

MARATHON MISSION ACCOMPLISHED FOR LOCAL RUNNERS

By **DON SIKORSKI**
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The 110th Boston Marathon is now officially in the record books. Everything seemed to run smoothly, as blue skies and mild temperatures greeted the second largest Boston field in history (22,517 official starters, with only the 100th anniversary run in 1996 drawing more). Even the Red Sox cooperated, posting an impressive come from behind victory with a Mark Loretta walk-off home run. The marathon dabbled with a tweak in tradition by implementing a second starting wave that followed at 12:30pm, one half hour after the first group began with the traditional noontime start. Since chip timing has become a standard in the industry, the staggered start helped provide relief in countering the narrow starting line in Hopkinton.

Kenya's Robert Cheruiyot took full advantage of the ideal racing conditions, winning in a course record time of 2:07:14. Rita Jeptoo of Kenya was the top female finisher in 2:23:38, with Kenya now claiming both top prizes in four of the last six Boston Marathons. Kenyan runners have long been a dominating force in Boston, now producing the overall race winner in 14 of the last 16 years. The big story in this year's race, however, was the performance of the American men, claiming five of the top ten places overall. It was the best U.S. finish since the race's prize money was increased in 1986.

Locally, West Hartford's Eben Robinson (148th in 2:40:57) was the top Connecticut finisher, while 49 year-old Mark Novotny of East Lyme earned top local honors by running 2:58:19. Let's take a look at how our runners performed on Patriot's Day.

George Adrian, Noank, CT (12,547th in 3:58:03) – Adrian struggled with a number of injuries leading up to the marathon, spending as much time in doctor's offices as he did on the roads over the final weeks. But he recovered in time to make it to the starting line in Hopkinton. "It's an honor to run (in the Boston Marathon)," said Adrian. "The fans are phenomenal. I felt great for the first half and was hoping to hit halfway on 3:30 pace and then drop down, but my legs just started to fade." Adrian cruised through the half marathon mark in 1:46:35 but struggled in the later miles. Despite his injury setbacks, Adrian didn't make excuses and was hopeful to bounce back to run a faster fall marathon. "No excuses," said Adrian. "It was a great day and I had a great start. I was discouraged by my time, but then again, three weeks ago, I wasn't even planning on being able to go to Boston." Adrian plans to recover and cross-train before returning to running. He hopes to re-focus on getting his injuries behind him so he can train for a fall marathon and a return to Boston in 2007.

Bob Walsh, East Lyme, CT (5,386th in 3:27:21) – Walsh posted the fastest finish time of the group, running sub 8:00 per mile pace to finish in a time of 3:27:21. "It was a 26 mile long party," said Walsh of the atmosphere surrounding the marathon. "It was a good time and the camaraderie, both amongst my training partners and with all of the runners at Boston, was great." Walsh just missed bettering his Boston personal best of 3:26:37 set last year, but was pleased overall with his race effort. He plans to incorporate some faster running into next year's training plan. "I'll have to do a little tweaking for next year," said Walsh. "I did no speed work at all this year. We did have some great long (training) runs and I think that really helped." As for his recovery plans, Walsh wisely take a full week off and plans to resume running on Monday. He also has other plans to ease the pain. "I have a hot tub on the deck that I'll be spending some time in," says Walsh.

Peter Weeden, Ashaway, RI (5,758th in 3:28:44) – Weeden also posted a strong effort and averaged sub 8 per mile, finishing just 1:23 behind training partner Walsh. With a fairly conservative start, Weeden hit the halfway mark in 1:39:17 and ran well through the Newton hills to finish in 3:28:44. He plans on taking a different approach than his training partners for the week following the marathon by jumping right back to racing, hoping to be recovered in time for today's Clamdigger 5 Mile Road Race in Westerly. Weeden finished 16th overall in 32:08 in last year's Clamdigger race and hopes his legs hold up OK just six short days after Boston.

Sue Sucholet, Norwich, CT (10,437th in 3:47:44) – Despite an aggressive pace early, Sucholet ran a strong race and was able to hang on to finish in 3:47:44. "Overall, I felt really good," said Sucholet of her first Boston effort. "My calves and left leg hurt on the downhills. I'm normally strong on the uphill, but I bonked around 17 (miles); my legs were really starting to go. I had a real struggle getting to the finish line". Sucholet felt that Boston's logistics, including the early afternoon start time, were also a challenge. She also encountered leg cramps after her finish, but successfully avoided another trip to the medical tent. As far as recovery, Sucholet is already looking forward to returning to running. "I'm thinking about going for a nice, long walk today (Tuesday) and back to the gym tomorrow. Then I'll get back and try to return to a bit of regular running."

American men back in the mix

The American contingent at Boston didn't disappoint, with Meb Keflezighi, Brian Sell, and Alan Culpepper leading the way with a 3-4-5 finish. Keflezighi, the Olympic silver medalist, was 3rd overall in 2:09:56 after running with the leaders though 16 miles. Sell, who trains under the Hanson-Brooks program based on Rochester, Michigan, caught Culpepper in the final turn to claim 4th overall in another breakthrough race. He finished with a big PR of 2:10:55. Culpepper, who was 4th a year ago at Boston, hung on for 5th in 2:11:02. Other top American performances included Peter Gilmore (7th in 2:12:45), Clint Verran (10th in 2:14:12), and Luke Humphrey (11th in 2:15:32). No American has won Boston since Greg Meyer's 2:09:00 in 1983, and a dozen times since then, there had been no American in the top ten. Let's hope this year's performance is a sign of good things to come.

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