Shurter wins his second Shamrock Scramble

By JOE DINEEN

For the past seven years, St. Patrick's Day festivities in the hamlet of Wallkill have kicked off with the 5K Shamrock Scramble. In fact, it almost seems St. Patty's Day would not get the proper sendoff without this popular road race.

George Shurter of Middletown, one of the top road race competitors in Orange County, has participated in every race since it was inaugurated in 1988 and enjoyed some satisfying results.

Shurter, placing in the top three during all of his appearances, posted his second victory in Sunday's Shamrock Scramble by running his fastest time. Shurter was clocked in 15 minutes 40 seconds over the 3.1-mile course, outkicking Gary Hans of Middletown and Martin Morales of Newburgh.

"I just enjoy competing in this race every year," said Shurter following his victory. "It is run on a fast course; there is always good competition; and (race director) Spero Chumas always does an excellent job putting this together each year."

Shurter won the 1989 Shamrock Scramble, was second on four other occasions and finished third in 1992. But this was his fastest effort.

"I was really surprised with my time, but I was pushed by some good competition," admitted Shurter. "Martin Morales was ahead of me, but he got sick and pulled back. Then he nearly went ahead of me again, but he got sick again. That gave me a chance and I took advantage of it. If Martin hadn't gotten sick, I'm not sure I would have been able to stay with him."

Morales is the Shamrock Scramble course record-holder, but he is returning to competitive racing after a long layoff. Gary Hans of Middletown also pressured Shurter, but ended up second overall with a time of 15:53. Morales finished in 16:08.



Over 200 runners at the start of the seventh annual Shamrock Scramble in Wallkill. JOE DINEEN

Jan Vermilye, one of Orange County's master runners at 44, was the first woman to finish the 3.1-mile course. She posted a time of 19 minutes 26 seconds, edging Joanne Eherts of Middletown by 12 seconds. Eherts had a time of 19:38.

The race is a lot of fun because Chumas and his Wallkill race committee take care of the competitors. The age group competition is broken down in 5-year categories, not 10 years like in many races. The competitors also receive t-shirts and a breakfast at the Wallkill Fire House.

The Shamrock Scramble attracted a field of 207 runners and more than 35 walkers during a perfect day for racing.

The age group winners among the men included Chris Ruckdeschel, 18:40, (15 & Under); Jeff Rios, Schabot, 20:59 (25-29); Martin Morales, 16:08 (30-34); Frank Wipple, 18:50 (35-39); Alan Zubowicz, 17:52 (40-44); William Chawner, 17:10 (45-49); Paul Rehm, 19:24 (50-54); John Grant, 19:56 (55-59); Mort Berman, 20:02 (60-64); Bernie Stahl, 23:46 (65-69), and heavyweight division (over 200 lbs.), Al Schmidt, 18:04.

The women's age group winners included Kelly McIntosh, 21:27 (15 & Under); Jesse Phillips, 23:02 (20-29); Joanne Eherts, 19:38 (30-34) ; Glenda Chipperfield, 20:19 (35-39); Colleen Fischer, 20:13 (40-44); Benita Auge, 21:29 (45-49); Janet Mancuso, 27:36 (50-59); and Edith Farias, 26:58 (60 & Over).

Doug Ingram and Joanne Warren were the overall winners among the walkers. Warren was timed in 36:31 while Ingram posted a time of 37:54. The men age group winners included Joe Beattie, 41:03 (39 &

Shurter, Morales and Hans ran together until the turnaround point midway through the race. Then Morales sprinted to the lead. Shurter held back at that point waiting for his chance to challenge Morales.

"Martin went out sprinting at that point and I wasn't ready for that," said Shurter. "I held back and finally caught Martin when we started up the little hill. But then he almost caught me, but he got sick again. It would have been more interesting if he hadn't gotten sick."

Shurter said he had no special strategy for the Scramrock Scramble, relying on his experience and instinct to make the right move at the right time.

"In a short race like the 5K you have to work hard and react to whatever happens," said Shurter. "I haven't been doing a lot of racing during the winter, other than the winter series, so it was nice to see these kinds of times."

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17:24, (16-19); Gary Hans, 15:53, (20-24); Michael



George Shurter of Middletown crosses the finish line after winning the Shamrock Scramble for the second time.

Under) and Len Vandermark, 38:46 (40 & over).



Jan Vermilye is the first woman to cross the finish line, placing 30th overall.