

Runners pick up the pace

Winners improve on last year's times

By Matt Middleton| *Staff Writer*

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Runners marveled at the cool, soothing weather Sunday morning for the Augusta Half Marathon. Their times reflected it.

Georgia State graduate student, and graduate of the UW-Stevens Point Health Promotion program, Cory Baumann crosses the finish line at Augusta Common to win the Augusta Half Marathon.

Cory Baumann won the second annual event, setting a course record by nearly five minutes. He finished in 1 hour, 12 minutes and 12 seconds. He was one of two runners who bested last year's winning time on a cloudy, breezy morning ideal for the nearly 700 competitors who completed a race that began and ended at Augusta Common.



Baumann, a 23-year-old graduate student at Georgia State in Atlanta and a former collegiate runner at Wisconsin-Stevens Point, was competing in his first 13.1-mile event. His time trampled last year's winning mark by more than four minutes. Jacob Melnick, a Medical College of Georgia student, won the inaugural event in 1:16:46. Last year, only two people completed the race in less than 1:19.

Sarah Madebach, a 2004 Augusta Christian graduate who was a standout runner at the University of Georgia, was the top female finisher and third overall at 1:18:13. The top female finisher a year ago ran the race in 1:29:22.

Baumann set the early pace with fellow Atlanta Track Club runner Kel Bond but pulled away a little before the halfway mark. He said he felt strong running the early uphill portion of the race, which climbed Central Avenue before flattening out around Highland Avenue.

"I guess I'm a pretty strong uphill runner," said Baumann, who noted the longest distance he ran in college was 8 kilometers. "It didn't affect me much."

Bond finished second in 1:14:51. Both Baumann and Bond reached the finish line with no other competitor in sight.

Clusters of runners began to reach the finish as the morning progressed. After they finished, many lingered in the Common to study a computer printout of results that posted unofficial times.

Ten-year-old Justin Hansen was the youngest runner in the race by six years. He finished in 1:51:32 and 228th overall. His father, Andrew, said Justin accomplished his goal of finishing in less than two hours.

"To see him beat it by that much is surprising," Andrew Hansen said. "He did great."

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