

Hall edges Keating in Women's Distance Festival 5K

By Kevin Spradlin

ROCKY GAP – It was a competition among veterans Saturday at the 29th annual Women's Distance Festival 5K at Rocky Gap State Park as eight of the top 10 finishers were 39 years old or older.

It also was a celebration of women's running, as the race is annually one of 12 female-only events across the state. The series, designed to celebrate women's rights to participate in running events, is sponsored by the Road Runners Club of America. It was formulated as a response to a lack of distance running events for women in the Olympic Games in 1980.

Pat Keating, 46, of Dayton, Md., said after the 3.1-mile out-and-back, paved course that she "knew" Maureen Hall had slowed a bit to help pull her friend along and meet her goal. Mission accomplished, Keating said, as she crossed the finish line second in 20 minutes, 55 seconds, an average of 6:45 per mile.

Hall, 43, of LaVale, was just ahead of her in 20:53. While helping Keating to reach her goal, Hall also wasn't 100 percent healthy for the race. She said her left calf muscle was constantly tight. It had bothered her for a couple of days, Hall said, and just wouldn't loosen up.

Still, neither the pain with that slight muscle injury nor Keating played the role of the field's No. 1 enemy.

"It's hot as heck," Hall said shortly after crossing the finish line.

Keating, too, said the sun, beating down on runners' backs up and down the rolling hills, didn't help motivate her any to keep pace with Hall. And Hall's attempt to help Keating might have backfired, Keating said.

"I knew she'd beat me," Keating said. "I don't have the leg speed she does."

Hall used the final downhill, about 200 meters long, to put Keating away. As Hall turned the last orange cone on the 100-meter straightaway, the president of the Western Maryland Road Runners and race director had put just enough distance between herself and second place.

It was Hall's third win in the last eight years of the race. She has finished second five other times. Two years ago, the dual between Hall and Keating wasn't so close. Hall won easily in 19:29 while Keating finished a distance second (20:50).

Karen Abbamonte, 49, of Boonsboro, was third in 21:29 and Kay Harrison, 45, of Hagerstown, finished fourth in 22:10. Pauline Chvilicek, 39, of Laurel, Md., rounded out the top five in 24:18.

In the men's low-key 5K race afterward, regional standout and Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Troy Harrison cruised to victory in 16:23, averaging 5:18 per mile. Harrison, 32, of Hustontown, Pa., said he hopes to earn a spot next year on the marathon team in the World Class Athlete Program.

Martin Goode, 43, of Arbutus, Md., was second in 19:04 while Brian Greer, 28, of Cumberland, was third in 21:58.

For complete results and race photos, visit www.wmtiming.com.