15:44). The record was set in 2001 by John Tuttle of Douglasville, Ga., in 15:38. These are the only three who have gone under 16 minutes in the history of the race.

"Definitely a good master's field but I was expecting more open runners. Overall I liked the course but I didn't realize how hilly it was, the long stretch at about two and a quarter mile was pretty rough. It was hard to get into a rhythm having to go around the slower runners on the second loop", stated Stickley.

He adds, "I was coaching a cross country meet on Saturday and my legs were a bit flat from running around on the course. I knew to get the record I'd have to be right at 5:00 pace and I was pretty much dead -on for 2-miles."

"It was nice to see so many people (men and women) running in their 40's and running well. But it's a tad worrisome that there are not more newcomers, specifically talented youngsters, to fill the gaps", added Stickley.

Dave Berardi was able to deny Chatten a second win by running a 16:30 to 16:45. The third master was Chuck Moeser of Sterling, Va., with a 17:05. He was first in the age group 50-54.

Maria Spinnler was not able to cover any of the moves made by Alisa Harvey and took second place in 19:02 and collected \$100. Beth Belle of Fairfax, Va., was the third master in 21:27 and the mother of Lance Cpl. Kirven.

“I wasn’t sure what kind of shape she (Alisa) was in and so I went out a few seconds faster than I would have because I wanted to keep her in sight. (I probably suffered a bit more because of that). It was obvious after the first loop that she was running a good race and there was no way I was going to give her any competition so at that point I just tried to hang in there and run”, stated Spinnler.

“She is a world class athlete with incredible range and when we were both in our prime she reached a much higher level than I did so I’m not unrealistic with myself and my abilities. There are just some things you can’t control”, added Spinnler.

“I really enjoyed the course because it seemed to have a little something for every type of runner ... some hills for the strength runners to push (but not so many that you felt wasted) and plenty of down hills (especially coming home to the finish) for the speedy people”, stated Christina Wells of Woodbridge, Va., finishing in fifth place 18:18.

Wells adds, “It was only my second race since having my baby in March. I wanted to be sure that I did not go out too hard, and I wanted to run faster than I had the week before. As a true distance runner, I was pleased that I accomplished both of those goals, but I also finished knowing I could have run faster and thinking about how I should have pushed that final mile a little harder.”

“It was fun being back in the Northern Virginia racing scene. It was actually a family event- my 2 nephews and niece also did the race. It was a first for all of them. I did enjoy the race and it went well. I have not done a 5K in five years as my last was in Melbourne, Australia. I have been marathon training all summer for the Berlin Marathon on the 25<sup>th</sup>”, stated Meg Letherby of Boulder, Colo., finishing in sixth place 18:34.

Letherby adds, “The level of competition was steep! Those girls are fast – I was lucky to scrape into the top 5 – thanks to Alisa being a master. I remember going through the first mile in 5:50 just behind Alisa and Amy Blanco. My best time for 5K was 18:52. I held pretty steady for the second mile but slowed on the third, the course had some hills.”

“I’m still pretty surprised by my run too! I was expecting to finish in 28-30 minutes but I felt really good! The hardest thing about the whole run was trying to keep it controlled and not run faster because I promised my husband that I wasn't going to push it but the last 200 yards I saw him and said "I think I have to sprint a little bit!". It was ironic that you got me number 8 and I'm 8months pregnant...perfect”, stated Monique Rico of Aldie, Va., finishing in 25:14 (23<sup>rd</sup> place).

There were new age group records set for the females 35-39 by Elena Orlova (16:49), 25-29 by Olga Romanova (17:02) and 40-44 by Alisa Harvey (17:48).

The males age group 45-49 by David Berardi (16:30), and 65-69 by Steve Forman (21:08).

The PVI Runfest is sponsored by Clarke-Hook Corporation, Metro Run and Walk, DCACCESS, Marriott, Merrill Lynch and Nike, along with United Bank, Pohanka, Signs Plus, INTERPUNK.com, The Business Bank, Bishopp Realty, Inc., Panera Bread, Cyron & Miller and Commonwealth Commercial, Inc., Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Terpak and others.