

Sports

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Monday, June 11, 1984
Santa Cruz

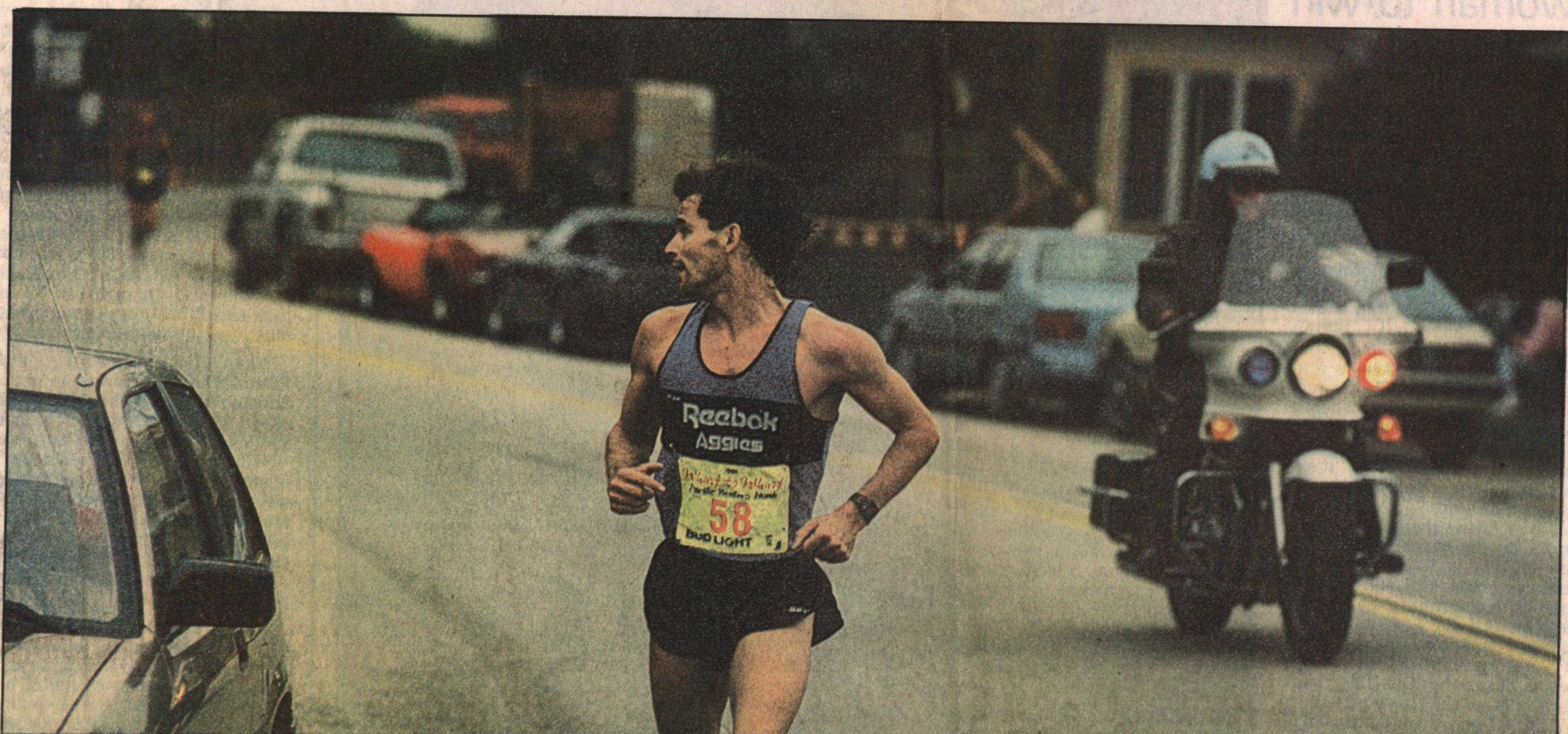
Wharf To Wharf

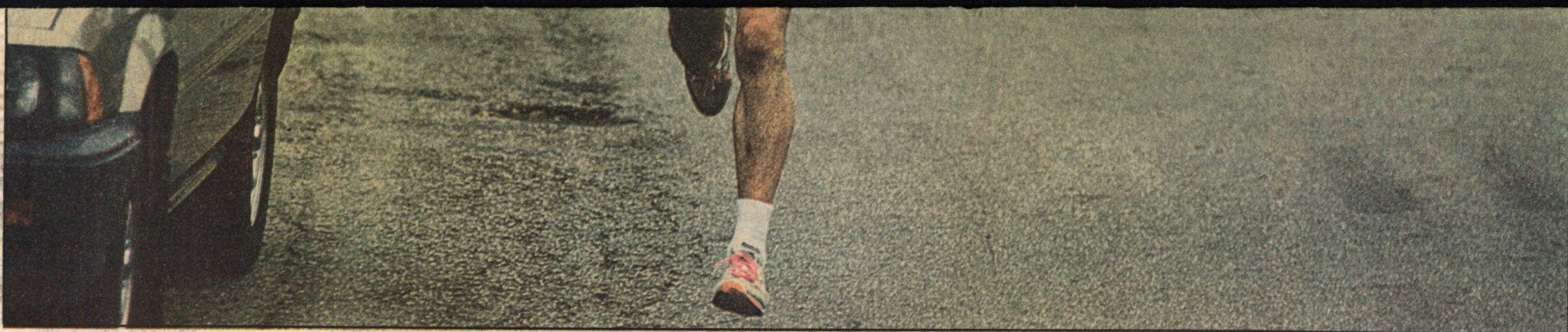
Wharf - To - Wharf

And then
there was
only one



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel
It was pretty crowded as the pack of runners made its way along Laurel Street Extension near the San Lorenzo River ...





Dan Coyro/Sentinel

... But a few miles later, there was no one near eventual winner Carmello Rios of Hayward, who won the race in 29 minutes, 48 seconds.

Rios' luck all good this time

By KEVIN WOODWARD
Sentinel staff writer

CAPITOLA — Carmello Rios was taking no chances Sunday at the 18th annual Wharf To Wharf Race — with his shoes, that is. When he went to sleep the night before he was sure to put his racing flats next to his bed at the Dream Inn and in the morning he tied them around his neck.

"I said to myself, 'These guys aren't going anywhere,'" said the 29-year-old former Olympian from Hayward.

It was a minor victory for Rios that he didn't lose his shoes this year prior to the Wharf To Wharf, which he has managed to do three times in the past. Thus

- *A first for Santa Cruz area women — Page B2*
- *Sunday belonged to Barb Myers-Acosta — Page B2*
- *Race has come a long way in 17 years — Page B2*

