

Runner dies during Wharf To Wharf

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A 39-year-old Elk Grove man collapsed and died during Sunday's 15th annual Wharf To Wharf Race. It was the first death of a runner in the event's history.

Joseph Wonder, who was apparently not registered for the race, was pronounced dead at Dominican Hospital after collapsing near 26th Avenue in the Pleasure Point area, about 3.7 miles into the six-mile course, said race director Kirby Nicol.

Nicol said "two or three" nurses running nearby immediately stopped and began administering Wonder cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

The Wharf To Wharf medical team arrived "within seconds," and an ambulance within five, Nicol

□ *Wharf to Wharf Race coverage — Pages B1-3*

said. But rescue efforts proved futile.

Wonder's wife reportedly was at the hospital when her husband was pronounced dead.

"We're pretty upset about it," Nicol said. The race has attracted more than 65,000 runners in its 15-year history, but none has collapsed during the race. In 1984, Mahlon Lee of San Jose suffered a heart attack while running back along the course after the race. He survived, and has run the race the last two years.

More than 15,000 runners participated in Sunday's race, Nicol said. Of those, an estimated 13,200 were registered.

"Three or four" other runners suffered from dizziness or fainting during the race, said Nicol, but were treated and released by medical crews at Dominican Hospital.

Nicol stressed that registered runners are asked to list any medical problems they might have. Then, if they become ill during the race, medical personnel can refer to their race number to help with appropriate treatment.

But in Wonder's case, this might not have made any difference, Nicol said.

"By all other accounts," this was the biggest, the best, the most successful race we've had," Nicol said. "But sooner or later, those numbers are going to catch up with you."

The race was won by Jay Marden, of Fremont, in 26 minutes, 14.3 seconds. Marden, a world-class 5,000-meter runner, edged second-place finisher, Steve Bishop, of West Covina, who crossed the finish line at Wharf Road in Capitola in 26:14.7 — one stride behind Marden.

The women's division winner was Nancy Ditz, who lives in Woodside, but whose parents have a home at New Brighton Beach. She finished in 31:58. Ditz is one of the top women marathoners in the United States and is to run at the World Championships for that event in Rome next month.

Weather for Sunday's Wharf To Wharf Race was sunny and nearly perfect, if a little warm, Nicol said. The traditional overcast was absent.