

Graham's first marathon's the one that 'sounded tough'

By **BARBARA BOXLEITNER**

Special to the Daily News

Naples resident Ann-Margret Graham proved she's tough enough.

When the 37-year-old was deciding which marathon she wanted to be her first, she didn't randomly select one. She picked the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington.

"It sounded tough," said Graham, who has a son and a daughter. "I wanted to do a big (marathon) for my first one."

Graham met Naples residents Pam Tanner, Allyson Blasucci and Jill Wheeler through the Gulf Coast Runners and trained with them since July for their respective fall marathons.

"It was crazy training," said Graham, who has been running in local 5K events and half-marathons for about four years.

On work mornings, they would be up at 4 a.m. to get in runs before returning home at 6:45 a.m. to get ready. Every other Saturday they went to Marco Island for their hill training, she said.

"It was definitely intense," Graham said.

Graham finished the October marathon in 4 hours, 9 minutes, 49 seconds.

She was 5,234 out of 18,270 finishers and placed 216th out of 1,149 in the female 35-39 age category.

"I was trying for a 3:50 marathon. It was a little harder than I thought," she said. "It was an amazing experience."

Husband Steve Graham, 39, completed the 10K run there in 45:42. He finished 126th out of 3,634 runners and 12th out of 194 in the male 35-39 age group.

He was done with his race more than an hour when his wife saw him at mile 21 in the marathon and told him to run beside her, which he did until she crossed the finish line.

"I couldn't have done it without his help," she said.

Graham said she's thinking about another marathon next year, but in the meantime will continue with shorter runs, including January's Naples Daily News Half Marathon.

Other area competitors in the Marine Corps Marathon were Naples residents Behzad Afshar-Naseri, 31, (4:33:27) and Roxanne Jeske, 40, (6:13:10) and Estero resident

Ben Thye, 46, (5:52:30).

In the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon, Tanner, 38, finished in 3:23:07. She was eighth out of 521 in the female 35 to 39 age group. Blasucci, 37, finished in 3:36:11, 29th in her age bracket.

In the New York City Marathon, Wheeler, 35, finished in 3:38:21.

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The 2009 Naples Daily News Marathon is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 18.

For newcomers to the field, race director George Dondanville has developed and posted on the race's online site a 12-week schedule they can follow.

People may register until Jan. 17, but registration that final day must be in person. There is no registration on race day.

The race, which begins at 7 a.m., starts on Fifth Avenue South and ends at Cambier Park in Olde Naples.

The entry fee is \$30 before Dec. 1, \$45 between Dec. 1 and Jan. 10 and \$60 between Jan. 11 and Jan. 17.

For information including the training schedule, visit napleshalfmarathon.net (the Related Link on the left). For questions, call Dondanville at 434-9786.

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Capt. Ron Hueston will be the featured speaker at the Naples Fishing Club's meeting Tuesday.

Club president Curtis Ledbetter will open the meeting at 6:30 p.m., followed by members' accounts of recent fishing experiences. At 7 p.m. club members will discuss offshore and backwater issues.

Hueston is a south Florida native and local guide with 20 years of experience fishing the bays, backwaters and coastal Gulf waters from Florida Bay to Englewood.

He has competed the past five years in professional level redfish circuits.

He specializes in light tackle and plug casting and targets trophy fish, including snook, redfish, tarpon, trout and cobia. He will speak at 7:40 p.m.

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The Super 65 Softball League is recruiting players.

The league, whose games are at North



Collier Regional Park, has games through April. Players must be 62 in 2009 to qualify. Call Jim Parejko at 566-1896.



The South Florida Racewalkers will hold the Florida State Racewalk Championships at Golden Gate High School on Dec. 7.

The event will feature 1,500-meter, 3,000-meter and 1-mile race walks. The public is invited to watch. For information, contact Daniel Koch at 954-970-9634 or racewalker@bellsouth.net.

To submit items for the recreation column, send an e-mail to sports@naplesnews.com or a fax to 263-4816

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*on her goal for her first marathon, the
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