inspired — and equipped — Rios followed that with a major victory in the 10-kilometer race itself, sprinting away from the field of 12,000 to win in 29 minutes, 48 seconds.

Dave Frank, 26, of Los Altos was second in 29:59, while 1989 runner-up Alan Dehlinger, 27, of Reno, Nev., was third in 30:07.

Barb Meyers-Acosta, 32, became the first Santa Cruz women's winner in the history of the race, finishing in 35:18. Eileen

Brown, 31, of Santa Cruz, was close behind in 35:35 to make it a 1-2 local finish, while Jani Johnson, 34, of Atascadero, was third in 35:51.

Because this is the first time the race has been contested over the 10K distance, both the men's and women's winning times are course records.

The victory for Rios, a veteran Wharf To Wharf runner, was especially sweet considering his bad luck at the race in the past.

In 1983, he arrived in Santa Cruz at 2 a.m. and slept on the beach, awaking to find his shoes gone in the morning. In 1985, he left his shoes in his car and in 1987, "I just forgot to bring them with me," Rios said.

The native of Puerto Rico didn't forget anything Sunday, much to the chagrin of the rest of the elite men's field, which included more than two dozen runners capable of posting sub-30-minute 10K times.

"Damn you, Rios!" needled Reebok Aggies teammate Frank in the chute moments after the two crossed the finish line into Capitola Village.

