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[New runner gets off to quick start](#)

Competitive coach who began two years ago wins national award

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Mindi Rice of Lewisville still can't believe she runs, much less that she's the Road Runners Club of America's 2006 Female Runner of the Year.

"It's definitely a shock to me," said Rice, who received the news this week. "I'm amazed. I've always been very, very competitive but never had any desire to run."

Rice, 31, said she played competitive sports her entire life but only began running two years ago when she coached distance runners for Irving's Austin Middle School track team.

"I wanted to be able to run with them," Rice said. "Part of the reason was to show them I could do it. The other part was to make sure they did their workouts."

A friend talked her into entering her first race, the 2005 Labor Day 15K at White Rock Lake. Rice hoped to run eight-minute miles. She ran 30 seconds faster and maintained the pace, winning her age group and placing fourth among women in one hour, seven minutes and 39 seconds.

"As soon as they said, 'Go,' that whole competitiveness kicked in," Rice said. "It's a competitive drive my mom and dad said I've had forever."

Rice won her age group or the overall women's division in nine of 10 races between the 2005 and 2006 Labor Day 15K races.

At the 2005 Dallas White Rock Marathon half, she arranged for three Lake Grapevine Runners and Walkers club members to pace her through her first 13.1-mile race.

"She was so unaware of her abilities that she beat the three men by more than 10 minutes," said Kelly Richards, president of the Lake Grapevine club, which nominated her for the prestigious national award. "Mindi has talent that is scary."

Rice placed second among women, finishing in 1:28:50.

Her training varies depending on her work schedule. She has limited time to train during basketball season. She usually runs an eight-mile loop on Saturdays and Sundays. She said joining the running club helped motivate her.

"That's been the best move ever," she said. "They've become my whole new circle of friends. I look forward to seeing them on the weekends."

In turn, they enjoy sharing Rice's success. They also admire her enthusiasm and dedication to the sport and to her student-athletes. Richards said Rice often brings her underprivileged students to races and pays their entry fees.

Road Runners Club of America award winners will be honored during the awards ceremony at the 2007 annual banquet, March 24 in Chicago.

"I hope this award lets her realize how special she is," Richards said.

Uptown moves to April: The 21st Borden Uptown Run & Trolley Walk, benefiting Special Olympics, will move from its traditional March date to April 7. The race was pushed back to avoid conflicting with the March 24 IAAF World Cross Country Championships in Kenya, race director Tom Short said. The Carlsbad 5,000, which also draws international elite runners, is April 1 in California.

Short said Uptown officials hope to land some of the international elite runners who might be in the United States for the Carlsbad race. Defending Uptown champion Sammy Kipketer missed breaking the world 8K record by nine seconds.

"This puts us in prime position to capture more world elites coming off these two races," Short said.

Other schedule changes: The Trio, formerly Kids in Action 5K in Cedar Hill, has moved from April to March, and the Right Foot Run 5K in Garland rescheduled from March to November. ... The Double Play Duathlon, an Ironhead Race Productions duathlon, will be March 18 at Amerquest Field. All competitors will receive two tickets to the Rangers-Boston Red Sox game on April 7. The 5K run/10K bike/2.5K run finishes on the third-base line. ... The Frisco Spring Fling 5K, Westlake's Run the Ranch 5K, Coppell's Extreme Makeover 5K and the Flower Mound Special Olympic Spirit 5K have been cancelled.

Briefly: Clint Bell and Mo Ecker won the NHL All Star Race-n-Roll last month at the American Airlines Center. ... The Dallas Running Club, formerly the Cross Country Club of Dallas, was a finalist for having one of the top three large club Web sites in the country by the Road Runners Club of America. ... Saturn is the title sponsor for the Feb. 24 Cowtown Marathon's Kids 5K. The Cowtown event will have a full marathon, a half marathon, a marathon relay, a 10K, an adult 5K and the Saturn Kids 5K.

CALENDAR

SATURDAY, FEB. 3 – Dallas Running Club (previously Cross Country Club of Dallas) Tal Morrison Classic 15K and 5K, Winfrey Point, White Rock Lake, Dallas, 8 a.m., members free, others \$10, 214-432-6619 or www.dallasrunningclub.com.

SATURDAY, FEB. 3 – Kick 4 College Run 5K, Bob Woodruff Park, 2601 San Gabriel, Plano, 8 a.m., \$25, 972-838-5425 or www.GetMeRegistered.com

SATURDAY, FEB. 3 – Fillie Trot 5K and 1-mile, Grapevine Lake, Oak Grove Park, 2500 North Dove Loop, Grapevine, 8:45 a.m., \$20, 817-481-8872 or www.active.com

SATURDAY, FEB. 3 – American Heritage Academy Run for the Children 5K and 1K, 2660 East Trinity Mills, Carrollton, 8 a.m., \$20 through today, \$25 race day, 972-416-5437, ext. 1313 or www.starsaha.org

SATURDAY, FEB. 3 – The Trio 5K and 1-mile fun run, Canterbury Episcopal School, 1708 N. Westmoreland Road, DeSoto, 8 a.m., \$20, 972-572-7200, ext. 103 or www.runontexas.com.

SUNDAY, FEB. 4 – Burleson Runners Back to Basics 10K, 2-mile and Kids' 1K, Burleson Community Center, Burleson, 3 p.m., 817-496-3734.

SATURDAY, FEB. 10 – Haltom Stampede 10K and 5K, Haltom Recreation Center, 4839 Broadway, Haltom City, 817-831-6464 or crussell@haltomcitytx.com.

SATURDAY, FEB. 10 – Knight Run 5K and 1-mile, Holy Rosary Catholic School, 2015 Southwest Green Oaks Blvd., Arlington, 8 a.m., \$15 through Saturday, \$20 after, \$25 race day. 817-253-6473 or www.knightruntx.com

SATURDAY, FEB. 10 – Jogging for Johnson 5K and 1-mile, Johnson Elementary School, Southlake, 8 a.m., \$15 through Sunday, \$20 after, 817-707-3440.

SATURDAY, FEB. 10 – The Texas Half and 5K, Winfrey Point, White Rock Lake, Dallas, 8 a.m., Half Marathon: \$45 through Tuesday, \$50 through race day. 5K: \$20 through Feb. 9, \$25 race day, 972-235-2513 or www.texashalf.com.

SATURDAY, FEB. 10 – East Texas Ultra Runners 50K & 25K, Tyler State Park, Tyler 7 a.m., 50K \$55, 25K \$45, 903-894-3788 or www.ntrr.org

SUNDAY, FEB. 11 – Fort Worth Runners Club Cowtown Countdown 5-mile, River Plaza Building Parking Lot, 1701 River Run, Fort Worth, 8 a.m., members \$8, others \$12, 817-654-5390 or www.fwrunners.org.

TUESDAY, FEB. 13 – Plano Pacers Prediction Race 5K, 7 p.m., Schimelpfenig Library, 5024 Custer Road, Plano, free, 972-967-7223 or www.planopacers.org.