

## **Cross-country competition offers different challenge for road-race runners**

By Fiona Green



There is no question that the appeal of a road race is quite different from the appeal of a cross-country race. In the former, runners generally feel in control of their race. While the course might not be perfectly flat there is a certain familiarity with the running surface and an ability to speed up and slow down as needed.

In cross country, this is not the case. Uneven and changing terrain make cross country races as much a mental game as a physical one so instead of implementing a specific race strategy you often need to simply go with the flow.

For the young and carefree (some of those competitors are pictured), the presence of rocks, sand and grass is often of little consequence. For others, however, the race becomes a challenge, an adventure, an event requiring the triumph of mind over matter. The accomplishment of finishing, tinged with relief at not twisting an ankle, is invigorating and addictive.

If you are thinking of changing things up a little, you might consider participating in next month's Parker County cross-country style 5K on the campus of the Weatherford Christian School on Ranger Road. Set among gently rolling hills, the course is challenging but not too difficult for anyone new to cross-country running.

Saturday (Jan. 30) was the first of hopefully many monthly runs organized by running coach Bryan Ruiz. With an entry fee of only \$10, the race is a low-key, no-frills event but focuses on offering a unique race experience for all ages. Awards were given to the top three male and female runners in the open category and the top three male and female runners in the masters category. The medals were actually recycled from previous school events, which meant I won my first (and probably only) medal for women's pole vault!

Having the race on the last Saturday of the month meant that the event coincided with the city's monthly First Monday Trade Days, which are always fun. If you are looking for a new challenge, keep it in mind when planning next month's race calendar.