Please see RIOS — B2

At the finish

The top ten men's and women's finishers from Sunday's Wharf to Wharf race:

Men	
1. Carmelo Rios	29:48
2. Dave Frank	29:59
3. Alan Dehlinger	30:07
4. Daniel Gonzales	30:15
5. David Welsh	30:29
6. Victor Santamaria	30:30
7. Peter Woods	30:30
8. John Barrett	30:31
9. Darin Slade	30:32
10. Robert Thwala	30:35

Women	
1. Barb Myers-Acosta	35:18
2. Eileen Bickard Brown	35:35
3. Jani Johnson	35:51
4. April Powers	36:06
5. Becki Kriege	36:42
6. Peggy Smyth	36:57
7. Tracy Leichter	37:12
8. Janine Jarris	37:22
9. Lura Damiano	37:27
10. Leslie McMullin	37:45

Wharf To Wharf

Santa Cruzans 1-2 in women's race

By LAWRENCE SALISBURY
Sentinel correspondent

CAPITOLA — A local one-two punch garnered top honors in the women's field of the 18th Wharf To Wharf Race on Sunday. It was the first time in the competition's history two Santa Cruz women have finished first and second.

Barb Myers-Acosta of Santa Cruz was the first area woman to ever win the race, finishing in 35 minutes, 19 seconds — 17 seconds ahead of second-place finisher Eileen Bickard Brown of Santa Cruz. The training partners, who are running club teammates and are coached by Gary Goettelmann of Aptos, also became the first local

runners, men or women, to finish one-two overall.

"I felt great going in. I thought I'd do pretty well, but you never know until the race," Myers-Acosta said. "Once I started I knew I would do well."

The start of the race was crowded, but after some pushing, Brown emerged as the early leader. Race officials were worried that the course, which was changed because of the Riverside Avenue Bridge construction, would create a troublesome bottleneck for the women's leaders in the first mile. But no problems developed.

"There was a little pushing at the start like there always is, but

other than that it was a really smooth start," Myers-Acosta said.

Brown led for the first two miles after the strong start, before she was overtaken in the third mile by eventual third-place finisher Jani Johnson and Myers-Acosta, who moved into second.

"I came out first with the lead women," Brown said. "It was fun being out in front. I knew there were some good women behind me so I decided I would just run as hard as I could until they caught me," Brown said. "I really surprised myself that I held on that long."

"I knew in mile two that we

could finish one-two, we were just both running so well."

Johnson, whose final time was 35:51, dropped back to third in the fourth mile.

"This is usually a vacation time for me, a slow time of year," Johnson said. "I really didn't know what to expect so I just tried to hold my own."

At the start of the fourth mile, Myers-Acosta took the lead for good. She passed the four-mile mark two seconds ahead of Brown, and never slowed down.

"I looked up and there was Barb running past me," Brown said. "I hoped it was just a surge. But then she took off again and I knew I

didn't have it to go with her. I just yelled 'Go, Barb.' I was really happy for her."

Myers-Acosta led by 15 seconds at the five-mile mark.

"I looked back a few times, but I didn't see anyone after the fifth mile," Myers-Acosta said. "I knew I had it if I could just hold on."

Her time was an official course record because this is the first year the race was run on the new course.

Flanked by a red flag, which a race official carried behind Myers-Acosta for the last block of the race to mark the first women finisher, she crossed the finish line to the loudest cheers of the day from

the crowd gathered in Capitola.

While Myers-Acosta felt strong going into the race, Brown wasn't sure if she would be able to run because of a sore calf muscle.

"I only just decided last night to run for sure," she said. "I didn't know if my legs were up to it."

That's because Brown just qualified for the 1992 U.S. Olympic marathon trials at the Grandma's Marathon on June 24 in Minnesota, where she placed ninth in 2:43.21.

"This is a big local race and I wanted to be in it," Brown said. "I felt great at Grandma's, so I decided to give this a shot. It's always a better feeling to win. Next year maybe Barb will be behind me."

Myers-Acosta leaves her mark

First Santa Cruz woman to win

IT'S BEEN a custom of Barb Myers-Acosta to dedicate each of her road races to someone special, and buy them a T-shirt to commemorate the occasion. Sunday, though, she wasn't sure what size to get, or how many to get, since she was dedicating her effort in the 18th annual Wharf To Wharf Race to all the people in Santa Cruz who have been rooting so hard and so long for her to win her hometown race.

