

2005 RUNNING IN REVIEW

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

2005 was again a big year in sports, especially in the New England area. With a win over the Philadelphia Eagles, the New England Patriots transformed themselves from good to the dynasty level with their third Super Bowl victory in the last four seasons. And while the Boston Red Sox failed to repeat the magic of 2004, both they and the Yankees posted strong regular seasons despite being ousted early in the playoffs. It was good to see former Norwich Little Leaguer Paul Konerko win it all with his Chicago White Sox, who haven't claimed a title since the Black Sox scandal in 1919. This trend should give hope to franchises like the Chicago Cubs or New Orleans Saints, who have suffered through years of bad luck.

In the running world, a post Olympic year meant no less drama on the roads and the track. United States runners continued to re-establish themselves on the world circuit, building on the successes of Mebrahtom Keflezighi and Deena Kastor and their Olympic marathon medal efforts from a year ago. Local road races remained strong, and the talent of the Eastern Connecticut Conference showed promise for our local runners of the future. As always, a special thank you should go out to the Road Race Directors, SNERRO timing officials, and all of the race volunteers who help keep the racing events going. Here's a look at running's top performers and performances from 2005:

LOCAL RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: CHADWICK BROWN, WATERFORD / STEPHEN HERRERA, WATERFORD / CHAD JOHNSON, LISBON – This one was too close to call, as each of these runners put together strong racing seasons in 2005. Brown ran 1:07:12 for 39th overall at the New Haven 20K, Herrera was runner-up to Sergio Ribiero at the very hilly Rose City Challenge 10 Miler (54:54) and was one of the state's best cross-country runners, finishing 24th at the Boston Mayor's Cup; Johnson ran 1:06:23 for 31st overall and top state finisher at the New Haven 20K and ran sub 15 minutes at the competitive Eliot 5K race in Maine. Norwich's Chris Andrew led the field of those chasing the big three, which runners like Adam Fitzgerald, Dave Hurtado, Brendan Cashman, Christopher Kane, Chris McCormack, and Jeff Wadecki who all posted strong road racing efforts in 2005.

FEMALE: MELISSA PERKINS-BANAS, NORWICH – Perkins-Banas returned to top form after struggling with injuries in past years, winning the Kelly Road Race in 1:15:26 and running 2:59:34 at the Mystic Places Marathon for 21st overall and 5th female.

HIGH SCHOOL BOYS: TRADELLE WARD, GRISWOLD – With former teammate Gavin Coombs now at North Carolina State, Tradelle Ward has moved to the forefront. His 14th place finish at the Footlocker National Championship race capped a well-executed plan and put an exclamation point on an outstanding high school career.

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS: KELLY SORRELL, LYMAN – Sorrell, now in her junior year at Lyman, posted a terrific cross-country season. , winning the Class SS race, finishing a strong 3rd in the CT State Open, 4th at the New Englands, and 16th overall (top CT runner) at the Footlocker Regional.

CONNECTICUT RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: GIDEON MUTISYA, HARTFORD – Mutisya, a native of Kenya, races in state often, especially when there is cash on the line. His best effort was a 9th place overall finish at the Fairfield Half Marathon in June.

FEMALE: MARIE DAVENPORT, GUILFORD – Davenport, a native of Ireland and former Providence College standout, ran 2:33 in her marathon debut at the ING New York City Marathon in October. She also finished a strong 3rd at the prestigious Friehofer's 5K in Albany (15:44.7) and posted a runner-up finish to Katie MacGregor at the Tufts 10K in Boston.

NEW ENGLAND RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: NATE JENKINS, MASSACHUSETTS – Jenkins claimed 3 of the 5 USATF-NE championship races he ran in 2005 (he finished 2nd and 4th in the other two). He was also 9th behind a stellar international field at the B.A.A. Half Marathon (PR of 1:07:31) and finished runner-up at the USATF-NE Cross-Country Championships in November.

