



The Patriot-News

Women's champion wins 3rd in 3 months

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BY JERRY REIGLE
For The Patriot-News

Matt Palombaro had a difficult decision early in yesterday's 33rd annual Harrisburg Select Medical Marathon and Relay.

Should he hold up and run with his girlfriend, Leslie Turchetti, and her father, Tony?

Or, should he pull out all the stops and make a concerted effort to win?

Palombaro, 29, of Elkins Park made the choice after some encouragement from Turchetti, 32, of Camp Hill.

"She was behind me, and she was fading," Palombaro said. "So, I looked back and told her, 'I'll see you at the finish'."

Palombaro proceeded to pace himself through the field, picking up his first career marathon win in 2:40:38.

On the women's side, Jill Vollweiler, 37, of Purchase, N.Y., won her third marathon since September with a time of 2:57:51.

She's won in Yonkers, N.Y. (September), Westchester, N.Y. (October) and Harrisburg (November).

"I was looking at a marathon Web site and the Select Medical Corp. caught my attention," Vollweiler said. "So, I decided to enter it."

On a whim, Vollweiler, a running coach at SUNY-Purchase, traveled from her hometown near the New York-Connecticut border.

"This is a fabulous course," she said. "People were cheering for the runners along it. At times, I thought I was running in front of the kids I coach. I couldn't get over the support provided by everyone."

Good thing Vollweiler, who finished 45th in the Boston Marathon, heard cheers from the bystanders.

She beat runner-up Connie Grace, 43, of Poughquod, N.Y., who finished in 3:03:28. Katherine Remillard, 27, of Ebensburg, was third in 3:15:12.

"I was keeping pace with a male runner," Vollweiler said. "I could see a female every now and then, but we got to a point and I took off."

Vollweiler's biggest concern after winning was finding some chocolate.

"I want to get to Hershey," she said. "I really want to get chocolate before I leave."

Palombaro, on the other hand, savored his first marathon victory.

"This was as good as it can get," Palombaro said. "Everything turned out how I had it planned."

Palombaro studied the course layout Saturday afternoon.

"I wanted to know what was waiting for me, so we went out and drove it," he said.

Around the 13-mile point, Palombaro picked up the lead and never relinquished it.

"I don't know who I passed, but it was around the HACC," Palombaro said. "After that I had the lead."

The only problem was Palombaro didn't know if he was officially in the lead.

"I saw runners ahead of me, but I thought they were relay runners," he said. "At least, I hoped they were relay runners. I couldn't tell who was who out there."

Indiana's Tom Lipsie, 38, finished second in 2:45:22 while Pittston's Paul Leonard, 43, was third in 2:46:12.

Yesterday's marathon, which drew more than 500 runners, was the smallest in which Palombaro has competed.

His prior marathons included Philadelphia (five) and Boston (four).

"Along the industrial area near HACC, it was different being all alone," he said. "Philly and Boston have a lot more runners and people along the course.

"Also, you can tuck behind other runners if the wind kicks up. I couldn't do that when the wind kicked up in parts of the course. I'm not used to that. But, hey, I won so there's no use complaining."

Local male category winners were Harrisburg's Guillermo Munoz (15-19), Camp Hill's Richard Fesler (20-24) and Landisburg's Mike Price (45-49).

Mechanicsburg's Julianne Rupp (15-19) was the only local female category winner.

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