



**By Jan Schultz**

***The Imperial Republican***

Record-breaking numbers and times marked the 35th annual Chase County Fair Run held Saturday morning of fair, Aug. 17.

Organizers were predicting that participation would surpass the previous record, as runners signing up in advance flowed in at a higher-than-normal preregistration rates.

There were 190 registered for the event this year and 172 finished their respective races. Event coordinator Jonathan Beverly reported that's 26 more than last year's previous record high of 146 finishers.

A new course and deep fields likely produced faster times this year, Beverly said.

In the 10K, both Scott Lambley of Benkelman and Lauren Klima of Grant repeated as champions. Lambley, Dundy County/Stratton's cross country coach, finished 45 seconds faster with a time of 38:46, while Klima clocked a three-minute faster time than last year at 44:12, and was third overall among both men and women.

The 5K winning times were nearly two minutes faster than last year for both the men's and women's divisions, won by Jacob Schuman of Denver and Michelle May of Imperial.

Schuman, finishing in 18:15, is the son of former Chase County High School cross country state champion Terry Schuman. May, also a standout high school cross country and track athlete at CCS, won the women's 5K in 20:17, and was eighth among all 5K runners.

Jayden German and Mallie McNair, a pair of local runners, took first in the mile with times of 7:10 and 7:50, respectively. Young McNair was fifth among all mile runners.

Looking at the race numbers, it shows the 5K was most popular, drawing 110 runners who finished. The 10K fielded 23 runners, the mile 23 and 16 youths, age 12 and younger, ran the half-mile.

The new course, starting and ending on East 9th St., in front of Chase County Schools, may have contributed to the larger numbers, Beverly said.

The parking lot, bathrooms and a wider, open street for the start and finish worked well with the larger numbers, he said.

There wasn't competition, either, with the car shows, barbecue set-up or police barricades that were present in the streets near the former start and finish at the fairgrounds' main walkway.

"The new course came off successfully," Beverly said. "Runners reported it was easy to follow and a fun route."

Another change dealt with the kids' half-mile, which was run right after the mile/5K/10K divisions while awards were being compiled.

Rather than run it in the street as in the past, it was moved to the school track allowing parents and others to watch from the concession area. The kids' race was sponsored and directed by McNair Agency and family. Pat McNair signaled the start of the race.

Something else helping the increase in participation was the later start for high school sports seasons this fall.

Because official practices had not started as of Aug. 17, high school athletes could compete, and the strength of this year's cross country team showed.

The Longhorn boys finished third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh in the 5K, and the team's

female runners also finished in a tight pack.

Beverly noted, given the fact that high schoolers were running this year, added to so many younger runners in the 5K, a 13 and under category for awards was used for the first.

Except for some humidity, race conditions were nearly perfect Aug. 17 with 68 degrees at the start and a light wind.

The race is sponsored by Super Foods and Running Times magazine.

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