

Barber, Lessard rule half-marathon

By Tom Henderson
and Marybeth Dillon
Staff writers

Ron Lessard of Bloomfield Hills blistered his way to a first-mile time of 5:05 en route to a 1:09:11 that was good for nearly a two-minute win in the West Bloomfield Half-Marathon Sunday.

He won a trip for two to the Bahamas.

Lessard and Tobin Jones of Westland duelled for a while, but Lessard was just a bit too tough.

The trip was gratifying, but what was especially pleasing was that the win capped a long comeback from injury. It was Lessard's first race since November 1985 and a knee operation in January 1986.

"It feels fine to run on," said Lessard. "It was just in the last six weeks that I decided to come back six months sooner than I was supposed to."

Lessard slowly stretched his early lead until he was 30 seconds up at the six-mile mark. By eight, he figured the race was about over.

"I relaxed a little. I was pretty tired. It was a good race. I train on terrain like this all the time, so it's ideal for me. The wind slowed me down, but it slowed Tobin down, too."

THANKS TO a stubborn boy-friend, Cindy Barber has herself a trip for two to the Bahamas and the championship in the women's division of the West Bloomfield Half-Marathon.

Up until the final few minutes before the start of Sunday's 13.1-mile road race through the twisting, rolling streets of the city, Barber had no intention of running a race.

"I had to drag her out here, then I had to twist her arm to enter," said Mike Keeler of Milan, who footed her \$13 entry fee. It was the best money he'll ever spend. She won the trip for two and promised she'd reserve one of the spots for him. "She better," he joked.

Barber, 29, of Lincoln Park is familiar with winning races. She ran track for Eastern Michigan, is a past winner of the Free Press International Marathon, was once named the state's runner of the year by Michigan Runner Magazine and has already qualified to run in next spring's U.S. Olympic Marathon trials in Pittsburgh.

Ideal conditions for WB runners

By Tom Henderson
staff writer

WHAT, NO SNOWSTORM? Where's the rain? What happened to the sauna?

The West Bloomfield Half-Marathon, something of a legend in local running for its incredible weather in recent years, was downright hospitable Sunday for the 11th running of the 13.1-mile road race.

Those grueling hills were still there. Those turns kept coming up relentlessly. But everything else was just fine. Rain fell before the run and after it, and the wind was a little stiff, but conditions were just about perfect.

They were certainly perfect for Ron Lessard of Bloomfield Hills and Cindy Barber, who finished first for the men and women and each won a couple of trips to the Bahamas (see related story on page 1D).

It was fine for race director Sally Slater Pierce, who was delighted with a field of 853, up 33 from last year despite those who say running is on the decline.

It was fine for the 150 or so volunteers who whooped and cheered, passing out encouragement as fast as they passed out cups of water. And from the looks on the faces of the 3- and 4-year-olds who stood in driveways along the way and jumped up and down with glee whenever a runner would take water from their unofficial aid stations, things were just fine in the neighborhoods, too.

A SUCCESSFUL road race is always more than the sum of its parts. On the surface, it is just a string of people running from here to there. Beneath the surface are tales of success, the culmination of heroic battles to conquer things like middle-age spread or the depression of divorce — for nearly every runner there is a story behind the simple matter of putting one foot in front of another.

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running

WEST BLOOMFIELD HALF-MARATHON				
place	name	age	city	time
Men's Open				
1.	Ron Lessard	27	Bloom. Hills	1:09:31
2.	Tobin Jones	27	Westland	1:11:19
3.	Matthew Simpson	23	Walled Lake	1:12:49
4.	Harve Corro	35	Windsor	1:13:46
5.	Steve Angerman	28	Ann Arbor	1:14:22
6.	Allen Cook	27	Canton	1:15:05
7.	Karl Darnun	18	Detroit	1:15:14
8.	Ken Price	29	Mt. Clemens	1:15:26
9.	Greg Heller	32	Trenton	1:15:39
10.	Jaime Kasurak	28	Windsor	1:15:54
Women's Open				
1.	Cindy Barber	29	Lincoln Park	1:23:38
2.	Charlene Catalano	41	P. Huron	1:25:59
3.	Kathy Irwin	27	Birmingham	1:27:05
4.	Jan Jacobs	29	Birmingham	1:27:38
5.	Linda Powers	38	Ann Arbor	1:28:49
6.	Nina Bovis	41	Brighton	1:28:55
7.	Marybeth Dillon	32	S. Lyon	1:30:01
8.	Donna Lori	27	Windsor	1:30:09
9.	Carole Dieck	44	Rochester	1:32:42
10.	Donna Swanson	35	Walled Lake	1:34:47

Still, winning Sunday came as a surprise. Winning the trip was a downright shock.

