

Proving it can be done

Craig Virgin won, but Len Duboff ran it blind

By BLAINE NEWNHAM

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Craig Virgin was gliding beautifully along the Willamette, gathering momentum for his kick to the finish at Autzen Stadium.

Virgin, the Olympian from Illinois now running for Nike's Athletic West, was to win the 10,000-meter grind in Sunday's St. Patrick's Run for the Shamrock at Alton Baker Park. Virgin's time was a very fast 28:02.6.

But both the crowd and many of the other runners had their thoughts elsewhere. Somewhere out on an adjacent course, near the I-5 freeway bridge, was a man and his dog.

Len Duboff was running the 5,000 meters for the first time. Running through Pre's Trail, out Day Island Road to the freeway bridge, and then back along the Willamette on the bike path.

He finished about 33 minutes after he began. Len was 269th in a field of 300. Alexander, his eight-year-old golden retriever, was 268th.

It was appropriate that Len received the biggest round of applause of the day, both as he and Alexander headed for the finish line, and later when he was presented a special award.

Runners everywhere understand the fatigue of long distance running. Few, however, understand the uncertainty of running in total darkness.

Len Duboff is a 36-year-old law professor at Lewis & Clark College in Portland. He has been totally blind since losing his sight 12 years ago in an accident, in which he also lost his right hand.

"No problems," he said after his first race, "now Alex and I are ready for a solo."

Duboff was exhilarated after the race. He has been a two miles-every-other-day jogger for the past two months. He wasn't sure he could even run 5,000 meters.

Not the uncertainty of whether the physical handicap of being blind would keep him from finishing, but just the same anxieties any of

us might face trying to run farther than we've ever run before.

"Alex was bothered by the noise of people popping balloons at the start," said Len, "but after that he was fine.

"Well, until about the last mile or so. I think Alex is going to explore a breach of contract. He didn't have this long distance running in mind when we started."

In truth, Len did do a little dragging the last mile as Alex starting looking for a nice tree to crawl under.

Alex and Len have been together for the last seven years. The relationship is a fine one, although Len is testing it with the running.

"Alex likes the short distances, but, remember, he's 56 years old in our age," said Len. "And when it gets over two miles he wonders what's going on."

One of Duboff's law students ran next to

Shamrock

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Alex and provided verbal assurance as the race wound its way through the park.

He talked Alex off the parking lot at Autzen Stadium and on to the bridge which crosses the canoe waterway.

"The surface was fine," said Len. "I fear moguls, or any place where I'm not sure where my feet are going to land. There was one place where we were on grass for a few steps, but the rest of the way it was fine. The bike path was soft enough that it didn't bother me."

Len said he was aware that the Willamette River was to his left as he and Alex ran down the bike path on the way home.

"At one point something was

burning," he said. "It smelled like gas." Len had run past the Day Island landfill.

"But I really enjoyed it. There was only one car on the course, the air was nice, the surface was great, the surroundings were just perfect."

Len started running at the urging of his neighbor and fellow teacher, Don Large, who runs marathons.

"I was running every other day," Large said, "and then began to run with Len on my off days. We have a mile course around his house which doesn't cross any streets."

Len started jogging "because I needed some exercise."

The Shamrock event drew nearly 700 runners for the two races.

Virgin's time was very fast, 10 seconds better than he ran during an Oregon Track Club 10,000 last fall, and the second fastest time he's ever run.

For his first-place finish, Virgin won a trip to San Francisco, as did Heather Tolford, who was the first woman to finish in the 10,000 meters.

There was a drawing for a free trip for two to Dublin, Ireland. The winner was eight-year-old Douglas Stringer, a student at Ellis Parker School in Eugene.

Eugene pair wins Cruiser Class race

PELL, Wash. — Tom and Dave Mooney of Eugene teamed up to captured first place in the Cruiser Class at the nine-mile Chehalis River Canoe Race starting here this past weekend.

Ty Easton and Jan Martin of Portland combined to win the open class race in the event sponsored by the Oregon Canoe Racing Association.

OPEN CLASS — 1, Ty Easton-Jan Martin, Portland, 1:12:57. 2, Steve Admas-Kurt Renner, Portland, 1:16:48.

CRUISER CLASS — 1, Tom and Dave Mooney, Eugene, 1:17:32. 2, Joe Sarro-Terry McCabe, Eugene, 1:17:37. 3, Larry and John Mooney, Eugene, 1:22:22.

MIXED CLASS — 1, Roger Squirrel-L. Youngblood, Portland, 1:20:57. 2, Carl and Olga Joplan, Tigard, 1:27:35.

OSU women's coach resigns two positions

CORVALLIS — Mary Covington, Oregon State University women's basketball and golf coach, has resigned both positions effective June 15.

Covington has coached basketball, golf, field hockey and track at OSU at various times the past 3 1/2 years.

13 AND UNDER — 1, Matt McGuirk, 35:16.3. 2, Brandon Tabor, 35:51.7. 3, John McCaffrey, 40:12.1.

14-18 — 1, Clancey Deavery, 29:47.0. 2, Ellison, 31:19. 2, 3, Tracey, 32:35.7.

19-29 — 1, Craig Virgin, 28:02.6. 2, John Halberstadt, 29:07.1. 3, Matt Yeo, 30:25.5.

30-39 — 1, Jim Crawford, 28:26.6. 2, Mike Manley, 29:38.7. 3, Derek Frechette, 31:39.0.

40-40 — 1, Killgore, 37:25.9. 2, Buck MacGillivray, 38:18.7. 3, Elkington, 38:34.6.

50 AND OVER — 1, Mel Grooman, 39:48.8. 2, Henry Piznev, 43:10.4. 3, Don England, 43:25.0.

Women 10,000

13 AND UNDER — 1, Theresa Barrios, 36:19.4. 2, Alice Fletcher, 37:18.4. 3, Molly McGuirk, 43:01.8.

14-18 — 1, Salyer, 35:04.5. 2, Virginia Howlett, 40:50.8. 3, Rosemary Printice, 42:11.6.

19-29 — Heather Tolford, 34:09.4. 2, Debbie Richie, 35:10.2. 3, Charlene Marino, 37:58.8.

30-39 — 1, Gayle Proudfoot, 38:20.3. 3, Judy Trexel, 39:56.6. 3, Connie Manley, 40:53.8.

40-49 — 1, Marilyn Paul, 37:23.4.

1. Virgin; 2. Crawford; 3. Halberstadt; 4. Deavery; 5. Manley; Men 10,000