Once she broke the tape in Capitola, though, Sunday belonged only to Myers-Acosta.



Ed Vyeda

"This was for everybody here," she said of her triumph, which

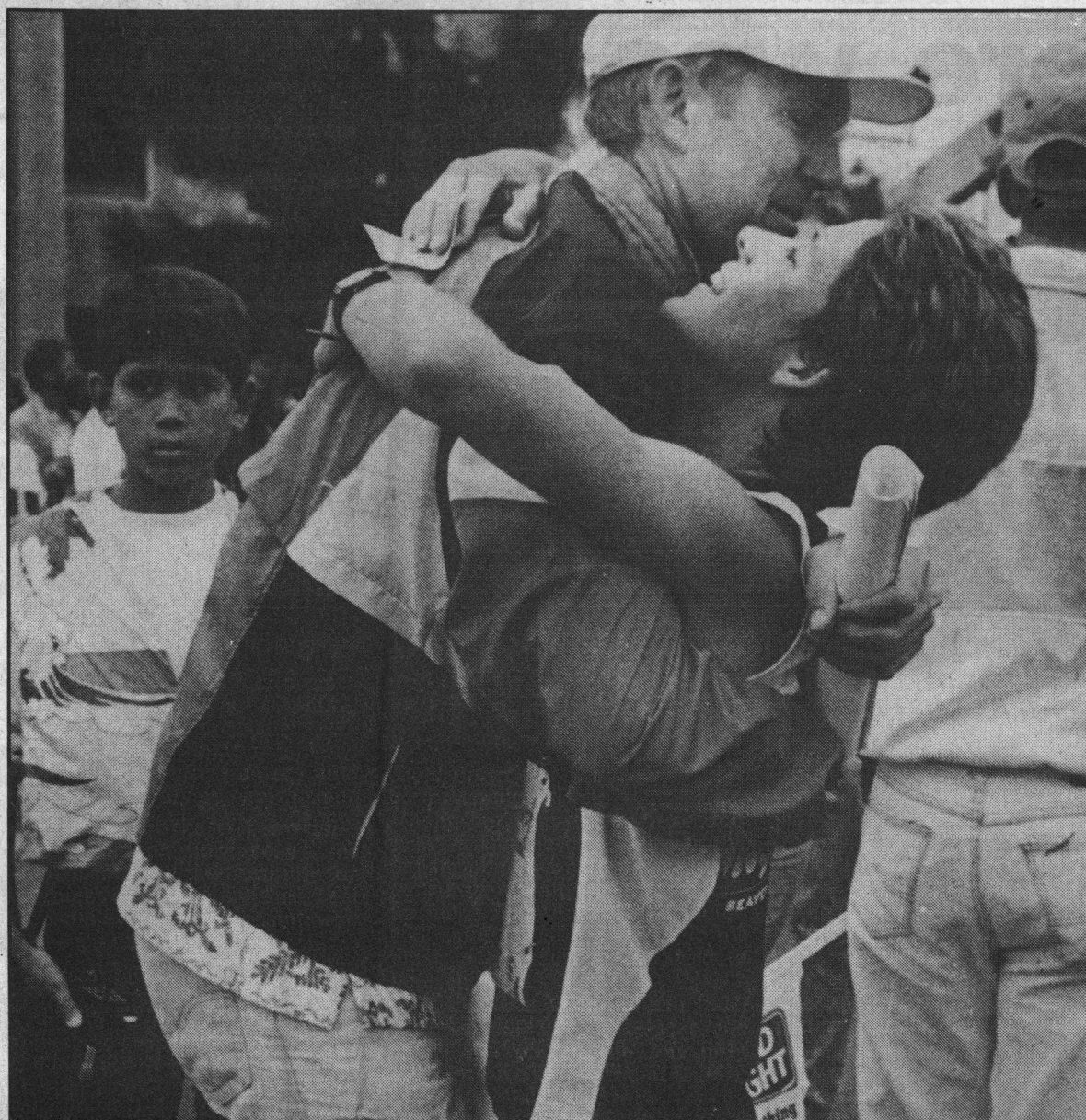
people at home would ask him was *How'd you do in the Wharf To Wharf?*

"It's a relief," Gruber said Sunday, knowing what Myers-Acosta has been going through as the local favorite. "It's like protecting your turf. The race (committee, to which Gruber now is an advisor) try so hard to get top people to run here, sometimes they overlook the locals. But the locals are important. People like to know a local guy, or local gal, can do it." And people have been asking Gary Goettelmann of Aptos, who coaches both Myers-Acosta and Brown on the Ryan's Sports racing team of Santa Clara, when a local woman was going to win.

