

10th Wharf To Wharf Race To Be Wide Open

By ED VYEDA

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The Wharf To Wharf Race, Santa Cruz' annual mid-summer mass dash from Beach St. to Capitola Village, is guaranteed for its 10th anniversary of being more wide open. As wide as a two-lane street, anyway.

"We could see even faster times," says Wharf To Wharf director Mark McConnell of Soquel, in pointing out the major improvement of the event: streets along the 5.816-mile course will be, for the first time, completely closed off to traffic.

"Runners won't have to worry about staying on one side of the road," McConnell said. "They can take the shortest line between two points. It will have no real effect at the start of the race, but, out on East Cliff Drive, it will have a big effect."

The Wharf To Wharf committee, which expects about 3,500 runners to line up for

Sunday's 8:30 a.m. start, has lobbied for closed streets virtually since the first race in 1973. But, not until this year have local law enforcement agencies decided it would be most beneficial — to both the race and traffic control — to allow the race to be run on both sides of the street.

"It was getting to the point where the law enforcement people were telling us we would have to limit ourselves," McConnell said, "because of traffic problems. But, now, they are changing their tune and it's real nice for us. It makes things run a lot smoother."

McConnell said it is uncertain whether defending champion Duncan Macdonald, the San Jose physician and former U.S. Olympian, will be back to defend his course record time of 26:23. "I haven't received applications from any of the big names who usually run," said McConnell. "But, they usually don't enter until the morning of the race."

Registrations will begin at 7 a.m. in the parking lot of Penroy's, a couple blocks up from the Municipal Wharf. Entry fee is \$4 for all men's and women's divisions, including a new men's 50-over category. Upon completion of the race, there will be limited free shuttle bus service from Capitola back to the registration area.

McConnell, who figures it costs about \$14,000 to put the race, says the committee has expanded its staff to coincide with the widening of the course. "With what we've done, there is no way we could do it with just the volunteers," he said. So, there have been a dozen police officers hired, along with a group called the Explorer Scouts, which marshals events like the annual Bing Crosby Pro-Am Golf Tournament.

As of Wednesday, there were 1,500 entries already mailed in and, according to past records, that translates into roughly half of the field that will run the race. And

the last few days are sometimes the heaviest for mail entries. "We've been really fortunate that way," says McConnell of the yearly increase in participants. "We've gone up every year. This one should be bigger than ever, which, it being the 10th annual, makes us real happy about that."

Last year, the Wharf To Wharf Race, a benefit for the Soquel High, Cabrillo College other area track and field programs, drew a record 3,300 runners.

THE COURSE: From Beach St., the race turns left at Riverside, then right at East Cliff, running up toward the tressle. The course merges onto Murray St., before turning right at Lake St. at the yacht harbor (about two miles into the race). Making another left at the beach, the course returns to East Cliff, staying there with a right turn at the Cheese Factory, where the course stays along the cliffs. At Opal Cliffs Drive, there is a veer to the right and push through the neighborhood, which takes runners to Cliff Drive and the downhill stretch run to Capitola Village. There is one final right turn at the base of the hill, across the Soquel Creek bridge, to the finish line along the esplanade.