

Winter Blast, Grandville

Hot Times at Winter Blast Series Opener

By Scott Sullivan

GRANDVILLE (2/16/13) — Former Michigan Runners of the Year Nick Stanko and Kris Koster didn't fear getting lost at the fore of the Winter Blast 5K field.

The course — on flat, residential streets behind race sponsor Calvin Christian High School — was so assaulted with sleet beforehand that falling snow had no chance of sticking. Plows had also scraped side roads, but not made them sodium-bare and black.

Stanko, MR's 2005 and 2010 Runner of the Year, and Koster, 2011 Men's Co-Runner of the Year, spread heat from the start in this first event of Michigan Runner magazine's 2013 Race Series. The two former college stars — Stanko at the University of Michigan, Koster at Calvin College — sized through the snow to a photo finish. Asked while doing a cool-down together afterward who had won, neither knew.

"We ran through a door inside to a dark gymnasium, then, boom, we were done," said Stanko.

"Nick closed stronger. I think he got me," Koster said.

The clock showed Koster, winner in each of the Winter Blast's first three runnings, was accurate. Stanko, 32, crossed in 15:40.0; Koster, 31, in 15:40.7.

Calvin Christian, whose boys cross country team finished third in the Division 3 state meet last fall, was well represented behind the leaders. All-state seniors Zac Nowicki (15:59.7) and Andrew Rylandsdam (16:25.1) placed third and fourth. Next came junior Logan Jurgens (16:50.7).

Calvin's girls, second in the state just four points behind Jackson Lumen Christi, fared even better, with senior Ashley Jourdan (20:00.0) nipping sophomore Enma Doorn (20:07.0) for the women's title.

"I'm pleased with the way our team members ran," said race director and CC coach Laurens TenKate. "I can see who's been training in the off-season. We'll have most of our top girls back next fall, while some of our younger guys will have new opportunities."

Old-timers had their day in the sun ... OK, snow, as well. Brian Falsby, 44, nipped JD Pepper, 49, for the men's masters crown, 18:00.4 to 18:01.1. Steve Hulst, 56, (19:12.7) topped Dan Kervjes, 51, (20:19.7) for grand masters honors.



Photo by Scott Sullivan

Nick Stanko (bib no. 3) edged Kris Koster (bib no. 2) for the 5K win.



Photo by Scott Sullivan



Photo by Scott Sullivan

Gayle Kuipers, 47, (21:01.3) bested Darla Brown, 49, (24:24.4) among masters women. Wanda Hanlin, 56, (22:30.9) paced the grand masters, followed by Nancy Curry, 51, (24:42.7). Valentine's roses were handed to each woman finisher.

Harold Plasier and Rob Smith faced a thornier dilemma as the only two in the oldest race group.

"Rod and I have strategy," said Plasier, 79.

"We outlive our competitors," Smith, 76, chipped in.

A 1K Winter Flurry children's fun reddened cheeks and warmed hearts as well.

For complete results and more information, visit <http://sites.google.com/site/calvinchristians/home/winter-blast-5k>.