FEMALE OPEN: MARIE DAVENPORT, CONNECTICUT (See Connecticut Runner of the Year)

U.S. RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: ABDI ABDIRAHMAN, ARIZONA – Abdirahman's big race of 2005 took place right here in Connecticut, where he broke Meb Keflezighi's American record at the New Haven 20K despite going off course twice. Abdirahman clocked 58:42 in his best effort of his career. He also began the racing year in top form, winning the Papa John's 10 Miler in April (47:27), and finishing runner-up at the NYRR 8K (22:56) and 5th at the Gate River Run 15K in Jacksonville (44:23), both in March. Keflezighi, Alan Culpepper, Brian Sell, Ryan Shay, and Jorge Torres also head the list of U.S. hopefuls that posted strong racing seasons in 2005.

FEMALE: DEENA KASTOR, CALIFORNIA – Kastor returned from a disappointing DNF at last year's New York City Marathon to win the Chicago Marathon this past October in 2:21:25. The Olympic bronze medalist also claimed wins at the LaSalle Banks Shamrock Shuffle 8K in an American Record 24:36 and finished 3rd at the Falmouth Road Race (36:48). Jen Rhines, Katie McGregor, Elva Dryer, and Blake Russell all deserve mention as strong contenders in 2005.

WORLD'S BEST RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MEN: GILBERT OKARI, KENYA – Okari won many of the big times road races in 2005, including the Peachtree 10K (28:19), the Utica Boilermaker 15K (43:22), the Bix 7 Miler (32:24), Falmouth (31:59), and the Beach to Beacon 10K (27:39).

WOMEN: LORNAH KIPLAGAT, KENYA/PAULA RADCLIFFE, GREAT BRITAIN – Kiplagat, like Okari on the men's side, concentrated her racing efforts on the roads in 2005. She posted wins at the World's best 10K in Puerto Rico (32:12), Peachtree 10K (31:17), Falmouth (36:09), and the Beach to Beacon 10K (31:35) and was runner-up at the IAAF World Half-Marathon Championships (1:10:19). Radcliffe maintained her title as the world's best marathoner with two big wins in 2005; the Flora London Marathon in April (2:17:42) and the IAAF World Championships Marathon in August (2:20:57).

BEST PERFORMANCE – LOCAL:

57 year-old Tim Smith of Norwich ran 3:00:00 at the Hartford Marathon in October in less than ideal conditions. Melissa Perkins-Banas returned from injury to run an impressive 2:59:34 at the Mystic Places Marathon to place 21st overall.

BEST PERFORMANCE - UNITED STATES:

Michigan's Brian Sell posted an impressive 9th place finish at the World Marathon Championships in Helsinki in August in 2:13:27. Sell's negative split effort was the fastest-ever performance by an American in a world championship race.

BEST PERFORMANCE - WORLD:

Kenya's Paul Tergat out leaning Hendrick Ramaala of South Africa in the final stretch of the ING New York City Marathon to win by 1 second was not only the best performance of 2005 but also the best race. With weekly mileage totals that approached 170, Tergat proved many of the critics wrong, who felt that at age 36, the world marathon record holder was too old to win major marathons.

BEST LOCAL ROAD RACE:

JOHN J. KELLEY / OCEAN BEACH ROAD RACE, August 6th – The 43rd annual race again lived up to its reputation as being the best bargain in town. Brendan Brown of New York and Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas led 379 finishers to earn top honors. This 11.6 mile race continues its long-standing unique tradition of charging no entry fee while offering a quality race and a great day at the beach.

BEST CONNECTICUT ROAD RACE:

MANCHESTER ROAD RACE, MANCHESTER, November 24th – Manchester's tradition makes the race special, and even the snow and slush that greeted runners this past Thanksgiving morning couldn't deter the crowds. A pair of New Zealand runners posted big wins at Manchester in 2005, with Former Michigan Wolverine Nick Willis and former Providence College runner and defending champion Kim Smith earning the top prizes. The post-race gathering at the Army-Navy Club and the chance to see friends from the running community always makes the visit to Manchester worthwhile.

