

# A coastal spectacular



The Big Sur Half debuted in 2003 and was an immediate and **overwhelming success**. The half marathon rivaled the full marathon in terms of **scenery** and over the following five years the field has now almost doubled in size.

By Sally Smith

Wind and rain showers couldn't wash away the enthusiasm of the 6,500 runners and walkers who ran along the edge of the western world in the sixth edition of this event. The Big Sur Half Marathon on Monterey Bay offers spectacular coastal scenery and ocean vistas along with glimpses of history on a gently rolling course that winds through historic downtown Monterey and along John Steinbeck's Cannery Row. The overwhelmingly favorite part of the course is the eight-mile stretch along the Pacific Grove shoreline, where runners are treated to a panorama of breaking surf, otters frolicking offshore, sea lions reposing on rocks and pelicans flying overhead. If one looked hard enough, a glimpse of a spout from a California gray whale might be seen out in Monterey Bay.

Best known for its marathon held on the last Sunday of each April the Big Sur Marathon's non-profit board had long been bombarded by requests for a half marathon. Because the number of participants in the April events had reached capacity the organization opted to create a new race that would be held annually in November. The Big Sur Half debuted in 2003 with a field of 2,900 finishers and was an immediate and overwhelming success. Run on a gentler course than its counterpart in April the half marathon rivaled the full

marathon in terms of scenery and event organization and over the following five years the field has now almost doubled in size. In 2006 a 10-Mile walk was added to the slate of events, designed as a non-competitive fitness event for those not quite up to the rigors of the full half marathon distance. An increased prize purse began attracting world-class elite runners and the current course records were set by Ian Dobson (1:02:33) and Jennifer Rhines (1:12:18) in 2006.

Participants were also in for some auditory high notes along the course. Country music at the start got runners moving their feet and a tuxedoed piano player on a Yamaha Grand piano serenaded runners as they left Monterey. The haunting notes of a bagpipe echoed through the Custom House Tunnel, adding a surreal note to the morning. Rock and roll along Cannery Row was followed by Dixieland tunes at Lover's Point Park in Pacific Grove. Taiko drummers at mile eight were met with great enthusiasm as

runners made the turnaround for the return trip to the finish in Monterey. The Sambahamian dancers at mile twelve gave tired runners just the boost needed for the final mile of the race.

The organizers' move towards sustainability and a greener race environment was evident along the course with lots of recycle containers and an additional optional program called "BYOB" (bring your own bottle). To reduce the waste of thousands of paper





# RESULT

## MEN:

1	Wesley OCHORO	KEN	1:04:20
2	Christian HESCH	USA	1:05:26
3	Ben BRUCE	USA	1:05:27
4	Brad LOWERY	USA	1:06:42
5	Paul NGUGI	KEN	1:06:44
6	Jared SCOTT	USA	1:08:16
7	John TIMEUS	USA	1:11:12
8	Justin PATANANAN	USA	1:12:12
9	Jeff MAGALLANS	USA	1:14:38
10	Rigo VASQUEZ	USA	1:15:24

## WOMEN:

1	Belainesh GEBRE	ETH	1:13:11
2	Hyvon NGETICH	KEN	1:13:47
3	Jacqueline NYETIPEI	KEN	1:16:08
4	Lauren JOHNSON	USA	1:16:47
5	Kari BERTRAND	USA	1:18:08
6	Heather GIBSON	USA	1:18:17
7	Kristi ARTHUR	USA	1:18:25
8	Jennifer DEREGO	USA	1:20:34
9	Alexis SMITH	USA	1:23:40
10	Elissa RIEDY	USA	1:24:02



The organizers' move towards a **greener race** environment was evident. To reduce the waste, runners were encouraged to **carry their own water bottle**, which could be refilled at a special 'BYOB' aid station.

water cups, runners were encouraged to carry their own water bottle, which could be refilled with either water or Gatorade at a special BYOB aid station. The program was immediately embraced by almost 25% of the field.

The Big Sur Half course ended in the Custom House Plaza in downtown Monterey, adjacent to Fisherman's Wharf. After receiving a unique ceramic finisher's medallion and heat blanket, runners passed through a food tent offering muffins, fruit cups, bananas, salty chips and more. If this post-race feast didn't satisfy their appetite, hot minestrone soup and cold Michelob Ultra beer was given free to all finishers over age 21 on the Plaza.

Prior to race day, registrants attended a two-day Health & Fitness Expo where they picked up their bib, goody bag and long-sleeved event technical shirt. In addition to a variety of health and

fitness related products and clothing, runners and walkers were invited to attend several free race clinics. Bart Yasso of Runner's World magazine spoke about his new book, "My Life on the Run," a compilation of humorous stories about his running adventures around the world. Runners also had the chance to meet the 2008 elite field as well as attend a course briefing presented by Big Sur's Race Director, Wally Kastner.

The day before the race Half Marathon runners and walkers were encouraged to take part in either the JUST RUN! Just Kids 3K with their families or the Run Forrest Run 5K as a final warm-up run for the main event next day. These shorter distance out-and-back races began and ended on Cannery Row, with most of the course along Pacific Grove's scenic shoreline. All participants received a post-race feast courtesy of Bubba Gump Shrimp Company.

Californian Denny Carl ran his first ever half marathon and enthused: "This was awesome. I ran because I wanted something to keep me walking and jogging so that I can fight off a family history of diabetes and because this race is on my 'bucket list'." Greg Booth of San Diego was also both thumbs up when he said, "Awesome experience! I did a PR by 9 minutes. Great Expo...great race morning...the course was fast and scenic. The finish was well stocked with refreshments: cold beer and hot soup? What more could you ask for on a cold, rainy day? Keep

up the good work." Finally Amy Moore, also from California, commented "It was everything I was hoping for and more. I had the time of my life. The people were incredible and positive and inspiring. The music was a blast. I felt like the whole town welcomed us with open arms. The sights are gorgeous. Thank you!"

Next year's Big Sur Half Marathon on Monterey Bay will be held on 15 November 2009.

## RACE CONTACT DETAILS

### BIG SUR HALF MARATHON ON MONTEREY BAY NOVEMBER

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Full race contact listings start on page ??