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UKROP'S MONUMENT AVENUE 10K



NICOLAS GALINDO, TIMES-DISPATCH

Runners travel down Franklin Street during the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k on Saturday. More than 24,000 participated in the race.

Cookies, fun fuel racers

25th anniversary event welcomes more than 24,000 participants

EM HOLTER
Richmond Times-Dispatch

The key to running six miles in less than an hour might be eating a fair share of Ukrop's rainbow cookies.

That was the case for Richmonder Brendan Pevarski, who finished Saturday's Monument Avenue 10K in just under 45 minutes for his best personal time in nine attempts in the event.

And while others might not

be so eager to reveal their tricks of the trade, Pevarski was more than willing with his race-day shirt, which showcased the classic Richmond staple sweet treat.

"The rainbow cookies — they're my secret sauce," Pevarski said.

The 25th annual Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k presented by Kroger kicked off Saturday morning as more than 24,000 runners, some traveling across

city and state lines, vied to bring home the prized blue medal.

As the sun was rising over the city, volunteers with Sports Backers — the organization behind the race — as well as community sponsors and vendors began the daunting task of setting up the soon-to-be arena. Banners reading "It's not RVA without the 10K" were hung, and crates of water bottles were shuttled over to the finish line.

By 8 a.m., participants and spectators alike had quickly filled Monroe Park, which served as home base for those starting

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WATCH NOW: See videos from Saturday's Monument Avenue 10k event by pointing your cellphone camera at the QR code and clicking the link. [NEWSVU](#)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Taxes key to deal on Va. budget

Collections may open path to compromise

DAVE RESS AND MICHAEL MARTZ
Richmond Times-Dispatch

With a potential budget deal at stake, Gov. Glenn Youngkin and General Assembly budget leaders will keep a close eye on taxes Virginians pay and refunds they claim as state income taxes come due by May 1.

Tax collections so far are up dramatically, which could open a path to a budget compromise in a May special session that does not include a tax increase. But legislators want to be sure they will have enough money for K-12 schools and other priorities in the next two years.

Two numbers may be why a governor and General Assembly who are at loggerheads over taxes finally agreed to try to agree on a budget for the next two years.



Youngkin

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NICOLAS GALINDO, TIMES-DISPATCH

A runner grabs his reward for completing the course: a prized blue medal.

Racers

From A1

and finishing the race. In an hour, the line for Mimi's Ice N' Custard food truck would wrap around the park's gazebo.

By the time the 10K Mini, a mile-long run for kids ages 4 through 12, began, folks had already staked their claim along the blocks-long metal barriers that separated the sidewalk from the Laurel Street finish line. From their lawn chairs, they proudly held up their hand-crafted signs that later bobbed in the air as racers passed by.

Although many set out to cross the finish line first, there could be only one.

For University of Richmond student and cross country team member Jordan Bendura, there was no chance he wasn't going to claim the glory.

He began training months ago, taking on back-to-back 90-mile weeks and several track races. However, Bendura said his goal to win began at last year's race, when he finished third.

The grueling training and determination paid off. He finished in 30 minutes, 18 seconds — averaging a 5-minute mile.

"I was really going for the win this year. So I just sat back and

did what I could do, and it all just came together," Bendura said.

Former North Carolina State University track star and current grad student Ryen Frazier was the top female finisher. Frazier crossed the finish line in 34 minutes, 44 seconds.

From the more competitive to the here-for-a-good-time group, the race brought out folks with different goals. Regardless of where each stood on the leader board, the race proved to be a universal equalizer as folks cheered one another on.

The more serious competitors — those who finished within the first hour — claimed their medals and trickled into the park. In between sips of water and bites of banana, they congratulated one another and handed out high-fives to strangers.

"This is one of my favorite things that Richmond does," Pevarski said. "Everybody is so supportive, and we all cheer each other on. It's just a great thing to be a part of and to see."

Others took advantage of the sheer size of the crowd.

Richmonder Lawson Wijesooriya crossed the finish line, grabbed a bottle of water and congratulated her running mates who had finished a few minutes ahead of her.

After a short moment to catch

her breath, Wijesooriya reached into her mesh backpack and pulled out a clipboard filled with signature sheets — a requirement for potential political candidates.

From there, she began her search for Richmond registered voters. And she wasn't alone. With an anniversary race year bound to bring in a high turnout and an ongoing mayoral race, other runners joined in hoping to grab enough signatures to help put their choice of mayoral candidate on the ballot.

"I believe in democracy and doing my civic duty and what better way," said Wijesooriya, pointing to the crowd.

As the first hour turned into the second, the trickle of runners turned into a flood as hundreds began to make their way into the park to meet up with their family and friends and celebrate with some post-run treats. Jugs of chocolate milk were passed around, rolls were tossed to those who wanted them, and granola bars were downed in seconds.

While some families opted to watch from the sidelines, others decided to participate together.

John Bodt and his two children, Jack and Della, hope to continue the experience for years to come.



EM HOLTER, TIMES-DISPATCH

Richmond resident Brendan Pevarski completed his ninth Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k Saturday morning in a little under 45 minutes.



NICOLAS GALINDO, TIMES-DISPATCH

Participants in the Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k go to high-five the Jammin' Grannies on Franklin Street in the last leg of the run on Saturday.

The Bodts, who moved to Richmond from San Francisco last year, said they are always looking for things to do as a family. So when they heard about the race, they signed up. With Jack being a budding track star and Della making waves in soccer, they made easy work of the race.

For John, who remembers running the race with his father

when he was his children's age, it is a chance to pass on the tradition.

"I've been waiting for this day that we could do this all together so, for me, this is a special day," John said. "It's just so fun, and I get to do it with them."

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