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## Sports

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# Darling Reed brings state title race to River Run

## Bradenton Runners Club annual event will be five-mile state championship race

ROGER MOONEY  
Herald Staff Writer

The idea came to Rae Ann Darling Reed after she placed first in her age group at the Micanopy Half Marathon last year and drove back to Bradenton the newly crowned half marathon state champion for females ages 30-34.

A little wordy, but a nice distinction.

As one of the directors for the Bradenton Runners Club, Darling Reed decided to see if she could get the club's annual five-mile race deemed a state championship. And in less time than it took her to win her age group at the half marathon, Darling Reed did just that.

All it took was a little paper work, and Saturday morning's Manatee River Run 5-mile race, which starts at 8:30 a.m. at Emerson Point Park on Snead Island, is now the 2006 five-mile state championship race for the state of Florida.

"A little bit of bragging rights," Darling Reed said.

"A nice feather in our cap," added BRC president Alan Meyer.

And a pretty nifty honor for what's quickly developing into one of the top five-mile races in the state.

What started out as a year-end run aimed at raising money for the BRC's scholarship program now attracts a deep and diverse field.

Of the 372 pre-registered runners, 56 come from states other than Florida, and 23 come from countries other than the United States.

"A lot of people are here this time of year, they find out about the race and they come," Meyer said.

As of Thursday, Canada, England, Germany and Finland will be represented.

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The large contingent of visitors in town for the holidays helps swell the field. So does the distance, the timing and the course, which takes runners through both trails and roads.

There are only two other five milers held during the year between Venice and Tampa.

And there are no other races held in the area during the last Saturday of December.

Combine those with the upcoming Disney Marathon and the Gasparilla Distance Classics (15K, half and full marathon) held early next year and the BRC puts on a nice little training run for those training for bigger runs.

The BRC wasn't considering those factors when it started the race in 2001. It all just fell into place.

"When we set it up, we were just looking for a weekend that wouldn't compete with other races," Meyer said. "We never thought it would be this big."

The first race attracted 244 runners of which 224 finished.

Registration peaked at 395 in 2003 and was almost topped by last year's total of 393.

This year's 372 is a record for pre-registered runners for any of the 14 races sanctioned by the BRC. Race day registration is expected to bring another 100 or so runners, making this year the largest field in the River Run's six-year history.

"With the two loops through the woods and the second half on the road, it's a little bit of an unusual course," Meyer said. "I think word has spread over the years that this is a really great race, and people want to run it."

Manatee River Run 5-mile Race

## **RECORDS**

**Male:** Alex Miletich 25:52 (2004).

**Female:** Mary Ann Protz 30:54 (2005).

## **FIELDS**

### **Year Runners/finishers**

2001 244/224

2002 287/276

2003 395/349

2004 293/250

2005 393/358



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