

EQUINOX MARATHON 2004

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCES AND NOTES OF STATISTICAL INTEREST

Field Size:

Due in large part to the smoky summer, participation in the marathon was down significantly in 2004. The total of 402 individual entries was the lowest since 1998. The lowest number of entries in the period from 1999 through 2003 was 483. The record field since the early years was 2002 when 569 individuals entered the race.

The relay field tied the largest ever, with 60 teams, of which 58 finished – a record. The previous record for number of relay teams finishing was 2002, when 57 finished

Southern Invasion?

The Equinox Marathon seems to be regaining popularity among the running community in South Central Alaska. Runners from Anchorage and the Mat-Su area reaped a large share of the awards in this year's race.

In the overall rankings South Central women copped one of the top five places, 5 of the top 10, 7 of 15, and 9 of 20. In the men's race, the numbers were two of the top five, 2 of the top 10, 4 of 15 and 7 of 20. South Central women took four of nine age-class awards in the 20-29, 30-39 and 40-49 classes, while South Central men took three of six age-class awards in the 20-29 and 30-39 classes.

Times:

A total of 334 runners finished within the 10-hour time limit. The busiest stretch at the finish line was from 3:30:00 through 5:30:00, when 197 of the 334 finishers came across, about one every 36 seconds.

The median time for the whole field was 5:07:00. The median time for the 145 women finishers was 6:04:06, and the median time for the 189 men finishers was 4:43:43. The overall average time for the field was 5:31:01.9; for the men it was 4:54:44.0 and for the women it was 6:13:07.8.

Pacing and Competition

Both men's winner Mike Kramer and women's winner Julie Udchachon, an Equinox rookie, led from the gun and were never threatened. Udchachon recorded the 5th-fastest winning time, only one second behind Jane LeBlond's 3:22:55 in 2001. Her margin of victory of 22:07.9 was the third-widest ever. Kramer's winning time was the 19th-fastest, one second behind Bob Murphy's 1989 winning mark. His victory margin of 7:01.6 was the 13th-widest.

Besides leading at every checkpoint, Kramer had the fastest time for each section of the trail. For the first 1/3 of the race Kramer was holding a pace that threatened to break 2:50, one of his goals for the race, however, by the time he reached the summit of Ester Dome he had dropped off that pace and recorded a 2:57:12, four minutes and 25 seconds short of his PR.

One of the major stories of the first portion of the race was the Alaska Railroad train that only the first three runners (Kramer, Robinson, Strabel) beat to the crossing. Bob Murphy lost 2-3 minutes waiting for the train, and 8-10 other runners had to wait for anywhere from seconds to minutes.

Rookie runners in the top 10 included Mark Strabel (4th), Roger Sayre (5th) and Chris Eversman (9th). Strabel ran with runner-up Harlow Robinson for much of the race before course began to take its toll on the “Out-and-Back”.

As usual, Wayne Leder ran a well-paced race, hanging out just outside the top 10 for much of the race before coming on strong to finish 7th. Christian Psoch, 3rd in 2003, overcame a weak stretch in the second part of the first 1/3 of the race to place 6th. Gerald Huber (5th to the top of Ester Dome) and Simon McLoughlin ran in the top 10 for most of the race before fading to 16th and 32nd, respectively.

Udchachon, fresh off a hot performance at the Crow Pass Crossing, was running at or near record pace for the first ½ of the race before slowing on the “Out-and-Back” and eventually finishing more than four-and-one-half minutes behind Susan Faulkner’s 2002 record. Julie was 20 seconds ahead of Faulkner’s pace at Yankovitch and Ballaine and had dropped to 40 seconds behind the record at the top of Miller Hill. She was 1:40 behind the record pace at St. Patrick’s Road, but charged up the hill in 32:30 (likely a women’s record for the ascent) to get back within 1:05 of the record at the start of the “Out-and-Back”. In Faulkner’s record run she ascended the Dome in 33:04, but 2002 runner-up Jane Leblond had the fastest time that day with 32:35, which was thought at the time to have been the fastest women’s ascent. Leblond ran a 32:38 in her 2000 victory.

