

Head: Cook, Dodge claim seven-mile victories

Subhead: Johnson sets course record in two-miler

By **KEVIN SPRADLIN**
kevin@masoncounty.com

June 2012 — Daniel Tomko couldn't catch Mark Cook during the Goldsborough Creek seven-mile run on Saturday in Shelton.

Immediately after crossing the finish line in second place, however, the 35-year-old Bellevue resident had more important things on his mind.

Tomko, who brought his family to Mason County to visit relatives for the weekend, had to retrace his steps along Railroad Avenue towards State Route 101 to find his daughter.

Still on the seven-mile course were his daughter, 4-year-old Elsa, and his son, 7-year-old Reid. Both had chosen slower related adult companions to run with instead of their father. In hindsight, Elsa, at least, might start out with her dad next time.

"I lost my running speed when I was with my grandma," said Elsa, who exhibited a precocious talent for talk.

It was Elsa's first organized running event and first-ever run at the seven-mile distance.

But, said Tomko, "she runs all the time."

Unfortunately for Tomko, so does Cook. The 39-year-old from Keyport cruised to a first-place finish in 40 minutes and 54 seconds — eight seconds faster than year's winning time.

The runner-up finish didn't put a damper on Tomko's praise of the weather — a runner-friendly 55 degrees at the 8

a.m. start — or the nature of the course.

"Really, really nice," Tomko said of the paved road race that began near Shelton Valley Christian School, completed a loop around Shelton Valley and West Deegan roads before finishing the last two miles down Railroad Avenue to the Shelton Post Office.

"Beautiful scenery," Tomko said.

Tomko was even with Cory Woodard 44, of Shelton, for the first few miles but pulled away early in the second half of the race. Woodard finished fifth overall in 45:57, 74 seconds faster than his performance in 2011.

Paul Bliss, 47, of Tumwater, was third in 44:31 and Erik Heimann, 40, of Olympia, took fourth in 45:01.

Heather Dodge, 32, of Shelton, earned the women's title in the seven-mile run with a time of 54:48 — 20 seconds ahead of last year's winning time.

Dodge said she's training for her first marathon — the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon on June 23 in Seattle. Her training, she said, seems to be typical of any parent.

"I've got four kids," Dodge said.

As Dodge approached the first hill in the road course at about mile 2.2, just before runners turned left onto West Deegan Road, she was behind only 12-year-old Tayler Geiger, of Shelton.

She passed her, and held off Olympia resident Sonja Purtteman. Purtteman stopped the clock in 55:47.

Keri Davidson, 38, of Shelton, placed third in 57:02 and Geiger finished fourth in 58:05.

But Dodge, who placed second in the Mother's Day Dash four-mile run in Shelton on May 13, knew the extra three miles contested

on Saturday afforded her plenty of time to catch up.

Dodge averaged 8:04 per mile on May 13. On Saturday, she improved to 7:49 per mile.

Dodge took second last year in the Goldsborough race. She was on the heels — literally — of the woman ahead of her and clipped her opponent's heel. The resulting crash, Dodge said, gave her a fractured right leg.

It wasn't so close in the two-mile races.

Cody Williamson, an incoming junior for Shelton High School's cross country program, cruised to what seemed an easy win in 9:56.

Darius Burke, 16, of Shelton, was a distant second in 10:32 and Zacharie Taylor, 17, of Grapeview, placed third in 10:42.

Williamson said he had difficulty judging his pace on the point-to-point course, which features a slight downhill from the starting line.

"I took off way too fast," he said. "Road races are just so hard to pace."

Sarah Johnson, a 2010 Shelton High School graduate, made sure the women's two-mile race could barely be considered a competition.

Johnson, 19, entered the 2012 event as the three-time defending champion and the course recordholder (11:52).

Her primary motivation was not winning a fourth consecutive title. Instead, it was to try and beat her father, 43-year-old John Johnson.

The strategy paid off. The two Johnsons cruised through the one-mile mark in a blistering 4:58 — only 18 seconds behind Williamson.

"I just heard him say, 'oh, God,'" Johnson said of her father's reaction at the midway point.

The younger Johnson placed fourth overall in 10:46 while her father was next to cross the line (10:53).

Anika Parker, 12, of Shelton, was the second female to finish with a time of 12:46. Lindsey Goldsby, 14, of Shelton, took third in 13:40.

Proceeds from the Goldsborough Creek Fun Runs, which includes a quarter-mile "junior jog" for children, benefit the Mason General Hospital Foundation.

For more information, visit www.masongeneral.com and click on "events."