

# Money isn't everything

It's the race, not the bucks, that attract the runners

By ED VYEDA,  
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SANTA CRUZ — Having two Olympians as Wharf To Wharf Race champions is a bonus prize money can't buy.

"There's no question it gives the race some added prestige, nationally and internationally," said Executive Director Kirby Nicol, after U.S. Olympic steeplechase racer Brian Abshire and U.S. Olympic 10,000-meter runner Lynn Nelson came away winners Sunday in the 17th Wharf To Wharf.

The philosophy of the race is not to offer prize money, "And when Olympic athletes come here with no payday, it's pretty flattering," Nicol said.

It's also great publicity.

"Elite runners look at the results in all the magazines," Nicol noted, "and they see the names (of Abshire and Nelson) in our race, and wonder what are they doing in the Wharf To Wharf, when they could be making \$2,000 running in Iowa the same weekend?"

Although Nelson won the race in 1985 before becoming an Olympian, this year was Abshire's first appearance at the Wharf To Wharf.

"I will come back," Abshire said. "There is no big money, but it doesn't matter. This is a good race."

You can imagine how the commercials might go:

"Hey, U.S. Olympians Brian Abshire and Lynn Nelson, where are you going the fourth Sunday in July?"

(In unison) We're going to the Wharf To Wharf Race!

Nicol's definition of a perfectly run event means that during the race, he's not paged on his portable telephone to solve a crisis. About an hour after the lead runners had finished, Nicol had received only two calls — one to make sure some two trucks moved, and the

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other just to report the 2-mile area was closing down on time.

In other words, there were no problems, and no reports of injuries or serious health problems in the race. In fact, the medical team at the first-aid station in Capitola Village was almost bored with inactivity.

April Powers, one of the women's favorites, was the first registered woman finisher — only because she hitched a ride with the KLRS radio bus.

Pains in her left foot had given Powers problems the past few days, but she wasn't sure if they were strong enough to keep her from racing. After a morning warmup, they were.

"It was a real hard decision," said Powers, who lives in Kentfield and was runner-up to Nancy Ditz last year. "In such a competitive race, if there's any doubt in your head, you'd better think of your health. It was real hard to sit there and watch — a big bummer."

Powers finished in 32:07 last year — which would have been good for second again this year.

Men's runner-up Alan Dehlenger, with his best finish in four tries at the WTW, said he was tuned into the rock 'n' roll bands that played along the course, surging when he'd go by them.

"Everytime we'd hit some wild music, I just took off," he said later. "Going up those hills, it helped me quite a bit. I just thought, 'Wild music, all right!' Then, all of a sudden the music is gone and it was sort of a like a letdown."

The rainbows of balloons arched over the street at each mile mark were an attractive addition to the course — except at the starting



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Surely, the two kids in the cart had to be the youngest participants in the race.

line. The balloon company set up the arch at the corner of Beach and Main streets Saturday night, but by Sunday morning it was gone — either ripped down or ripped off.

Two "bandits" that no one gave any trouble to were Francis Farley and Rick Noble. Farley, who has a mean kick on the 10K circuit, is better known for his kicks in the ring as the North American professional kickboxing title holder. Noble, his trainer, recommends road races as part of training routine. Neither were breaking a sweat after the run. Guess they decided not to fight their way through the crowd.

# Myers-Acosta, Aispuro top local finishers

By ED VYEDA  
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CAPITOLA — Solid performances by Barb Myers-Acosta and Jose Aispuro, finishing fifth and seventh overall in the women's and men's divisions, earned top honors as first runners from Santa Cruz County to cross the tape Sunday in the 17th annual Wharf To Wharf Race.

Myers-Acosta, a 31-year-old scientist from Santa Cruz, had a personal-best Wharf To Wharf time of 33 minutes, 27 seconds. Aispuro, of Aptos, ran 29:09 to be the top local male finisher for the second straight year.

Aispuro, 27, a former Cabrillo College standout distance runner,

'I felt fantastic at the end of the race.'