Local Runners:

MEN'S OPEN

2005 Chadwick Brown / Stephen Herrera / Chad Johnson
2004 Chadwick Brown
2003 Stephen Herrera / Chad Johnson
2002 Stephen Herrera / Chad Johnson
2001 Chad Johnson
2000 Steve Herrera
1999 Ed Zubritsky
1998 John Anthony

WOMEN'S OPEN

Melissa Perkins-Banas
Martha Merz
Carolyn Verdon
Martha Merz
Melissa Perkins-Banas
Martha Merz
Kris-Anne Kane
Kris-Anne Kane

MEN'S MASTERS

2005 Dan Dillon/Mike Fritz
2004 Dan Dillon
2003 Mike Fritz
2002 Bob Stack
2001 Bob Stack
2000 Bob Stack
1999 Wayne Jacob / Jim Murphy
1998 Tim Kane

WOMEN'S MASTERS/GM

Martha Merz
Martha Merz
Martha Merz
Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley
Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley
Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley

MEN'S GRANDMASTERS

2005	Tim Smith	
2004	Richard England	
2003	Tim Smith	
2002	Wayne Jolley	
2001	Tim Smith	
2000	Dennis Crowe	1999
	Dennis Crowe	
1998	Tim Smith	

State Runners:

MEN		WOMEN	
2005	Gideon Mutisya	Marie McMahon-Davenport	
2004	Chadwick Brown	Kate O'Neill	
2003	Chad Johnson / Stephen Herrera	Heather Gardiner	
2002	Chad Johnson / Stephen Herrera	Sue Faber	
2001	Chris Chisholm	Marie McMahon-Davenport	2000
	Steve Swift	Zofia Wieceiorkowska	
1999	Steve Swift	Christine Junkerman	
1998	Steve Swift	Kerry Arsenault	

High School Runners:

LOCAL BOYS		LOCAL GIRLS	
2005	Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)	Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)	
2004	Gavin Coombs and Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)	Betsy Boucher (FITCH) and Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)	
2003	Gavin Coombs (GRISWOLD)	Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY) / Betsy Boucher (FITCH)	
2002	Gavin Coombs (GRISWOLD)	Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)	
2001	Jon-Paul Mandelburg (NFA)	Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)	
2000	Mark Brissette (STONINGTON)	Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)	
1999	Chris Andrew (NFA)	Jessica Schenk (FITCH)	
1998	Chris Andrew (NFA)	Jessica Schenk (FITCH)	
STATE BOYS		STATE GIRLS	
2005	Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)/Jay Koleseus (GUILFORD)	Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)/Amie Schumacher (HOLY CROSS)	
2004	Gavin Coombs and Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)	Amie Schumacher (HOLY CROSS)	
2003	Gavin Coombs (GRISWOLD)	M.Owen (KILLINGLY) / A.Schumacher (HOLY CROSS)	
2002	Ahmed Haji (CONARD)	Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)	
2001	Brian McGovern (FAIRFIELD PREP)	Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)	
2000	Brian McGovern (FAIRFIELD PREP)	Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)	
1999	Chris Andrew (NFA)	Jessica Schenk (FITCH)	
1998	Ren Provey (FAIRFIELD)	Jessica Schenk (FITCH)	

New England Runners:

MEN		WOMEN	
2005	Nate Jenkins, MASSACHUSETTS	Marie Davenport, CONNECTICUT	
2004	John Mortimer, MASSACHUSETTS	Kate O'Neill, CONNECTICUT	
2003	Keith Kelly / John Mortimer, MASSACHUSETTS	Blake Russell, MASSACHUSETTS	
2002	Dave Hinga, MASSACHUSETTS	Blake Russell, MASSACHUSETTS	
2001	Mike Donnelly, MASSACHUSETTS	Amy Rudolph, RHODE ISLAND	

United States Runners:

MEN		WOMEN	
2005	Abdi Abdirahman, ARIZONA	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA	
2004	Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA	
2003	Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	Deena Kastor, COLORADO	
2002	Khalid Khannouchi, NEW YORK	Marla Runyan, OREGON	
2001	Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN	Deena Drossin, COLORADO	
2000	Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN	Libbie Hickman, COLORADO	

