

ROCKIN' K

ROCKIN' IN THE HEARTLAND

by Chris Wristen

Don't let the quarter-mile dash up a paved road to the finish line fool you: There's nothing smooth and easy about the Rockin' K Trail Run.

Sure, the 50-mile and marathon event April 7 at Kanopolis State Park featured some classic central Kansas prairie, but this was hardly an easy trot through open fields.

Runners encounter five water crossings on each of the two loops – the first comes just three miles into the race and adds a few extra ounces of weight to runners' shoes for each step of the final 47 miles.

Those remaining steps don't involve climbing mountains like in a Colorado race, but they're far from flat. No pancakes here, the course features numerous climbs to the top of towering bluffs, followed by speedy descents on rocky terrain. The signature climb on the course – Big Bluff Loop – is at such a steep grade that it forces runners to claw their way to the top, using their hands and surrounding trees for support.

But yes, there are flat, open plains, too. Of course, those exposed sections only include obstacles such as 35-mile-per-hour winds and offer no reprieve from the sun. That's where the mind games come into play. You can see for miles at a time – but the finish line is nowhere in sight.

Of 45 total starters, 31 finished the 50-mile race and an additional 12 dropped to the marathon distance.

Jeremy Morris was the overall 50-mile champion in 8:33:27. It marked Morris' third straight year as the race champion. Todd Nott was second in 8:39:44, moving up one spot from 2011 and landing him in the top three for the third straight year. Jerry Armstrong finished third in 8:45:40.

Shelley Egli was the women's champion in 10:05:26, making her a back-to-back champion as well. Coleen Voek placed second in 10:54:46, up one spot from 2011 and in the top three for the third straight year; and Theresa Wheeler finished third in 11:07:03, giving her a fourth straight top-three finish at Rockin' K.

The 14th annual event marked the final Rockin' K for race directors and founders Stacy and Phil Sheridan. The 2013 race – scheduled for April 6 – will be led by longtime race volunteers Stuart Ryan and Elden Galano. ■



The conga line rolls down a Kansas hill early in the race



Debbie Webster battled stomach and heat issues but volunteers Zach Bailor (L) and Tony Clark made sure she beat the cutoff

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50 MILES

1. Jeremy Morris, 32, NE	8:33:27	8. Stuart Johnson, 52	10:02:40	16. Theresa Wheeler, 45	11:07:03	24. Amber Gates, 31	12:13:00
2. Todd Nott, 47, NE	8:39:44	9. Shelley Egli, 38, OK	10:05:26	17. Kurt Schueler, 44	11:14:18	25. Matty Mullins, 27	12:17:03
3. Jerry Armstrong, 35, CO	8:45:40	10. Marc Friesen, 37	10:13:56	18. Deb Johnson, 52	11:17:57	26. Bryce Barnett, 37, NE	12:24:14
4. Brad Bishop, 26, CO	8:57:58	11. Raymond Churgovich, 46, CO	10:15:50	19. Kimberly Spielman, 36	11:30:03	27. Bryan Tlamka, 37, NE	12:24:14
5. Ronald Lapoint, 30	9:22:11	12. Ben Gilbert, 38, NE	10:20:15	20. Steve Baker, 42	11:30:03	28. Matt Watts, 55, CO	12:27:20
6. Joshua Pool, 31	9:42:06	13. Dan Lesh, 29, AK	10:26:31	21. Kurt Egli, 49, OK	12:08:29	29. Adam Monaghan, 29	12:34:29
7. Paul Schoenlaub, 52, MO	9:46:09	14. Jeremy Ebel, 27, CO	10:44:35	22. Aaron Laird, 42, IL	12:09:56	30. Terry Rider, 57	12:34:46
		15. Coleen Voeks, 38	10:54:46	Matthew Ryan, 25, IL	12:09:56	31. Deborah Webster, 52	12:36:45