7-24-89

— Barb Myers-Acosta

nearly picked off sixth-place finisher Joe Rubio of San Luis Obispo at the finish line.

Being the first local meant a lot to Aispuro, who was 12th overall last year. "I feel very honored," said Aispuro, whose training has been aimed at challenging the national-caliber runners who run the 6-mile race from Santa Cruz to Capitola.

Aispuro, who runs for the Aggies running club, was the pre-race favorite to be the leading local, plus being a threat to the top 10, and

lived up to the billing.

"I'm very happy. It was a very good race," Aispuro said. "I got a good start. There were no problems."

Myers-Acosta, who lives on the West Side, has been pulling 65-hour work weeks at her job in Palo Alto and simply wasn't sure how to run the race. Since she hasn't had a regular training schedule recently, her pace varied and caused her to lose some ground on the leaders.

"I felt fantastic at the end of the

race," said Myers-Acosta, who notched her third top-10 finish in the race in the past four years. "I went ripping out from the start, and Lynn (Nelson, the eventual winner) was right behind me. Maybe I held back too much because I was feeling fine in the last few miles. I saw the finish line and kind of went 'Rats! It's ending.'"

The second local in the men's overall was Gilbert Munoz of Watsonville, 43rd overall in 30:32, followed in 44th place by Brandon Smith of Scotts Valley in 30:38.

Eileen Bickard-Brown of Santa Cruz was the second local, with a strong 14th place overall in 35:33. Kelly Ilnicki, a former Harbor High running standout, was the third local, taking 52nd overall in 39:31.

## In the pack

Lynn Nelson and Brian Abshire: Olympians, elite runners with focused goals, and now the new women's and men's course record-holders for the Wharf to Wharf race. Their names command publicity, and rightly so. But what about the 12,000 runners who followed them through the finish line in Sunday's Wharf To Wharf? Who are they? Where do they come from and how old are they? And what about their vocations?

If the answers from the following pre-race interviews near the starting line are an indication, what we saw moving toward Capitola was a small rolling city representing every imaginable aspect of human life.

We asked two simple questions: How many times have you run the Wharf to Wharf? What is special about this race that brings you out early on a Sunday morning to run it, often from out of town?

### Vicki Gunness

Ultrasound technician, 38, Lodi

"This is my first. I ran the Bay to Breakers and people were talking about the Wharf to Wharf and how much fun it is, and the great setting."

### Gary Gunness

Commercial and industrial sales rep, 37, Lodi

"It's my first, also. More than anything else, it's how well it's put together. It's almost a perfect event on a beautiful course. But if you see my name in the obituaries Monday morning, you'll be sorry you put this in!"

### Rocky Linebarger

Sales manager, 46, Santa Cruz

"I've never run this race before. I have lots of friends in the area who talked me into it. I plan to win. Actually, my goal is to finish upright."

### Dr. Paul E. Spangler

Retired surgeon, 90, San Luis Obispo

"I've run it every time. At least they say I have. My memory is not too good. I love it. It's a good race. They do a good job. They treat me as an elite runner. I'm a fixture with this race. I'll run it till I die. I'm committed."

### Susan Wiesenfeld

Court reporter, 44, Santa Cruz

"I've run it every year for practically the last 10 years — probably eight times."

### Marla Reyes (Susan Wiesenfeld's cousin)

Junior high school teacher, 45, Visalia

"It's become a tradition for us. Susan's what draws me. We have a huge family. If it was Thanksgiving everyone would be here. All along the race we discuss things. By the time we reach the end we've covered our lives. At the first corner it's the kids. By the second corner it's the men in our lives and how we are going to shape them up. At the third corner it's our careers and jobs, and by the fourth corner it's all the things in life that are important to the truly post-modern woman. At the end we go out for breakfast, then vow to be in better shape next year. The race is just a vehicle." And Susan adds, "We hope this race continues because we intend to keep running it into the distant future."

— Compiled by Benjamin Sawyer



Vicki Gunness



Gary Gunness



Rocky Linebarger



Dr. Paul Spangler



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Marla Reyes