

THE HOWLING K

by Stacy Sheridan, co-RD

When we opened registration for the Rockin K last fall, we already had a few entries from some resourceful runners who had copied the 2008 entry form and sent it in for 2009. They must have known something we didn't realize at the time, that the entries would soon start whirling in like the Kansas wind. By the first of January when I sent out the entry form, we already had fifteen entries, by the end of January the race was over half full. The first two weeks of February brought another whirlwind of entries and Phil and I knew we would have to close registration before the race. On February 16, we closed registration at 118 knowing there would be some who couldn't make it to the race and we felt there was a good chance we could start 100 runners on race morning. With a few replacements here and there, my start list had 112 names, and as Phil was giving the pre-race briefing, all 112 had checked in, a first for us in almost twenty years of race directing.

Kansas weather is unpredictable especially in the spring and fall. It can snow and blow one day and be 80 degrees the next. One week before the race almost a foot of heavy, wet snow blanketed us, but the forecast for the rest of the week was mainly clear and warm. Just a couple of days later the forecast changed again and the weather service was calling for rain and snow on Thursday, and we collected four more inches. Saturday was supposed to be cloudy with a chance of rain, and breezy. If you are from Kansas you know the weather service has code words in their forecasts: "breezy" is 20 to 30 miles per hour winds, "gusty" means breezy plus some bursts of wind, and "windy" means gale force



Sunrise runners.

PHOTO BY GARY HENRY

winds that will take down tents, clocks, pop-up shelters and a couple of runners. The Rockin K was "windy" this year.

Many first-time runners make the assumption that this is a flat and fast course - this is Kansas after all - and if you fly into Wichita the terrain would confirm your assumption. However, this event is in the beautiful Smoky Hills area of Kansas, with sandstone, "mushroom rocks" - spheres of Dakota limestone on top of pillars of softer sandstone, canyons, water crossings, beaver dams and a stunning view of the Smoky Hill River feeding into a lake from the Big Bluff Loop. While some of the course is on

prairie trails even these aren't flat, graceful rolling hills of grass, looping from cattle gate to cattle gate.

Thomas McKenna, from Lawrence, Kansas, was our 50-mile course record holder and overall winner the last two years. He returned this year to lead the 50-mile field throughout the race. His winning time was 8:34:02 with Rick Mayo taking second place with a 9:19:21 finish, followed by Paul Schoenlaub in 9:45:57. Theresa Wheeler from Wichita was the overall women's winner with a time of 12:11:25. ■



Big Bluff loop mud babes Debbie Webster, Coleen Voek and Deb Johnson, all from Kansas City

PHOTO BY GARY HENRY

ROCKIN' K TRAIL RUN 50 MILES | MARQUETTE, KANSAS APRIL 4 | TRAILS

1. Thomas McKenna, 29	8:34:02
2. Rick Mayo, 33, MO	9:19:21
3. Paul Schoenlaub, 49, MO	9:45:57
4. Mark Crisman, 45	10:04:32
5. Stuart Johnson, 49	10:12:08
6. Greg Burger, 42	10:23:43
7. John King, 36, MO	11:18:46
8. Gabe Bevan, 36, MO	11:29:12
9. Mark Inbody, 42	11:36:55
10. Marc Friesen	11:46:59
11. Nick Lang, 27	12:05:05
12. Bart Fisher	12:06:05
13. Dann Fisher, 45	12:06:06
14. Fred Hampel, 44, CO	12:06:07
15. Willie Lambert, 46	12:10:18
16. Theresa Wheeler, 41	12:11:25
Dennis Haig, 48	12:11:25



Theresa Wheeler navigates the cattle gates.

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