

T.O. Okazaki continues to bolster his miles and achievements



Thomas (T.O.) Okazaki has been featured on this website as a Runner in the Spotlight that included many of his impressive achievements. T.O. continues to log more miles than I drive my car and that's why he is one who deserves a Special Recognition.

He is 54 (will be 55 on Feb. 2) and was one of the runners on my list of candidates to win the Male Masters of the Year award. He said he is looking forward to moving into a new age group, which could help his attempt to qualify for his third Boston Marathon. He's scheduled to run his second in April.

In 2010, he reached 100 marathons, which included the 26.2-mile distance in the ultras he ran, and reached his actual 100th marathon last year in Tulsa. Runners who are members of the Marathon Maniacs and 50 States club (which he is) are allowed to use ultras when totaling their marathons. He also became one of the veterans by running his 10th Houston Marathon, which means he has an automatic entry. He also has qualified for the 50 sub4 Marathon Club because he beat four hours in four different states for a total of 15 states. And, it should be notable that he didn't run his first marathon until 2003, so in a relatively short time, he has covered many miles.

After a knee injury a year ago hampered T.O.'s Dallas White Rock effort, he has been recovering and T.O. said he ran some of his strongest marathons in December (2011). "I'm hoping for a break-out performance this spring. Most of my finishing times this (past) fall have been in the 3:40 range."

He ran his 140th marathon (combined with ultras) in Houston on Jan. 15 and he hopes to ring up No. 150 in April.

"Despite all my injuries and setbacks, I did manage to finish off 2011 strong with 10 marathons/ultras since the end of September for a total of 22 for the year. This stretch included four doubles and running races in the states of Connecticut, Vermont, New York, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas," he said.

In 2011, he ran his first Boston and also qualified and ran the New York City Marathon for the first time. "I won an age group award at the Tyler Rose Marathon and placed in the top four at the 8 Hour Run From The Ducks Ultra in Weatherford. I also managed to complete the Marathons of Texas Challenge of running Dallas White Rock, Houston and Austin Marathon while still recovering from a knee injury. I will be attempting to complete my first 100-mile ultra run at Rocky Raccoon."

T.O. said one of his most exciting moments in 2011 was when he won a check for \$100 for winning the Male Masters title at the Joe Pool Lake Pumpkin Run 5K in October.

“That was the very first time I ever won a cash award at a road race. I also enjoyed winning another carved parrot at the Joe's Run in Fort Worth back in the spring.”