"I CAME HERE for a workout and ended up with a cruise. I can't believe it," she said. She finished in 1:23:38, good for more than a two-minute bulge on the runner-up, and a time that placed her 56th overall in a field of 853. "I ran races the last few weekends and needed to get a long run in today because I'm training for a marathon in June. So I wasn't going to race. I was just going to go out for a 20-mile run."

Somehow, Keeler convinced her to ride to West Bloomfield with him, then once at the high school, he ejected her into joining the race. She didn't even sign up till 12:15 p.m., 15 minutes after registration was scheduled to close.

"I didn't even have time to warm up."

Once the race began, she ran with Keeler at a pace of about 6:20 per mile, racing for him, taking it easy for her. "I just wanted to help him run a good race," she said.

Along the way, people were telling her she was the third woman. She

passed someone and the crowd and volunteers along the way would tell her she was in second. Finally, between seven and eight miles, she passed Charlene Catalano, who was to end up as the masters' (over 40) champ. "She didn't try to go with me, so I knew I had her."

The biggest shock came later at the awards ceremony, when Jojo Spano, the director of parks and recreation, announced the trips to the Bahamas for the men's and women's winners. "Can you believe it?" asked Barber. "I figured I'd win a plaque or something."

THE WIND was a bit severe, but after previous years no one was complaining about the weather. There was no snow, no 90-degree saunas, no rain, so what was a little wind?

It certainly didn't bother Clifford Dorlin of Detroit, a past master's who was a cool breeze, both the way he ran and in his pure white outfit and headband at the awards ceremony. His birth certificate says 43, his body says 23 and his pace says "Follow me if you can."

Dorlin ran 1:16:39, good for 13th

overall and almost a two-minute margin over fellow master Ellis Boal of Detroit, runner-up in the master's division of last fall's Free Press marathon.

"I still haven't recovered from the Free Press," said Boal, his shoes bloody from blisters picked up on the grueling hills of West Bloomfield.

"I kept thinking there was someone behind me with a green tag on," said Dorlin, referring to the tag worn by masters' runners. "So, that kept me going. Then, a couple of young guys pulled up and I went with them a ways. It's good to stay with those young guys."

RACE DIRECTOR Sally Slater Pierce created a new division this year, the Supermen's division for men 60 and over. And the winner lived up to the billing. Chuck Davey, a legendary state boxer in the 50s who once fought for a world title in Detroit and who later went on to success in the insurance field, has channeled his competitive fires onto the roads.

Davey is 61, but you couldn't tell it from his time. His 1:30:56 placed him well up in the top half of the field and gave him almost a three-minute win in his age group, with Howard Emmons of Troy coming in at 1:42:45.

A true superstar was Jim Ramsey of Detroit. He is a legend in state running circles, races nearly every weekend, runs three or four marathons a year and, oh, yes, just so happens to be 79.

"It was beautiful out there," he said. "I was feeling good. I'm just getting over the hamstring I hurt in Columbus (a marathon last November)."

Ramsey finished in 2:32:32, but made it clear he was just out for a training stroll.

"Getting ready for Pittsburgh," he said. He wasn't talking about an upcoming vacation. He was talking about his next marathon, a 26.2-mile run he'll be taking part in on May 3. "Gonna take mamma to that one and go first class," he said.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Ron Lessard, overall winner of the West Bloomfield half-marathon, beat his nearest competitor by nearly two minutes.

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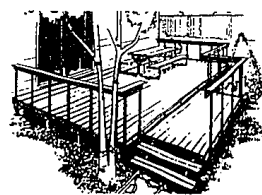


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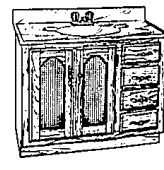
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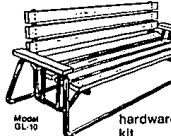
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