

# Acosta leads wire-to-wire

After nearly falling at start, local claims her second Wharf title

By JERRIS MUNGAI  
Sentinel correspondent

CAPITOLA — She was almost knocked down at the start, but Barb Acosta of Santa Cruz turned it on and burned clear of the field to win her second Wharf To Wharf Race with a time of 32 minutes, 41 seconds.

Acosta last won the race in 1990, becoming the first — and still the only — woman from Santa Cruz to take the title. But she almost didn't make it past the starting line this time around.

"I was right at the starting line when the race started and some of the men behind me started to push me," Acosta said. "I almost fell down and let loose a blood-curdling scream. They stopped pushing after that."

Acosta immediately broke loose of the threatening mob and didn't

## ■ One person's gripe: unsafe conditions at start—Page B4

have to look back again. She led all the women from start to finish, beating second-place Christine Kennedy by 54 seconds.

"Once I broke free at the starting line, everything went pretty well," said Acosta. "I looked around and didn't see anyone around. The people watching the race kept telling me I was in first, so I didn't worry about being overtaken."

Leading for the duration also meant that Acosta could set her own pace, though she failed to set her stopwatch in the stampede at the starting line.

"I just wanted to run an even pace, around a 5:20 to a 5:25 mile,"

she said. "Since I didn't have a stopwatch, I just kept looking straight ahead trying to find the balloon mile markers to pace myself."

Many runners complained about the heat after the 6-mile race, but Acosta claimed it wasn't a factor for her.

"I trained in Hawaii before this race, so I was used to the heat," she said. "I also hydrated myself with about 20 ounces of water before the race."

That the race is local makes it special for Acosta, whose specialty is the marathon. But being a local favorite adds pressure.

"I run the race because I enjoy myself. I am always here for the people, and this win means a lot for me," said Acosta. "There has

Please see ACOSTA — B4



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

A happy Barb Acosta wins the women's race, then is directed to the finish area by official Andre Dunkell.

# Acosta

Continued from Page B1

been a lot of pressure over the years. A lot of people want me to do well. Last night my phone did not stop ringing and I'm sure it won't stop ringing tonight."

After the race, the well-wishers came in droves, eager to congratulate the champion.

Kennedy, who hails from Cupertino but is a native of Ireland, regularly trains with Acosta and says her presence provided some incentive to perform well.

"Having her in the race pushed me a lot," said Kennedy. "With a good friend like (Barb) racing against you, it brings out your best."

Kennedy finished the race with a time of 33:35 and says that she wasn't even thinking about running in the Wharf To Wharf until Acosta talked her into participating.

"I really didn't give it much thought until Barb convinced me that the competition would do me some good," she said.

Improving greatly from last year was third-place finisher Sue Jones, who crossed the line with a time of 35:07. Last year, she finished 18th

'Once I broke free at the starting line, everything went pretty well.'

— Barb Acosta

and ran 50 seconds slower.

"I felt pretty good about my race. It was a fast course," said Jones. "It's so much fun here. Running this race is always a blast."

Jones, a student at UC Davis, had quite an adventure even before the race started.

"I was visiting friends in San Jose and we made it here at the very last minute," said Jones. "Then I had to go to the bathroom and the line was about 50 miles long and I'm going 'Gee, it's 8:25 and the race will be over before I even get out of here.'"

Must have been all the hydrating.