However, the “Out-and-Back” shows no mercy, and the hills and some too-tightly-laced shoes took their toll. By the time she headed down the “Alder Chute”, Udchachon was more than two minutes off the pace. Julie’s “O-a-B” time was 38:13 compared to the 2002 times of Faulkner (37:15) and LeBlond (37:56). LeBlond ran a blazing 37:09 in 2000.

The women’s leaderboard changed very little throughout the race, with only third-place finisher Joanna Szypula moving from outside the top 10 into the top 5, and only Erinn Whitmer, who was in the top 3 at the Yankovitch-Ballaine and Miller Hill checkpoints dropping out of the picture (and out of the race).

Records and Fast Times:

Although the conditions were relatively fast, record times for the men’s and women’s winners were not approached. Nine women finished under four hours, and only Mike Kramer, the winner, beat three hours for men.

Several age records were set and two age-group records were surpassed. Setting age records for women were:

- Age 33 Kristen Rozell, 3:48:18 broke Bobbi Fyten’s 1983 record by nearly 6 minutes. Kristen also holds the age 28 record.
- Age 34 Julie Udchachon, the winner, ran 3:22:56 to break the record established by Nancy Felix when she won the 1989 Equinox and established a women’s course record.
- Age 46 Roger Sayre, in his first year on the Fairbanks road racing scene, broke Joel Wattum’s 2002 record by nearly 5 minutes.
- Age 51 Dorli McWayne now holds the 50 and 51 records having run a 3:59:47. Her 2003 time of 3:54:12 is the women’s 50-59 age-class record. The old record was 4:50:40 by Marilyn Swanson in 1981.
- Age 53 Mary Lindahl a 2-time runner up in 1981-82, ran a 4:41:38 to knock nearly 4 minutes off the legendary Marcy Trent’s record of 4:45:28 which earned her a 3rd place in 1971.
- Age 56 Jim Decur, who also holds the records for ages 53-54-55, ran a 3:27:20, improving Richard Burton’s 3:44:43 set in 2000. More on Burton below!

- Age 57 Colleen Peterson's 4:57:07 (41st place) improved on the old record by a whopping one hour and 38 minutes. That's a big improvement.
- Age 65 Dieter Dolif, another multiple age-record-holder (also age 62) improved Gordon Ludt's year old 6:02:27 by more than two hours, recording a 3:59:15. Dieter is the oldest man to break 4 hours.
- Age 69 Phyllis Church established a record by finishing in 6:20:45. There was no prior record.
- Age 77 The holder of the records for ages 71-72-73-74-75-76, Jack Townshend, broke 7 hours (6:59:08) to establish a record time for age 77. His age 77 time is better than his records for age 75 and 76.

Age-Class Records

Two age-class records were established, in the Men's 50-59 age-class, and in the Men's 60-69 age class. Bob Murphy's 50-59 record is also an age 52 record, and Richard Burton's 60-69 record is also an age 60 record.

Bob Murphy erased Jim Decur's four-year-old 50-59 class record, knocking 2 minutes and 38 seconds off Jim's 3:18:52 by running a 3:16:14. Murphy, a 6-time winner of the Equinox, holds six of the 16 fastest, times, has run under 3 hours a record nine times, holds the record for the longest span from first victory to last (1978-1994 – 16 years), and holds age-records for ages 26-27-28-30-36-42-43 and now age 52 as well. He is the only runner to hold age records in 4 decades! In finishing eighth this year, Murph ran in the top 5 for 2/3 of the race, and had the second-fastest time of the day from St. Patrick's Road to Ullrhavn – the ascent of Ester Dome (29:35, behind Mike Kramer's 29:10). Let's hope that Murph comes back more times to continue to amaze us.

