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Cook cooks up marathon win

By DANNY RODE Advocate staff

Jack Cook accomplished something Sunday morning no other man has done since the birth of the Red Deer Woody's RV World **marathon** eight years ago — beat Phil Meagher.

Cook captured the 42.2-kilometre run in two hours, 49 minutes, 30 seconds, which was well off a record pace.

"I wasn't worried about the time as I'm preparing for an ultra (100-km) **marathon** next week," said the 38-year-old Edmonton native. "Once I got out in front I ran my race and hoped to come out on top."

Meanwhile, Ayano Hird of Calgary made her first **marathon** a memorable one, capturing the women's title in 3:24:28, just ahead of Red Deer's Janet Spafford, who finished in 3:25:00. Hird was 21st and Spafford 22nd overall.

Donald Fairweather of St. Albert was second overall at 2:54:23 with Colin Lee of Calgary third at 2:55:28 with Meagher of Fort McMurray fourth at 2:56:11.

Cook, who ran his first **marathon** 10 years ago, passed Meagher at the 10km mark, but never felt comfortable.

"Once I passed him I was still a little nervous," he said.

"I've faced him several times in the past and every time I'd pass him early and he'd catch me late. I was looking back expecting him to catch me today, but once I got in front I never saw him again."

Cook is a member of the Canadian ultra **marathon** running team, and expects to compete in the world championships in Korea.

"I enjoy the long distance runs and use the **marathons** to prepare me," he said.

Fairweather, who was making his first appearance in Red Deer, passed Meagher around the 10km mark, then battled Lee and Meagher down the stretch.

"I never saw Jack, but the other guys and I were together most of the way until I was able to pull away a bit at the end."

Meagher was well off his best time, but made no excuses.

"I ran my best," said the 45-year-old. "Really it's been a great run. I won this race once for every member of my family and I believe I've done everything I could to make this race stand out and left a good legacy."

"I know one thing my record won't be broken for a while . . . if ever."

Meagher has faced Cook several times over the years and didn't mind seeing him in the winner's circle.

"Jack and I are good friends and it's nice to see someone like him take over."

Hird didn't enter the **marathon** with the idea of winning.

"I certainly didn't expect it. In fact with it being my first time I didn't have any idea what to expect . . . my goal was just to finish," she said.

Her second goal was to qualify to compete in next year's Boston **marathon**, which she did.



Photo By JEFF STOKOE/Advocate staff

Jack Cook of Edmonton looks strong as he crosses the old train bridge over the Red Deer River, just three km from the finish line. Cook completed the Woody's RV World Marathon on Sunday morning in a time of 2:49:28 to take first place overall.

"It turned out great," said Hird, who attended Red Deer College for four years beginning in 1997.

Hird didn't start running seriously until last year.

"I was in speed skating, so I did run, but nothing serious," she said. "Once I started I ran a couple of half **marathons** and figured it was time to try a **marathon**."

Hird was pleased with her time, but it could have been slightly better.

"At the 35km mark my hamstrings began to seize up and I had to stop briefly to stretch twice," explained Hird, who ran by herself most of the way.

"There was no one with me and I kept thinking I may not be on the right track and was lost," she said with a laugh.

Spafford's performance came nine months after she gave birth.

"I was able to train normally, but with the baby and all I don't recommend it," she said. "Still I'm happy . . . I did my best."

Spafford, who ran the Boston **marathon** two years ago, could see Hird most of the way, but could never catch her.

"I just kept looking at the women in red ahead of me . . . she ran a phenomenal race . . . good for her," added Spafford.

- Ken Myers of Calgary won the half **marathon** in 1:12:55 with Jonathan Withey of Edmonton at 1:14:49.

Sara Gross of Calgary won the women's half **marathon** in 1:30:09 placed her 15th overall.

Tara Whitten of Red Deer was 16th and second on the women's side with a time of 1:30:36.

Shauna Skinner of Red Deer was third and 20th overall at 1:31:10.

For category winners see scoreboard (page C4).
