

## **Texas January 1<sup>st</sup> Marathon by David Holman**

On January 1, 2011, I ran the Texas Marathon in Kingwood, TX. (Kingwood is just outside of Houston.) This race is directed by Steve & Paula Boone, who are very active in the 50 States Marathon Club. Many of the runners were 50 States members. I also saw several Marathon Maniacs.

The course is on paved trails through Kingwood, which is also known as the livable forest. Even though we were in a city, it felt like we were running through a wilderness area. The course was an out-and-back that we ran four times. This provided numerous opportunities to see all the other runners. This was especially nice, this I saw several familiar faces at this race. The only drawback of this course is that it got congested with runners going in both directions, so it was sometimes difficult to pass.

Two of the notable runners doing this race were Larry Macon and Yolanda Holder. Larry and Yolanda each set world records the day before by completing 106 marathons in 2010.

This is a relatively inexpensive race, but each runner gets a load of goodies. When you pick up your race packet, you get a large duffel bag with Texas Marathon printed on it. I needed mine to hold all the other stuff I received. This included a long sleeve T-shirt, a hat, a coffee mug, food samples, two gift cards (one for sunglasses and one for music downloads) and the usual assortment of race information and promotional literature. When you finish the race, you receive a huge finisher medal in the shape of Texas, another hat (that looks like a duck), and a small rubber duck. Each duck is numbered. I finished tenth, so I received duck #10.

Every year has a different theme. This year was the year of the rubber duck. (2009 was the year of the penguin.)

Steve and Paula work hard to make every runner feel welcome. Their volunteers put up pink signs along the course for each runner. In addition to a runner's name, each sign had the race logo, and some type of welcome. (Larry and Yolanda's signs acknowledged their new world records.) If you wanted, you could take down your sign and bring it home after the race.

Post-race refreshments included pizza, cookies and soft drinks. The first boxes of pizza arrived as the half marathon runners were finishing, but there were fresh deliveries of pizza throughout the day. Even the last runners to finish could look forward to hot pizza.

This was my first race in four weeks, so I had fresh legs and had done a couple of fast training runs. I decided to run aggressively, doing the first few miles at the same pace as my fastest marathon. This pace proved to be too ambitious, and I gradually slowed, but I still managed to finish in 3:09:49. This was my fastest race in nearly two years.

This is a race I would recommend to anyone looking for a good marathon in Texas. I'd consider returning and doing this race again, but I probably wouldn't try to go all out for a fast time.