

MTA's Runners, Bikers face the challenge of L.A. Marathon

> Veteran marathoners Jose Lopez, left, and David Martinez, Metro Bus Operators out of Gateway Division 10, add the 2002 Los Angeles Marathon medal to a considerable collection. It was the 16th L.A. marathon for both.



By BILL HEARD, Editor

(March 8, 2002) They weren't in it for the money. Or the new car. Or even to outpace the other competitors. Instead, MTA employees who participated in last Sunday's LA Marathon were in it for the sheer challenge of completing the 26.2-mile course.

Their times were nowhere near that of men's winner Stephen Ndungu of Kenya who crossed the finish line at 2:10:27 or that of women's leader Lyubov Denisova of Russia, who finished at 2:28:49.

By comparison, MTA runners' times were leisurely: 3:40 for software engineer Vazgen Vartanian; 4:25 for Manuel Duarte of West Hollywood Division 7; 6:24 for Paul Kim of the County Counsel's office and his wife, Christina.

For this year's race, Marathon officials redesigned the course, routing it through different streets and reducing the number of hills. The MTA runners appreciated the new route.

"It was a very beautiful course compared with the last five years," said Paul Kim. Rudy Rounds of Division 2 maintenance agreed, noting that "you didn't see the same streets as last time."

Course was 'enjoyable'

James Wilson of Division 1 maintenance proclaimed the course, "enjoyable." Alberto Bellido of General Services was somewhat disappointed with the spectator turnout compared with previous years.

Veteran runner Everett Wilson of Revenue, who has a total of 59 marathons under his belt – including all 17 LA Marathons – liked the new course, but says race organizers should have started the runners



WINNERS ALL
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PHOTOS:

earlier than 10 a.m. "With the heat the way it was, you couldn't get a good feel for the course."

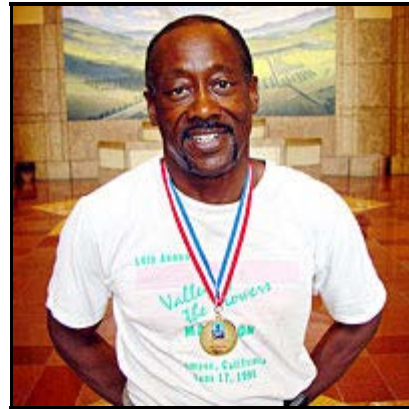
GAYLE ANDERSON

Preparation was the key for Joe Soto, of Gateway Division 10 maintenance, and his home treadmill was the training device of choice. At the marathon's finish line, he felt 40 percent better than during the 2001 race and believes his recuperation was 25 percent faster.

"The treadmill is not as hard on your body as running on the road would be," says Soto. "You're saving your muscles and especially your knees for when you need them in the marathon."

Then there were the bikers. Mattie Jones and Kathryn Jackson, both of ITS, rode together most of the way although Jones crossed the line first. "I felt a lot better than I did in last year's marathon," says Jones. "I finished strong at over 20 miles an hour."

Jackson, whose training for the race consisted of riding around the Rose Bowl grounds – twice – had a good race, was shivering in the 6 a.m. chill at starting time. With the marathon behind them, the women are training for next year's 600-mile AIDS ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles.



^ Veteran runner Everett Wilson of Revenue, who has a total of 59 marathons under his belt – including all 17 LA Marathons – liked the new course.

Sheriff's Transit Services Bureau runners were, from left, Deputy Cipriano Nanggolan, Capt. Dan Finkelstein and Deputy Kevlin Wong.



^ Division 8 Transportation Manager Grant Myers and Division 3208 Transit Operations Supervisor Ralph Gray. This is the eighth LA Marathon Bike Tour for Ralph and the seventh for Grant.

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