"I always hear people say that," Goettelmann said Sunday. "It's a local pride thing. There was a lot pressure on Barb."

It was fitting that Myers-Acosta, 32, be the woman to write a new chapter in Wharf To Wharf history, since she started her competitive running career in 1982 on the old 5.813-mile road course from Santa Cruz to Capitola — a career that since has taken her as far as the 1988 U.S. Olympic Trials, in the 10,000 meters.

And it was also fitting that Myers-Acosta and Brown make



Rios

Continued from Page B1

"I'm the king of Santa Cruz for a year," said Rios, who returned to the U.S. only nine days ago after spending his early summer running much-shorter track events on the European circuit.

The speedwork paid off for Rios when he made his decisive move midway through the race as the lead pack of nearly a dozen runners was working its way up the hill by Twin Lakes Beach. Taking one glance at his watch at the 5K mark and seeing 14:51, Rios decided to make something happen.

"It felt easy at 3 miles and I said, 'These guys aren't going anywhere, I think I'll push it for a mile,'" said Rios, who represented Puerto Rico in the 3,000-meter steeplechase at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. "I ran it in 4:31 and that shook the pace up. I pretty much just hung on from there."

When Rios began his surge, Frank, who just showed up to run Sunday, said he exchanged a quick questioning glance with Dehlenger and Victor Santamaria of San Jose.

"The three of us looked at each other and said, 'Who's going to do it?'" said Frank, a Stanford graduate who shares a house with a group of elite runners that includes former U.S. Olympian Jeff Atkinson. "I went after him and I couldn't catch him."

Not on this day.

"He just kept going," said Frank. "He sensed that everybody was in trouble and a voice inside of him told him, 'Go now!'"

Rios listened — and responded.

made her the first Santa Cruz woman in history to win the Wharf To Wharf.

She may have followed in the footsteps — figuratively, if not literally — of local men's winners Mark McConnell (1974), Dan Gruber (1982) and Armando Siqueiros (1984). But Myers-Acosta cut her own special path in becoming only the fourth local runner ever to be crowned an overall winner, as she combined with friend and running-club teammate Eileen Brown of Santa Cruz as the first locals ever to pull off a one-two overall finish, men's or women's.

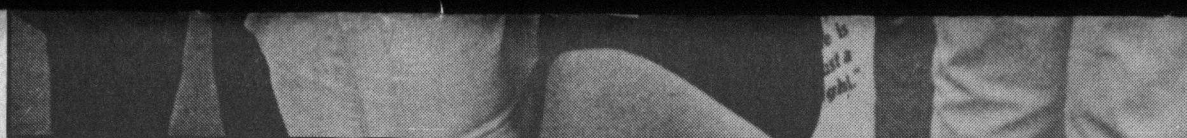
It's been an almost haunting goal of Myers-Acosta to win the Wharf To Wharf, partly because she knew how much so many people in the area expected of her. She's been a champion of numerous races, and a national-caliber competitor. But she hadn't won at home — something Gruber could relate to. He'd been a collegiate champion, road-race winner countless times and competed internationally. But the only thing

history, because until they burst onto the running scene in the mid-80s, no local woman ever had a chance to win the Wharf To Wharf. In 1985, Brown was fourth, officially, which was the highest local finish until Sunday.

Myers-Acosta, after moving to Santa Cruz in 1980, gradually broke into running and by 1986 was eighth in the Wharf To Wharf, then took moved up as the top local woman contender by finishing fifth in both 1987 and 1989. Each year, she's been running with the more and more of the extra load of being the local favorite.

