



Benoit (l) crushed her own AR in the half marathon; a week later Kathy Mintie (above) got close.

for the certified 15K is the 4th-fastest in U.S. history. Only the great Gasparilla run (Ric Rojas 43:12 in February) produced faster times.

Here it was front-runner Steve Floto who did the early work, speeding a 4:25 opening mile some 5 seconds ahead of the pack. Floto led through 5km, gradually falling back by 4M—or did the pack just catch up on the gradual rise?

Terry Cotton was the first of the leaders to fall off, then Gasparilla winner Ric Rojas at about 6M. Pfeffer and Stan Vernon passed 10km in 28:52, 14 seconds behind the Gasparilla split. "The key to the whole race was to push the pace," Pfeffer recalled. "It was strong the whole way."

It was no easy victory for the 2:10:29 marathoner, as Vernon refused to be broken. Finally, turning a corner at 8M, Pfeffer opened some daylight. "Stan was kinda hard to shake off," understated Pfeffer. "I had raced him in college [Pfeffer at Colorado, Vernon at Oklahoma]. I had beaten him before, so I thought I had a good chance." Some things remain the same.

No better example of change is Francie Larrieu, one of the U.S.'s best middle-distance runners now enjoying (?) a road race. Accompanied by Thom Hunt, Larrieu won the women's division handily with a sterling 51:24.

Men: 1. Pfeffer (Jamul) 43:28; 2. Vernon (AA) 43:35; 3. Cotton (Jamul) 44:01; 4. Rojas (AW) 44:43; 5. Heffner (adidas) 44:57; 6. Buhmann (AW) 45:02.

Women: 1. Larrieu (PCC) 51:24; 2. Dalrymple (WSSAC) 52:21; 3. Grottenberg (Nor) 53:25; 4. Anderson (S Az RR) 54:26.

Benoit Batters Own Record

San Diego, March 7—Joan Benoit made it 2 American Records in 2 efforts over the half-marathon distance in 1981 as she blitzed her own standard down to 1:11:16 in the San Diego Natural Light event.

The Bible of the Sport

She chopped a hefty 2:10 from the 1:13:26 she turned in over the New Orleans Natural Light route on January 18. She destroyed the field, local standout Laurie Binder coming home more than 5 minutes back at 1:16:27.

"I knew Laurie was favored in her own hometown and that she would try for my record if she could," said Benoit. "All I wanted to do was keep up with her pace. I was surprised when I moved out ahead early in the race and then maintained my pace."

Benoit roared away over the flat course on Fiesta Island in Mission Bay, a route pending certification. She was never threatened by Binder, who is currently in the midst of 140M/week buildup for the Boston Marathon.

Nonetheless, Benoit added, "I feel fortunate that I not only won the race, but also that I set a new record."

Benoit was so quick, in fact, her time bettered the AR for the shorter 20-kilometers. Ellison Goodall set the old mark of 1:11:40 in 1979.

Greg Meyer, who had also won in New Orleans, posted a 1:06:45 effort to win handily from San Diego's Tim Varley (1:07:34).

Men: 1. Meyer (NBTC) 1:06:45; 2. Varley (SD) 1:07:34; 3. Barton (unat) 1:09:13.

Women: 1. Benoit (AW) 1:11:16 AR; 2. Binder (KCBQ) 1:16:27; 3. Dierdorff (SLSTC) 1:19:18.

Mintie Close To Benoit

Pasadena, California, March 15—UCLA's Kathy Mintie sped to victory in the Avon Half-Marathon in a quick 1:11:39, the second-fastest time ever at the distance.

Mintie actually created a traffic problem as she hurried over the uncertified 13.1M course. She rushed to a sizable lead so early in the contest that she had to have a police escort all her own and another had to be brought in for the remainder of

the field.

Race organizers tried to claim this as a World Record effort, saying it came in an all-women's race, while Joan Benoit's 1:11:16 of a week ago came in a mixed race. But most of history's fastest performances by women at all road distances—including the marathon World Record and AR—came in mixed races.

Mintie finished well ahead of the crowd, Canadian Linda Staudt claiming 2nd (1:15:03).

Uncertified course: 1. Mintie (UCLA) 1:11:39; 2. Staudt (Can) 1:15:03; 3. Olinekova (unat) 1:16:40; 4. Bush (UCLA) 1:16:54.

CROSS COUNTRY TRIALS

Virgin Ready For Defense

Louisville, March 7 /by Pete Cava/—Defending World Cross Country champion Craig Virgin served notice that he's ready to defend his title with a race-to-the-finish triumph in the International Cross Country Trials.

Virgin waged a tight duel with Briton Nick Rose, a local favorite who ran this race trying to win a berth on his own country's national team.

Rose, running for the host Victory AC, took over from early leader Dan Dillon about halfway through the 12,000m course, which was wet and spongy from midweek rains. Virgin, who had been as far back as 9th at 3000m, moved right in behind Rose, with whom he has had more than one exciting harrier battle.

By the 8km mark, the two were trading the lead and as they turned for home they were neck and neck. About 400m from the chute, the race turned into a sprint.

"That was no strategy there," panted Virgin after the race. "I was just running as fast as I could." Within spitting distance of the finishline, however, he appeared to stumble slightly as raced over a low wet spot. "I hit a hole about four steps from the finish and I started to see sky," he

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