

From chips to a heart tale



Normally, I'm not one to look back; I am a forward-thinking person. However, it is interesting sometimes to take a trip back in time to see what was going on at road races in past years, when there weren't nearly as many options and not nearly the participation.

* For example, we're all accustomed to having two times now – chip and gun. However, it wasn't until 2002 that chip timing began making inroads into Metroplex road races. Among the first races to use chip timing were the Tracy Wills 5K in Highland Park and the Uptown Run in Dallas. Before the chip, timing companies usually used a pull-tag system, which involved having timers at the finish to push a button on a hand-held device that recorded a runner's time when crossing the finish line. The bottom of the bib was taken at the end of a chute to keep runners in the order of their finish, which supposedly would match times on a printed list. This usually was a good system as long as the timer didn't miss anyone and if runners didn't get out of order in the chutes. In a large race, this caused big problems and slow results. But then a race was truly a race because gun time was what determined winners in every age division.

* At the Cowtown Countdown 5-Mile race in 2002, there were some familiar names you can still see at races. Here are a few, including their times: Kim Dennis (now Andres), 38:40; Harold Jandreau (31:52); Frances McKissick (36:43); David Cabral (32:20); Rodney Hart (34:51); Scott McKissick (32:58); Sherry Pipkin (47:30); John Nance (35:55); Dick Hartnett (42:13); Don Wakeman (41:50); Jan Richards (51:24) and some guy named Charles Clines (42:27). The male winner was James Newsom, one of the area's best at that time. He finished in 31:58. That was the year I had my torn meniscus repaired by Dr. Tom Kleuser, a Fort Worth orthopedic surgeon who has logged more than 100 marathons. I probably didn't let it heal enough, but I was training a group to run the Dublin Marathon, and I wasn't going to miss the challenge, either. It never gave me a problem, though, and I was able to finish along with all my "students."

* One of the saddest columns written for the Fort Worth Runners Club's monthly newsletter (which no longer is published) in 2002 was by Jim (Furball) Salvatore. His story should remind runners to listen to their bodies and see a doctor when noticing health issues. The well-liked and regular road-race competitor wrote the column as he was preparing to undergo surgery for what he said was 90 percent blockage on the left back side of his heart and a couple of arteries blocked at 30 percent. A dedicated long-distance runner (he had logged 35 marathons along with many half marathons and other distances), he noticed he was beginning to experience shortness of breath during some of his races and during training. At first, he attributed to either aging or lack of training. But after having to walk almost all the way at the Sunmart 50K, he realized he might have a different problem, so he asked for a stress test. That's when he discovered the blockage. His family, he said, had a history of heart disease. He was scheduled to have surgery on April 23, 2002. As he said in the column: "Be honest with yourself and listen to your body, only you know how you feel."

His last sentence was that the doctor told him "I had good collateral arteries from running, and after recovery I will start jogging again." Sadly, that never happened as Jim passed away on April 27. I did take his advice and, after having difficulties sometimes of finishing even a one-mile jog, I was diagnosed with three blocked arteries of 70 percent. So, I had three stents inserted about nine years ago. Some say they notice an energy boost after this type of procedure, but I never noticed that. However, when I ran the next day, I didn't experience the same shortness of breath. It's good I listened to Furball and my body.