

## TIM CONWAY

Dear Anne —  
Thanks for "running" for  
the gump. You're a real  
trooper and probably ran  
further than I ever will again.  
Many thanks. Tim Conway

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# Anything (almost) for charity...

The T-shirt and cap arrived in the mail, accompanied by an effusive letter of support from the Don MacBeth Memorial Jockey Fund administrator. I suddenly realized there was no getting out of this.

A few weeks earlier, I'd impulsively agreed to run against fellow "media personalities" in a stick-horse race at Bandera Downs. The top finishers in the trials and finals would earn money for the charities of their choice, while the folks in the grandstand could enjoy some comic relief from the arduous task of handicapping maiden claimers.

What the heck, I figured —it's only 50 yards. Hey, I used to knock off a couple of half-marathons a year. Never mind that the last one I ran in was five years, two kids and 15 pounds ago. Never mind that an average router is bound to get blasted in a sprint. This was a Good Cause, by golly. I told Bandera to count me in.

That's not to say I didn't shame-

lessly try to improve my odds.

How about a distaff division? (Nope, sorry.) Lead weights on the males? (Un-uh.) A five-second head start for an older mare? (Derisive laughter.)

A dozen journalists of assorted shapes and ages showed up on race day. We sheepishly shuffled through a mock post parade, our pastel ponies the only creatures not melting in the brutal Texas sun. Then the first of two trial fields was loaded into the honest-to-goodness gates.

If I hadn't been the only one to break the very instant the doors snapped open (the TV and radio guys being momentarily stunned by the clanging bell), I wouldn't have succeeded in pulling off a show finish. Anyway, it was good enough to qualify for the finals, which meant maintaining a state

of race-readiness for another hour. Meanwhile, as I suspiciously watched the trial losers gleefully consoling one another over ice-cold pitchers in the air-conditioned clubhouse, I had to wonder if they'd truly put forth their best efforts to light the board...

Two horse races later, it was finals time. Four men, two women, another post parade. But this group

meant business. And this time, everybody was ready for the bell.

Consequently, my quick-break strategy wasn't enough to save me from finishing out of the money. Well, okay — so I was fifth out of six. All right, I was dead last, but the fifth-place runner was DQ'd for not properly "riding" his stick-horse. In fact, he fell on his face just past the wire. Served him right.

That our antics were simulcast

on the intrastate beam only ensured the prospect of endless ribbing from industry acquaintances. But I'd gladly make a fool of myself again for the sake of helping to boost racing's image.

The reason: among other things, this type of event is a clever way to provide the mostly indifferent and uninitiated outside media with a memorable, hands-on (feet-on?) experience at a racetrack. No doubt they'd prefer the anonymity of the press box on their next visit, but at least there's a good chance of that visit occurring. The result: more public awareness.

As for me, I was grateful to net \$100 for the MacBeth Fund from my modest showing in the trial. Not a staggering donation, but a useful one. Sure, I'd do this again.

After all, it could have been worse. At least we were spared a trip to the test barn.

□ Anne Lang is Daily Racing Form's Texas breeding correspondent

ANNE  
LANG

