



2009 Avia OC Marathon
in Southern California

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Avia Orange Country Marathon
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A Fresh Face & Local Favorite Win Southern California Marathon Titles

NEWPORT BEACH, CA—Under perfect marathon running conditions (overcast and cool), the **2009 Southern California USATF Marathon Championship** was held in conjunction with the **5th annual Avia Orange County Marathon** on Sunday, May 3. Taking first place in the men's division was marathon newcomer **Eulogio Rodriguez**, who traversed the scenic 26.2 mile course in **2:26:30**. In the women's division, veteran **Cheryl Smith** claimed the championship title with a time of **3:07:04**.



Eli Rodriguez with 2004 Olympic Coach, Bob Larsen



Cheryl Smith
Joness

Photos by Wayne

For Rodriguez, it was only his second marathon—the first being the Long Beach Marathon last October in which he ran a nearly identical time of 2:26:27. “Eli”, as he is known to his International City Racing Club teammates, was hoping for a time of 2:22. “I thought the next runners were only 3-4 minutes behind me,” Rodriguez noted. “So every time I cramped up and had to stop and walk, I was worried they would catch me.” As it turned out, his nearest competitor was almost 25-minutes behind, leaving Rodriguez to race against the clock for the last half of the race.

While Eli is new to the marathon, **Cheryl Smith**, the women's champion, claimed the title again after winning the inaugural OC Marathon in 2004. Close behind Cheryl was runner-up **Rosalva Bonilla**, the first Masters Woman finisher, with a time of 3:10:37. While, start-to-finish, the course elevation is a net loss (i.e. downhill), the rolling hills of the redesigned course sapped the speed from some of the top runners in the race.

In addition to those top athletes, the Southern California Association was well-represented in all its 5-year age-groups. Among those runners were age-group gold medal winners **Ryan Albu** (31) of Pasadena and **Andy Bussell** (28) of Newport Beach. Like Eli and Cheryl, both were also 2009 Southern California 5K Champions at the Coaster Run 5K in March. In addition to running both those Association Championship races and participating in the Road Running Grand Prix Series, Andy, who ran 6-miles Sunday morning before the start of the marathon (!), is also launching an ultra-distance runner career and participating in the 2009 SCA M.U.T. Ultra Runners Grand Prix.

With the highs and lows of racing the challenging marathon distance behind them, SCA runners are now focusing on the next Southern California Grand Prix race—the **Brentwood 10K**—on Sunday, June 7 in beautiful Brentwood, California. This starts a stretch of Grand Prix scoring-only races, which continues with the **Semana Nautica 15K** on July 4 in Santa Barbara, and the **Run Forest Run 5K**, held in conjunction with the Long Beach Marathon, on October 11.

The next Southern California USATF Championship race will be the **Santa Barbara Half-Marathon** on Saturday, November 7, 2009.