

Photo courtesy of Jonathan Roberts



The first and second legs of the Triple Crown — the Anthem 5K and Rodes City Run 10K — take place March 7 and 21, respectively.

## The Triple Crown (For Humans)

The Louisville Triple Crown of Running started in 1984. That's right: This year is the series' 25th. And Ray Parrella, part of the local culinary scene for decades and owner of a Frankfort Avenue Italian restaurant, has competed in 22 or 23 of them. He can't remember the exact number because he's done so many. "In the Louisville area, all year people talk about the Triple Crown of Running. It has such a strong reputation," the 74-year-old Parrella says. "For me and my friends, even though we slow up as we get older, we just want to be a part of it."

The Anthem 5K Fitness Classic kicks things off on March 7, followed by the Rodes City Run 10K on March 21 and the Papa John's 10-Miler on April 11. "People like that it's a series of more difficult events," says Pru Radcliffe, one of the Triple Crown's managers. "It's psychological. People say, 'I can do the 5K, so in two weeks I'm going to do the 10K too.' Then they say, 'Ha, I can do the 10-miler.'" Though the Rodes City Run has been around since the beginning, the other two races have changed over time. During the first year, for example, the second leg was the Run for the Arts and, to cap things off, people ran in the Kentucky Derby Festival's mini-marathon. In 2004, the Anthem 5K replaced the Derby Festival's events as part of the Triple Crown.

Last year, almost 7,000 runners finished the 5K, more than 5,600 completed the 10K and nearly 5,900 did the 10-miler. In total, 4,641 crossed the finish line in all three. Though the majority of participants were from Kentucky and Indiana, 18 states were represented overall. It's worth noting that the trio of contests raised more than \$131,000 for Crusade for Children in 2008.

According to the most recent data available, from 2007, each leg ranked as one of the 100 largest running events in the United States. And this year, organizers expect numbers to stay the same. Or maybe even increase. Fred Teale has worked at Rodes for 35 years and has been involved with his company's race since it started in 1981, even before the Triple Crown existed. He's now the Rodes City Run's director. "I don't think people here locally know what they've got in these three races. There's really nothing like this around," Teale says. "This year, with the pent-up frustration over the weather and the economy, I think people are going to be ready to get out and run."

The 5K begins behind Louisville Slugger Field, at Preston and Witherspoon streets, travels east along the Ohio River and cuts through Butchertown before ending on Main Street. The 10K's course starts in front of the

Brown Hotel on Broadway, takes runners on Cherokee Road, Grinstead Drive and Lexington Road and heads back downtown for a finish near Waterfront Park. For the 10-miler, the course routes competitors down Third Street and around Iroquois Park before heading back up Third. It ends at Papa John's Cardinal Stadium.

Beth Duffy, originally from Shelbyville, has lived in Louisville for more than 20 years, and this will be her first Triple Crown. As a matter of fact, the 46-year-old had never even run a mile before last July. Now she's training with a group at the downtown YMCA. "I've always had weight issues," says Duffy, who has already lost about 50 pounds. "I just thought this was the push I needed to get the last of the weight off." Duffy plans to give her "fat pants" to one of her trainers to hold at the finish line.

"When I think about finishing and I try to see myself, I almost can't," Duffy says. "It's so far beyond the couch-potato status I used to have. But I want it so badly. There aren't really words for it."

The entry fee for each leg is \$20, though the price increases closer to each race. Starting time is 8 a.m. Go to [www.louisvilletriple-crown.com](http://www.louisvilletriple-crown.com) for more information.

— Josh Moss