

FALL MARATHON WRAP-UP

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

There were a number of fall marathons that produced some great efforts and drew a large number of participants. Since most casual observers know that P Diddy ran the New York City Marathon but have no idea about the less famous yet faster runners out there, here's a look at what took place in other marathon action:

HARTFORD MARATHON (October 11th): After a cold and rainy 2002, Hartford was blessed with near-perfect conditions, displaying the state capital's fall foliage, city neighborhoods, and the quiet country roads along the Connecticut River. 26 year-old Michael Mislav, a Tanzanian training out of West Chester, PA, didn't slow down to check out the scenery and ran a course record 2:17:44 to claim top honors with a comfortable 3 minute winning margin. 42 year-old Ramila Burangulova of Russia was the top female in 2:33:26, slicing over 8 minutes of her previous personal best. Another master's runner, 43 year-old Mike Cobb of West Hartford, hadn't competed in a marathon since the 1988 Olympic Marathon Trials race. Cobb finished 9th overall in a very respectable 2:39:47. There were 1,259 official marathon finishers, in addition to the 1,952 half marathon and 699 5K race finishers.

CHICAGO MARATHON (October 12th): Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski has made the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon *the* marathon to run in the United States, surpassing both Boston and New York in prestige with its pancake flat race course and very competitive race fields, easily filling its 37,500 runner capacity well in advance of race date. Despite the absence of big names like Khalid Khannouchi (injury), Paula Radcliffe (focusing on 10,000m), Paul Tergat (world record run in Berlin), and Catherine Ndereba (2nd in New York City), Chicago still managed to draw a stellar field in its 26th running. First time marathoner Evans Rutto of Kenya and the reigning Boston Marathon champion Svetlana Zakharova of Russia captured the men's and women's titles, posting times of 2:05:50 and 2:23:07 respectively. Rutto's winning time narrowly missed Khalid Khannouchi's course record by eight seconds, as Paul Koech (2:07:07) and Daniel Njenga (2:07:41) claimed the next two places to lead a Kenyan sweep of the top five spots.

MYSTIC PLACES MARATHON (October 26th): Ethiopia's Araya Haregot won at Mystic Places in his first attempt racing the 26.2 mile distance in a course record time of 2:19:30 (despite nearly getting clipped by the press truck with 2 miles remaining). Russia's Alena Vintskaya ran 2:45:19 to claim top honors in the women's race. Ridgefield's Bryan Kovalsky ran a strong debut to finish 7th (2:29:22) for top American honors, while Danielson's Harry Lepp (20th in 2:59:45) and Uncasville's Kevin Gallerani (22nd in 3:01:30) were the top local finishers (Lepp had also placed 16th in 3:00:37 in the Ocean State (RI) Marathon just two weeks prior). Despite the clouds and rain that began about 2 hours into the race, the Mystic Places course is one of the most scenic marathon courses in the country, starting and finishing in Niantic's Rocky Neck State Park and winding through the seaside neighborhoods of picturesque Black Point.

NEW YORK CITY MARATHON (November 2nd): The hats and gloves were absent thanks to temperatures that were perfect for spectators yet a bit warm for marathon runners in the Big Apple. With an early, separate start for the elite women's field for the second consecutive year, the ladies wasted no time in establishing the fact that they were in New York to run and run fast. Margaret Okayo, the 2001 champion, moved to the front just after 19 miles and went on to shatter her own course record, winning in 2:22:31. Okayo outdueled fellow Kenyans Catherine Ndereba (2:23:04) and Lornah Kiplagat (2:23:43) for the win. While the women's race was fast and aggressive, the men's race played out more tactically, as Kenya's Martin Lel pulled away from training partner and defending champion Rogers Rop in Central Park to win in 2:10:30. While Kenyan runners posted impressive sweeps in both the men's and women's races, the American performance was again dismal. New Hampshire native Matt Downin was the top American finisher in his marathon debut, finishing 17th overall in 2:18:48. Marya Runyan suffering from a collision at a water stop and a hip injury and was not able to replicate her 4th place finish from a year ago, ending up 20th female in 2:45:12. Mystic's Stanley Mickus ran 2:46:35 for 147th place overall.