Realistically, the Wharf To Wharf, as popular as it is locally, doesn't measure up in the wider spectrum of Myers-Acosta's accomplishments as a competitor, particularly her running in the 1988 Trials. But the Wharf To Wharf is the No. 1 way people around town always measure her — just as they measured Gruber before.

Although Myers-Acosta knew she could do it, she must have



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Barb Myers-Acosta receives a victory hug after winning in 35 minutes, 18 seconds.

been wondering when it would be her turn to win the Wharf To Wharf. She knew, too, she'd had no more luck at the Wharf To Wharf than, as she put it, Ivan Lendl has had trying to win at Wimbledon.

"I just kept thinking about poor Lendl, who can't win on turf," Myers-Acosta said after Sunday's race. "And I couldn't win on my home turf."

If Santa Cruz wasn't already her turf, it is now, after her time of 35 minutes, 19 seconds, was good for first place, with Brown the runner-up in 35:36.

Ironically, nobody was pulling harder for Myers-Acosta than Brown. The two train together as friends and teammates for Ryan's Sports, coached by Goettelmann

of Aptos. Sunday, it was Brown, one of the up-and-coming U.S. marathoners, who took the early lead and held her position until about the 4-mile mark.

"When Barb passed me, I was happy it was her who went by," said Brown, 31, who was also expecting Jani Johnson of Atascadero to be pushing for the front.

"Go, Barb!" Brown said. Myers-Acosta went, Brown kept pushing and Johnson never showed until the end, finishing third.

"She deserves it," Brown said of Myers-Acosta's victory. "She's had years of good running, and a lot of disappointments."

Nothing was more disappointing for Myers-Acosta than getting to the 1988 Trials and having to compete on severely sprained an-

kle. But with the same determination she's shown through the years at the Wharf To Wharf, she finished her heat in the 10,000 when most runners wouldn't have bothered to run through the pain. Then a week later, still favoring the ankle, she was the first local finisher in the Wharf To Wharf, 54th overall.

All things considered, this probably wasn't the year to expect Myers-Acosta to win the Wharf To Wharf, Goettelmann said. She didn't line up in front of the Coconut Grove on Sunday in her best condition, he noted, physically or mentally.

"I told Barb to run with her heart, not her head," Goettelmann said.

And Sunday, her heart showed.

"I took off too early," said Rios, whose longest race of the summer has been a 5K on the track. "It hurt. I was scared at the end and just hanging on."

By the 4-mile mark, Rios has opened up a sizable 10-second lead on Frank and was running smooth as he continued to pull away. Running alone, Rios had a 17-second lead after 5 miles and switched in to cruise control.

Rios looked over his shoulder for the first time at the hill above Capitola, looked again just to make sure, then pumped his fist to acknowledge the cheers of the crowd lining the finish.

"LA was nice, but it was an extravaganza," said Rios. "I like this race, it's special, and I really wanted to win it bad. Today I was positive. All I wanted to do was run hard and push it."

Dehlenger, who is in the midst of marathon training and running up to 120 miles a week, said he was not disappointed in his effort.

"I was pleased to finish third," he said. "I beat about 12,000 people, didn't I?"

Race has come a long way since first one 17 years ago

By KEVIN WOODWARD
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Official race starter Ken Thomas was staring at the teeming masses milling about just minutes before the start of Sunday's 18th annual Wharf To Wharf Race and couldn't help but look back.

"I still remember the first one 17 years ago," said Thomas. "I was standing on a balcony down the street and there were only a little more than 100 runners."

Sunday, perched high above the crowd on a crane, Thomas gazed out over a sea of an estimated overall field of 15,000. There were 12,000 officially registered runners, the limit set on the race, with the rest Thomas' estimation on unregistered participants.

"In that first race, I just raised my finger and yelled, 'Bang!'" said Thomas, who used a starter's pistol this year. "Then I got in my car and drove to the finish line to help out at the end."

Thomas can't do that anymore, it's tough getting to Capitola in time to see the finish. Street closures for the race combined with summer weekend traffic conditions clogged things up a bit Sunday.

