



PRESS RELEASE
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EIGHT NEW RRCA SOUTHERN REGION 10K TITLES WON IN SATURDAY'S 8TH ANNUAL TOUGHEST 10K KEMAH

KEMAH, TEXAS (September 19, 2015) – Leading a record 1,883 runners across the finish line at the world famous Kemah Boardwalk, Kingwood's **Ryan Smith** and Lake Jackson's **Lauren Smith** defended their 2014 victories here -- Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) Texas State 10K championships – and upgraded them into this year's RRCA Southern Region 10K crowns at Saturday's 8th annual Toughest 10K Kemah.

"Tough race today," said the Al Lawrence Running Club's Smith, who won in 33:46. "Guess this race earned its name this year by slowing me down by a minute over last year."

Still the 30-year-old used a 46-second margin of victory over runner-up **Michael Gillis** of Pearland to record the third fastest time in the event's history to go with his course mark of 32:47 from a year ago.

Yet the very humid Southeast Texas conditions didn't seem to thwart Lauren Smith.

In fact, she thrived in them – and off the course – as the 24-year-old former Stephen F. Austin State runner lowered her 37:34 mark from last year by more than a minute to win in 36:27 – more than seven and a half minutes ahead of her closest competitor.

"I really enjoy the challenging courses," said Smith, who picked up her fifth RRCA title in the last two years. "It's definitely a great kickoff to the fall season."

She won the RRCA Texas state championships at the 5K, 10K and 25K distances last year and opened 2015 by defending her state championship with a win at the Bayou City Classic 10K in March in an identical time of 36:27.

The Toughest 10K Kemah, though, includes four passes of the Kemah-Seabrook Bridge, which includes two north-to-south grades of 4.3 percent and a pair of south-to-north climbs of five percent.

Both Smiths – no relation – earned \$125 each for their win in addition to the \$50 Sports Authority gift card for winning the RRCA Southern Region 10K title.

Finishing third overall, Houston's **Luis Armenteros**, 42, won his second consecutive RRCA Southern Region 10K Masters title in 35:38.

Brookshire's **Vicki Melnick**, 49, third overall like Armenteros, captured the women's RRCA Southern Region 10K Masters title in 44:41. She won the state championship here last year in 45:12 before winning the 25K state title two months later in Houston.

Kingwood's **Tom Barbee**, 52, and Katy's **Lynn Malloy**, 55, were the RRCA Southern Region 10K Grandmasters champions in respective times of 38:37 and 45:45.

Barbee earlier this year won the RRCA Texas State 10K championship at the Bayou City Classic 10K while Malloy edged RRCA winners – and Al Lawrence Running Club members - **Melissa Hurta-Crites** and **Rose Rhoton** by five and six seconds respectively.

Two weeks earlier, Hurta-Crites won the RRCA Texas 15K Grandmasters championship at the Fort Worth Runners Club Labor Day 15K while Rhoton was this year's RRCA Texas 10K Grandmasters titlist at the Bayou City Classic 10K.

Two of the country's fastest 60-and-over runners – Houstonians **Peter Mullin** and **Sabra Harvey** -- went home with their second consecutive RRCA Southern Region 10K Senior Grandmasters titles in winning times of 42:09 and 44:09, respectively.

Mullin, 64, was less than a week removed from winning his age group at the New York Road Runners Fifth Avenue Mile (5:26), while Harvey, 66, is gearing up for a USA 65-69 age group record-setting attempt at the Space City 10-Miler in three weeks.

Harvey's effort resulted in a 98.11% age-graded performance, which was world class.

RRCA South Texas state representative **Lee Greb** was in attendance to present the winners their Southern Region championship medals.

Astronaut **Sunita "Sunni" Williams**, who completed the 2007 Boston Marathon *during* the first of her two trips to space, was the race's special guest – addressing the field of nearly 2,000 before the race -- and placed third overall on the first day in her new 50-54 age group.

The Toughest 10K Kemah was created in 2008 by Running Alliance Sport founder **Robby Sabban** as a charity event after Hurricane Ike ravaged the Kemah Boardwalk and is first of the widely popular three-race Texas Bridge Series, which is in its fifth year.

The remaining two races feature the **Toughest 10K Galveston** on Saturday, October 17 and the **La Porte By The Bay Half Marathon** on Sunday, November 15.

Runners traverse over and back the Galveston Causeway Bridge and the Fred Hartman Bridge, respectively, in those races after having completed four passes of the Kemah-Seabrook Bridge in September.

The proceeds from the Toughest 10K Kemah – and the entire Texas Bridge Series -- go directly to **The Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Inc.**, a Pasadena, Texas organization whose mission is to offer support, provide safety, and prevent domestic and sexual violence.

Since 2011, through its five races, including the Seabrook Lucky Trail Marathon, Half Marathon and Relay, the Baytown Bud Heat Wave and the three Texas Bridge Series events, Running Alliance Sport donated more than \$413,000 to local charities.

For more information about Running Alliance Sport and the upcoming races of the Texas Bridge Series, please visit www.runningalliancesport.org.

About Running Alliance Sport

Based out of the greater Bay Area Houston area, Running Alliance Sport (RAS) is a not-for-profit event production company that has a passion for producing quality running events which in turn

support local communities and its charities. RAS successfully works with city governments in Seabrook, Kemah, La Porte, Baytown, Galveston and Tiki Island to produce five races annually from March to November that engages nearly 500 volunteers, sends over 5,550 runners and walkers across finish lines and donated over \$100,000 to local charities in 2013. For more information, please visit www.runningalliancesport.org.

About Road Runners Club of America

Founded in 1958, the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) is the oldest and largest national association of running clubs, running events, and runners dedicated to promoting running as a competitive sport and as healthy exercise. The mission of the RRCA is to promote the sport of running through the development and growth of running clubs and running events throughout the country. The RRCA supports the common interests of runners of all abilities during all stages of life by providing education and leadership opportunities along with programs and services that benefit all runners. For more information, please visit www.rrca.org.