Richard Burton had the outstanding single performance of the day, knocking a huge 17 minutes and 8 seconds off Jim Madonna's 3:49:52 established in the fast 2002 race. Richard paced himself very well, running outside the top 25 or 30 for most of the race before coming on strong to finish 16th, surely one of the highest finishes ever for a runner in the 60-69 group.

Multiple Winner List:

Mike Kramer, with his second win, became just the 6th man to join the multiple victory circle. The other members are Stan Justice and Murphy with 6 each, Kevin Brinegar with 5, and two other double-winners, race founder Nat Goodhue and Olympic cross country skier Chris Haines.

Julie Udchachon, the rookie winner vows to return and run faster next year. If Susan Faulkner returns from her injuries to run at her previous level there could be quite a battle between the two one-time winners to try to join the 11-member group of female multiple winners.

Sub 3:00:00 and Sub 3:45:00 Clubs

There wasn't much adjustment to the men's Sub-3:00:00 club – no new members joined the club, but Mike Kramer recorded his third sub-3:00:00 performance. Only Murphy (9), Justice (8) and Brinegar and Everett Rubel (4 each) have more sub-3's.

Udchachon became the 29th member of the women's sub 3:45:00 club with her winning time of 3:22:56. No other women ran under 3:45 this year, although runner-up Colleen Personett missed her second sub 3:45 by only 5 seconds.

25 Fastest Men and 25 Fastest Women

Only Julie Udchachon moved onto this list in 2004. Her winning time made her the 4th fastest woman ever, behind Faulkner, LeBlond and four-time champ Tina Devine.

Top 100 Times

Seven women recorded times that rank among the 100 Fastest all-time, and two men did likewise.

Among women, Julie Udchachon recorded the 6th-fastest ever women's time. Colleen Personett's runner up performance was good enough for 63rd on the all-time list. Personett also owns the 45th ('03), 76th ('02) and 81st ('00) fastest times on the list. Joanna Zypula earned 73rd on the list. Kristen Rozell captured her fourth position on the list with the 78th-fastest time. She also has the 15th ('00), 69th ('01) and 72nd ('99) fastest times. Eve Lamborn, Karen Williams and Jamie Blythe posted times number 86, 89 and 93 on the list. Laura McDonough, 8th this year with a 3:54:01, just missed earning her 6th spot on the list. She currently owns the 38th-43rd-53rd-67th-and 77th-fastest times.

Moving off the women's list were times run by Michelle Mitchell, Tasha Thompson-Bergt, Moon Sun Stone, Helen Desinger, Joyce Mitchell-Anderson, Beth Nava, and Corrinne Reinhard. Mitchell (18-21-22-32-50), Thompson-Bergt (57), Stone (55), and Desinger (87) remain on the list with other times.

Mike Kramer ran the 33rd-fastest time to win the 2004 race, and is also on the list with times ranked 20th ('02), 46th ('98), and 60th ('99). Harlow Robinson's runner-up time of 3:04:13 earned the 91st position on the list, in addition to his 2002 time (82nd) and 1998 time (94th).

The times that were bumped off the list belonged to Mike Johnson's 1985 time and Wayde Leder's 2002 time. Johnson remains on the lists with the 27th (2:54:27) and 66th fastest times. Leder still owns the 75th fastest time, recorded in 2002.

Who Da Man/Woman

In this ranking of runners with multiple top-five finishers, there was a fair amount of movement, as two women and three men who finished in the top five had been there before. Mike Kramer moved up from being ranked 9th to a 5th-place ranking. Runner-up Robinson moved up from 13th to 10th, and third-place finisher Matias Saari improved from 34th to 14th.

Colleen Personett moved up from 40th to 20th thanks to her second consecutive runner-up finish. Kristin Bartecchi Rozell, with her fourth top-five finish, improved her ranking from 39th to 28th.