He does think the race can handle a limit of 15,000. "I think there were 1,000 or 1,500 (runners) who tried to register by June 24 (when the race sold out), but couldn't. So they decided to run anyway," Thomas said. "I think if we went to

Notebook

15,000, we wouldn't get that many more."

While the local running community made a big splash in the women's race, there was also a good showing in the men's race, where Jose Aispuro of Aptos was the top local finisher for the second straight year.

"I ran good," said Aispuro, who was 19th overall in 31:23.

The next locals to finish were Gilbert Munoz of Watsonville, 35th in 32:03; Ian Blair of Soquel, 62nd in 32:51; Tony Munoz of Watsonville, 71st in 33:04; and Rafael Ojeda of Santa Cruz, 91st in 33:28.

Crowded traffic conditions may have prevented some runners from making it to the race on time, and the earthquake-damaged Riverside Avenue Bridge may have had more of an effect on the race than a simple course change.

With one hour to go before the scheduled 8:30 a.m. start, cars were lined up bumper-to-bumper for at least a half a mile up Highway 17 from Ocean Street. Due to the early hour and foggy conditions, it was obvious that it wasn't the usual beach traffic.

The crawl reached a snail's pace by the time the cars reached Beach Street — with not a parking place in sight. And the race, which tradi-

tionally starts on time, was begun at 8:26 a.m., as runners hurrying to the starting line were caught four minutes short.

"It could have been my imagination, but there didn't seem to be as many people as usual at the start," said Wharf To Wharf committee member and 1974 winner Mark McConnell.

There may not have been anything imaginary about it.

Although no official numbers are kept, all along the course there were fewer spectators watching Sunday than in recent years.

With one exception, the race medical team didn't get much work Sunday morning.

An older male runner was taken to Dominican Hospital by ambulance when he fainted after crossing the finish line. The man, whose name and age was unknown, was listed in critical condition in the hospital's coronary care unit.

Only one death has been reported in the history of the race. In 1987, 39-year-old Joseph Wonder of Elk Grove collapsed and died 3.7 miles into the race in the Pleasure Point area. In 1984, Mahlon Lee of San Jose suffered a heart attack, but survived to run the race again in 1986 and 1987.

There were no other major injuries to report.

"We passed out a lot of ice and band aids, but that's about it," said medical team chief Mark Frank of



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Amid the neon Lycra outfits, these three runners made their own fashion statements in garbage-bag warmups.

the La Selva Beach Fire Department.

Running medics posted near the bottleneck on the Laurel Street Extension reported no problems during the race, he said. The narrow, downhill portion of Laurel — part of the detour on this year's new course (with the Riverside Bridge under repair) — didn't create the problem in the pack that was expected.

Dave Frank, who placed second overall, also earned last-to-register honors. He called race registration official Mark McConnell a few weeks ago to say he was going to run, but didn't follow up to confirm his entry. McConnell was going to seed Frank into the elite field. But until Frank walked up Sunday morning, McConnell wasn't expecting to see him.

"He said, 'Do you remember

talking to me?'" McConnell said after the race. "I remembered. But I didn't know if he remembered about the race."

Now Frank can be remembered as the 1990 runner-up.

The race officials' lead truck didn't catch 91-year-old Dr. Paul Spangler until he'd reached the East Cliff Village on Portola Avenue. It was the farthest he's run — he gets a half-hour head start — before being passed by the leaders. Spangler, by the way, has been passed in every Wharf to Wharf Race, because he has run in every race. And he's been the oldest runner every time.

The top three men and women finishers spent over 30 minutes taking a post-race drug test. They spent so much time that Acosta was late for the awards ceremony.

She had to run a record 1K just to get there from the drug test.

Winner Carmello Rios and second place finisher Dave Frank worked up quite a thirst running the race. At least they waited until after the drug test to toast their victories with a cold beer.

"The big guy (giving the drug test) said I can have a beer now," Frank said.

Acosta and Brown not only win together, they train together. They both run for Ryan's Sporting Goods of Santa Clara. They train together daily and on Sunday mornings in both Santa Cruz and Los Gatos.

According to their coach, Gary Goettelmann, they don't aim to finish any particular place. "They just run to win," Goettelmann said.