

SUMMIT

CONGRATULATIONS



NEWS PHOTO BY FRANK MURRAY

High on a mountaintop

One of the more than 1,200 runners entered in Saturday's Mt. Evans Challenge Run crosses the finish line at the end of the grueling 14.2-mile climb. Pat Porter of Evergreen won the race in a time of 1:42:09, nearly four minutes faster than second-place finisher Troy Billings of Denver. Barbara Alm of Fort Collins was the top women's finisher. STORY ON PAGE 107.

Porter romps in Mt. Evans Challenge Run

Wins grueling race by nearly 4 minutes

By KEVIN SIMPSON
News Staff

It was hardly a race at all from a competitive standpoint. Evergreen's Pat Porter saw to that.

While more than 1,200 runners sputtered, gasped, wheezed and shivered for 14.2 miles on the road to the top of Mt. Evans, the 22-year-old Porter strode out confidently from the starting line and simply blew away his competition in the YMCA-Rocky Mountain News Challenge Run early Saturday morning.

But there were times, Porter admitted, when he thought he might be blown away himself — and not by other runners. A rapier-like wind slashed the contestants and of all the liabilities associated with running up the side of a 14,000-foot mountain, it was the most formidable.

"Even on the downhill stretch around Summit Lake I felt like I couldn't make up any ground because the wind was so fierce," said Porter, a five-time All-American in track and cross country at Adams State College. "And when I started back up the hill, it seemed like the wind was right in my face. It seemed like I wasn't even moving."

Actually, Porter moved quite well, covering the course in 1:42:09 — slightly off the record pace of 1:41:35 — and outrunning Denver's Troy Billings (1:45:58) by nearly four minutes. Porter went out fast and led virtually the entire route, opening a margin of two and a half minutes at Summit Lake's nine-mile mark.

"I busted my butt from the beginning," said Porter, who finally won the Challenge Run on his fourth attempt. "I didn't want any doubt in anybody's mind. I was trying to break 1:42, but the wind was too fierce."

Porter, who will be a senior at Adams State, trained in the thin air around Alamosa and came to the race well-prepared to contend with the altitude. In fact, the former Evergreen High track star clipped five minutes off his previous best time, a 1:47 clocking that was good for third place in last year's race. In his first Mt. Evans race four years ago he finished 40th in 2:19. After skipping the event the next year, he improved to 1:57 in 1979.

"I enjoy getting out and getting away from the rest of the pack," said Porter. "Then you don't have to concentrate. You just keep your legs going and keep your rhythm."

Sam Montoya, Porter's teammate at Adams State, set the pace for the first mile, "and I took it from there," said Porter. "I knew what it would take to win. I was ready."

All of the finishers were ready for warmth by the time they reached the summit. The air was a chilly 38 degrees when the starting gun went off, but at the finish line the harsh winds sent clouds tumbling along the course and even triggered brief snow flurries. Those finishers with foresight quickly jumped into sweatsuits and retreated to the infinitely warmer surroundings of the nearest available automobile.

Said Porter: "I'm anxious to get into races at sea level."

In the same breath, Porter said he will pass up the Pikes Peak Marathon, another grueling mountain race, because "marathoning is a little out of my range. Right now, even this seems a little long. The last four miles were murder."

Those final miles are a taxing series of steep-grade switchbacks, but Porter showed no signs of breaking his rhythm the entire race.

"I had a lot of people expecting a lot from me," said Porter, who had a cheering section of family and friends on hand. "And I didn't want any doubt in anybody's mind."

John Swartz of Breckenridge finished third and was followed by Evergreen's Dan Garcia, Roger Johnston and Joe Sheely of Boulder, Denver's Chris Chambers, Leadville's Jim French, Boulder's Chris Kamper and Ken Schei of Englewood rounding out the first 10.

In the women's division, Barbara Alm took top honors with a time of 2:12:44, nearly three minutes ahead of Colorado Springs runner Sue Gladney (2:15:01), last year's top woman finisher, and well off the record of 2:09:49. Alm, of Fort Collins, was the 114th finisher overall and Gladney was 136th. Jan Phillips of Denver was third among women, 152nd overall with a time of 2:17:23.

