

## WHERE ARE THE LONGER RACE DISTANCES?

Oklahoma race directors please make note of this article.

How many runners and directors in this state are aware of how many races there are at each standard metric distance? You can just about count the number of 12 km races and longer on both hands. Fact is there is only one 12 km, two 15 km, one 20 km, one 25 km, no 30 km, two marathons and three half marathons. The rest of the Oklahoma schedule is comprised mostly of 5 km races and a few 8 and 10 km. Oklahoma has about 160 separate events that may have two or more distances.

From an economic and participation point most directors seem to prefer the 5 km distance. The majority of participants in Oklahoma and nationwide are not there because races are athletic events. Personal satisfaction and participation are the main reasons. Personal satisfaction means staying healthy which is important to just about every runner. In addition, just about anyone, in shape or not, can do a 5 km. Walkers, first-timers and the older group are attracted to 5 km races.

However, weight control and competition are other reasons to run. The majority of runners are concerned with maintaining their proper weight and this is the main reason they put in the longer training runs. Many are still out there doing their long weekend runs, but these runners would substitute a longer distance race for this training run if they had the opportunity.

Many runners participate in the state races that do have distances longer than 10 km. It seems the solution to the problem of so many 5 km events may be to have an accompanying longer distance on the same day as the 5 km. This may not always be feasible due to budget constraints that could include some items like traffic control and cost of awards.

Most runners would be satisfied with a low-key, high-quality event that would include some of the longer distances. There are basic fundamentals with all events: Safety requirements, USATF sanction, certified course, advertising in the state publications, proper scoring and results reported to the OKLAHOMA RUNNER and to USATF. However, awards, called splits, (marked splits will do) and race mementos are not that important. Small mementos would do for the awards.

The Tulsa Running Club used to have a series of longer distance races starting in the fall with a 15 km and the following up in the coming months with a 20, 25 and 30 km. Finally a marathon was held in March. Each of these events had an accompanying 5 km. Everyone received complete mailed results (or today internet posting), the course was certified and each safety item from water to traffic control was handled properly. Most of these races have disappeared because of the 5 km competition. In those days much of the budget was spent on the running-figure trophy that most runners don't really care for any more. With minimal sponsorship, a cut back on awards and a slight increase in entry fees with no shirt, some of these races could be brought back even if a racing service was hired.

Run Short Run Long and Beacon on Bay are good examples of mixing the 5 km with a longer distance. These events are held in parks and not on city streets.

We need the highly promoted races such as the Tulsa Run and Redbud Classic to go with all the super-organized and major sponsored 5 km races in the state, but we have a shortage of longer distances. Some of the most satisfying, most relaxed and most fun races have come from the longer distances.

The major running clubs should consider putting together a series of long distances such as the Tulsa Running Club did back in the 70's and 80's.

**Race directors should consider adding an additional longer distance.**