

U.S. Rep. Allen West finishes half-marathon at Palm Beaches Marathon (Palm Beach Post)

By Scott Eyman

The sturdy man with tattoos on both arms and his back crossed the finish line breathing heavily, but not really panting. Pretty good for a 50-year-old Congressman who'd just finished the half-marathon at the eighth running of the Palm Beaches Marathon.

U.S. Rep. Allen West wasn't concerned about his time.

"I don't know. I finished," said West, R-Plantation. "As long as you finish, it's good."

Originally, West was planning to push a boy in a wheelchair for the half-Marathon, on behalf of a local charity, but that fell through. Instead, he ran for the pleasure of the exercise, and for the chance to meet his constituents where they live.

West also ran the half-marathon at the West Palm Beach event in 2007, but has never run the full length.

"Twenty-two years in the military wears on the knees," said West, who spent more than 20 years in the Army and retired as a lieutenant colonel.

To stay in shape, West ignores the Congressional gym in Washington.

"I get up at 5:30 in the morning, do five or six miles, then push ups and crunches. I eat pretty good, lots of fruit, try to eat healthy. I did the Army 10-miler in October at 1 hour 28 minutes, 13

seconds. "

West maintains the same regimen on the weekends when he comes home, but adds a little more distance to the run.

West enjoys the Palm Beaches Marathon partially because it's so "well-run," partially because it gives him a chance to meet his district.

"I can't think of a better thing to do than run with your constituents," he says. "It shows that I'm not any better than any of them. Also, it shows that health care is an individual, personal responsibility. South Florida is conducive to staying fit. The lifestyle works for walking, running, what have you."

The Congressman, whose combative persona is based on leaping beyond doughy liberals in a single bound, comes home to Plantation on most weekends.

"It's a two hour flight from Washington," West said. "There's no reason not to come back and spend time with the family."

On Monday morning, West will be heading back to D.C. on a 7 a.m. flight, fortified by extra-strength pain relievers. He could already feel his thighs tightening up. "It'll be all right; I've had worse," he said.

He's already planning on running in the Fort Lauderdale marathon early next year, and maybe Miami's as well.

A little later, West had reconsidered his indifference to his running time. It seemed that the machine that printed out each runner's time on a ticker tape was broken.

"What time would you liked to have run?" he was asked.

"How about a buck forty nine? Yeah. A minute forty-nine would suit me fine."

West didn't quite get his wish. The race's preliminary results list him at the still-respectable time of 2:05:49

The entire story can be accessed by clicking [here](#) .