World Runners:

MEN	WOMEN
2005 Gilbert Okari, KENYA	Lornah Kiplagat, KENYA/Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2004 Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO	Susan Chepkemei, KENYA
2003 John Korir, KENYA / Paul Tergat, KENYA	Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2002 Paul Kosgei / Khalid Khannouchi / Rogers Rop	Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2001 Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO	Catherine Ndereba, KENYA
2000 Reuban Cheruiyot, KENYA	Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA
1999 Hicham El Guerrouj / Khalid Khannouchi	Gabriela Szabo / Tegla Laroupe
1998 Khalid Khannouchi, MORROCCO	Catherine Ndereba, KENYA

Best Performances (Local):

MALE	FEMALE
2005 Tim Smith's 3:00:00 clocking at the Hartford Marathon	Melissa Perkins-Banas sub 3 marathon at Mystic Places
2004 Chadwick Brown Mystic Places Relay and Marathon	Martha Merz 1:17:44 20K in New Haven
2003 Chad Johnson 1 st @ the Rose City Challenge	Carolyn Verdon's 3:07:29 Marathon @ Vermont City
2002 Steve Herrera 6 th @ Mystic Places Marathon	Martha Merz 1 st Master @ Army 10 Miler
2001 Chad Johnson 17 th @ New Haven 20K	Melissa Perkins finishes 3 rd @ Mystic Places Marathon
2000 Mike Slinsky defends title @ Rose City Challenge	
1999 Mike Slinsky wins first Rose City Challenge	

Best Performances (United States):

MALE	FEMALE
2005 Brian Sell's 9 th place finish at World Champs Marathon	Deena Kastor's win at the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon
2004 Meb Keflezighi's Silver Medal in the Olympic Marathon	Deena Kastor's Bronze Medal in the Olympic Marathon
2003 Eddy Hellebuyck's win at Twin Cities Marathon	Marla Runyan's win over De Reuck at New Haven 20K
2002 Khalid Khannouchi's 4 th win @ Chicago	Marla Runyan's 5 th place finish @ NYC Marathon
2001 Alan Webb breaks high school mile record	Deena Drossin runs 2:26:58 debut @ NYC Marathon
2000 Rod Dehaven wins Olympic Marathon Trials	Christine Clark wins Olympic Marathon Trials

Best Performances (World):

MEN	WOMEN
2005 Paul Tergat's 1 second win at the New York Marathon	Paula Radcliffe's 2:17:42 marathon win in London
2004 Hicham El Guerrero's 1,500/5,000m Olympic double	Paula Radcliffe's win at the ING New York City Marathon
2003 World T+F Championships 5,000 meter final in Paris	Paula Radcliffe's record run @ London
2002 Khalid Khannouchi's record run @ London	Paula Radcliffe's record run @ Chicago
2001 Hicham El Guerrero run 3:44.95 mile in Rome	Catherine Ndereba record run @ Chicago
2000 Haile Gebrselassie's Olympic 10,000 meter win	
1999 Khalid Khannouchi record run @ Chicago	
1998 Ronaldo da Costa's record run @ Berlin	Tegla Laroupe's record run @ Rotterdam

Road Races:

LOCAL	STATE
2005 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race	Manchester Road Race
2004 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race	Christopher Martin 5K
2003 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race	New Haven 20K / Manchester Road Race
2002 Mystic Places Marathon	Moonlight Run 5K, New Milford
2001 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race	New Haven 20K
2000 Rose City Challenge	Litchfield Hills Road Race
1999 L & M Hospital Spring Stride	Manchester Road Race
1998 L & M Hospital Spring Stride / Tarzan Brown	New Haven 20K / Manchester Road Race

Don Sikorski writes a twice-monthly running column for the Norwich Bulletin. His "Coach's Corner" column can be accessed at www.moheganstriders.org. He can also be reached by e-mail at kdcsikorski@netzero.net.