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Runners of the year include old, new faces

By LARRY L. HAMILTON
Special to The State

ERIC ASHTON OF Columbia and Maggie Chan Roper of Shaw Air Force Base were named the S.C. Long Distance Runners of the Year.

Ashton, 38, captured the award for the 11th time in the past 14 years.

Roper, 30, won for the first time. She was born in Hong Kong, where she held seven national records, from the 1,500-meter to the marathon. She competed in the marathon for Hong Kong in the 2000 Sydney Olympics and will attempt to make the 2008 U.S. team.

The Masters division winners were Tom Mather, 49, of Mount Pleasant and Dian Ford, 51, of Seneca. It was Mather's first win and Ford's fourth. Ford holds nine S.C. age-group records.

Rock Hill sweep. Rock Hill's 27th annual Alyce T. Guettler Hunger Run on Feb. 4 featured 146 finishers. The top three finishers were from Rock Hill: Stuart McDaniel, 18, 16:41; Jonathan McGinnis, 18, 17:38; and Michael Marshall, 17, 17:42. Rock Hill residents also claimed the top three spots in the women's race: Kelly Gainey, 35, 21:30; Hope Figuero, 25, 21:55; and Lisa Cox, 33, 22:33.

Columbia runners make Strides. The Strides in Health 5K, sponsored by the USC School of Medicine, featured 75 finishers on Saturday. Columbia residents took the top three spots: John Charlton, 40, 16:15; Garry Morten, 26, 18:26; and Megan Weis, 29, 18:51.

Hilton Head races. Larry Evans, 37, of Georgia won Hilton Head's half-marathon Saturday in 1:14:48, topping a field of 333. Karl Walsh, 31, of Mount Pleasant was second in 1:14:50, followed by Masters division runner David Quick, 42, in 1:18:17. Marisa Johnson, 27, of Atlanta was the first female finisher, 17th overall, in 1:29:03.

In the 10K, Irv Batten, 43, of Summerville led 197 finishers in 33:50. Hunter Hicklin, 24 of Charleston was second in 35:25. Devondria Sanchez, 28, of Bluffton was the first female finisher, 17th overall, in 45:13.

Note. Columbia's Chapter of Girls On The Run is accepting online registration at girlsontherun.org. For information, call Janice Addison at (803) 865-5593.

UPCOMING

Friday-Sunday

MYRTLE BEACH 5K run, 6:15 p.m. Friday; marathon, relay and half-marathon, 6:30 a.m. Saturday; bicycle ride, 7:30 a.m. Sunday (10, 30 or 63 miles). (843) 293-RACE, www.mbmarathon.com.

Saturday

BLUFFTON 8:30 a.m., Pinckney Colony Duathlon and 5K Run Series, 5K race or duathlon (5K run, 6-mile trail bike), (843) 816-2979.

FOLLY BEACH 9 a.m., MESSA 8K, (843) 817-8064.

Feb. 24

LEXINGTON 8:15 a.m., Race Against Hunger 10K, 5K Fitness Walk, Saxe Gothe Presbyterian, U.S. 378, (803) 359-7770, www.lexrah.org.

GREENVILLE 8:30 a.m., Green Valley 10-mile and 8K, (864) 322-5545.

Code: GPT — Grand Prix Tour; TDC — Tour de Columbia