Racing Roundup

A lot of local runners have had strong cross-country seasons this fall. Killingly's Megan Owen finished 12th in the ACC Championships, helping her North Carolina team to the team title. Owen, a freshman and 3-time Connecticut XC champion, ran 4th for the Tar Heels, which are lead by defending National Champion Shalane Flanagan, a Massachusetts native, and coached by Mike Whittlesey, a former distance running standout at UConn. Another former Connecticut standout, Brian McGovern of Fairfield, is North Carolina's top male runner as a junior, finishing 17th in the men's race. In other collegiate XC updates from state runners, Danbury's Andre Laboy, a sophomore at St. Joseph's, won the Atlantic 10 title by a comfortable 26 second margin; Yale's Lucas Meyer was 4th overall in the Heptagonal XC Championship race in Van Courtland Park, and Former Griswold High School standout Mike Charron won the CCSU Invitational and is running in the top spot at Quinnipiac. Finally, congratulations to Gavin Coombs of Griswold High School on winning the 2003 XC State Open Championship. The anticipated duel between Coombs and Conard's Ahmed Haji lived up to its billing, with Coombs fending off Haji by 1 second in a dramatic finish at Manchester's Wickham Park. In the girls' race, Amie Shumacher of Holy Cross ran away from the field to win in 15:15 over the 4,000 meter course. Shumacher joined East Hartford's Allison Hanscom (1994) as the only non-ECC runners to win the girls XC State Open race since in Cindy Davis of Darien won back-to-back titles in 1987-'88 (thanks to Liz Mueller 1989-'92, Jill Akus '93,'95,'96, Jessica Schenk 1997-'99, and Megan Owen 2000-'02). Coombs became the second Griswold runner to win a XC State Open title, as Matt Papuga won it all for the Wolverines 10 years ago.....Mark your social calendars for this year's Tommy Toy Fund Run. The event takes place on Friday evening, December 12th at 7:00pm, starting and finishing in front of Billy Wilson's Ageing Still on 57 Broadway in Norwich. Participants are asked to donate a new, unwrapped toy, collected prior to the 3 mile group jog through the city of Norwich lead by with Santa himself. The Mohegan Striders Association will also be accepting 2004 membership applications at the event. Annual dues are only \$15 and there are no requirements to join.

This Month in History

November 3rd, 1996 – The Tarzan Brown Road Race registered 1,001 runners, its third straight race over the 1,000 mark. 41 year-old Wayne Jacob of Mystic, no stranger to the River Road course, breaks away at the 5 mile mark only to see his lead evaporate over the last 30 meters. Jacob has just enough left in the tank to out lean 24 year-old Eric Woronick of Ivoryton at the tape to win by 0.4 seconds for his 9th Tarzan Brown title. Jacob is clocked in 27:51.6 for the 5.5 mile race, with Higganum's Gary Nixon 3rd overall in 28:16, and John Bysiewicz (28:19) and Ed Parrott (28:49) rounding out a very strong top 5. 30 year-old Christine McNamara of Providence, 17th in the Olympic Marathon Trials race in February, obliterates Anne Hird's 1987 women's course record of 31:34, finishing 14th overall in 30:10. Stonington's Heather Bessette, fresh off a win at the Hartford Marathon, is the 2nd female in 31:44, with 5 time winner Carla Thompson (32:53), Catherine Sikorski (33:31) and Kris-Anne Kane (34:00) claiming the top 5 positions. Other notables in the field included future State Open XC champion Chris Andrew (37th at age 14), former Mystic resident and Manchester Road Race winner Ray Crothers (280th in 39:43) and former 2-time Olympic marathoner John J. Kelly (524th in 44:55). There were 906 official finishers.

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