

# North Carolina runner wins Tybee in record-breaking time

Aldrink runs course in 2:29:48; hopes to qualify for U.S. Olympic trials

Winning the February 2, 2007 Memorial Health Tybee Marathon wasn't the last thing on Mike Aldrink's mind early Saturday morning. The thought may have been fleeting, even in his subconscious.

"I never enter a race thinking I'm going to win it," the Durham, N.C., resident said. "Really, my main goal for today was to break 2:30 (2 hours, 30 minutes)."

On a bone-chilling day, Aldrink accomplished his goal and then some, running a personal-best time of 2:29:48 to win the title. Second-place finisher Radek Parnica, a triathlete who lives in Savannah, was nearly 20 seconds behind with a time of 2:47:52. Robert Preston of Athens, Tenn., placed third in 2:50.00.

The 30-year-old Aldrink not only won Tybee's marquee event, but he eclipsed Paul Deaton's record time of 2:30:43.9 in 1997.

"With such a flat course, I thought I had a shot (at the record)," said Aldrink, who was on a 5:43 mile pace. "It was in the back of my mind."

With a race-time temperature in the mid 30s - and a brisk wind that made it feel at least five degrees colder - Ed Long, the president of the Savannah Striders, was pleasantly surprised by Aldrink's accomplishment.

"I thought it was incredible," said Long, whose organization puts together and directs the Tybee event each winter. "I'm no marathoner, but I thought the conditions were pretty tough. People were talking about the wind. Going south to north there was a pretty good headwind."

Aldrink, a teacher and coach at Cresset Christian Academy in Durham, acknowledged the wind, but said "once you started running, the conditions were pretty close to ideal."

The former University of South Florida track and cross country runner heard about the Tybee Marathon from a friend who ran it last year. His friend's report went something like this: flat course and well-organized race, which was more than good enough for Aldrink, who said he has run "30 or 31" marathons.

"It was as well-run a race as I was told," he said. "Every bump and pothole on the course was marked, and everyone was very helpful."

Aldrink's next marathon will be in Sarasota, FL, in March. His last marathon of the year will likely be the Chicago Marathon on Oct. 7. His biggest goal between now and then is to record a time of 2:22, which would qualify him for the U.S. Olympic trials marathon in November in New York.

"I still have quite a bit of time to drop," he said. "If I don't get it this year, I'll try again for (the) 2012 (Olympics)."