

2006 RUNNING IN REVIEW

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

While 2006 was a relatively quiet year for New England sports fans, there was plenty going on around other parts of the country. The Pittsburgh Steelers returned to their glory years of 30 years ago to claim victory in Super Bowl XL, relative unknown George Mason University shocked the March Madness world with their upset over the top seeded UConn Huskies, and the New York Yankees again spent big bucks but were unable to bring home the coveted World Series trophy. The lowly Detroit Tigers were suddenly very good, the once-feared Oakland Raiders are now pretty bad (how times have changed), Notre Dame Football has returned to glory, and the Celtics, well, they're still awful.

In the world of running, an American resurgence continued, building upon the Olympic success of Meb Keflezighi and Deena Kastor and proving that Americans can in fact compete with the best distance runners in the world. Local races continued to draw solid numbers, and as always, a special thank you to all of the Road Race Directors, SNERRO timing officials, and race volunteers that keep these events alive. Here's a look at running's top performers and performances in 2006:

LOCAL RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: CHADWICK BROWN, WATERFORD – Brown battled a foot injury during the latter part of 2006, but still managed to put in enough quality training that would produce results worthy of Local Runner of The Year, an honor he has won or shared for three consecutive years. Brown was also one of Connecticut's best runners, earning top USATF honors by finishing 4th in the Fairfield 4 Miler (20:40), 8th at the Branford 5 Mile Race (27:05), 3rd at the Milford 5K (15:53), 32nd overall (2nd CT finisher) at the New Haven (1:06:18), and 3rd in the USATF Half Marathon Championship (1:15:03). Brown wrapped up his season with an 8th place finish (2:47:15) in the Mystic Places Marathon to earn top state honors. Waterford's Steve Herrera made a successful return from injury to run well in 2006, finishing just behind Brown in Fairfield (5th in 20:55) and just ahead of him in Branford (7th in 27:01). Niantic's Larz Selmer-Larsen (9th at Mystic Places Marathon, 2:49:01), Mystic's Scott Bessette (Tarzan Brown winner), and Uncasville's Chris McCormack (5th at Branford 5 Miler) all ran competitively with both Brown and Herrera in 2006. Other area notables who should continue to make an impact in the next few seasons include Jeff Wadecki, Jimmy Grant, Christopher Kane, Scott Delongchamps, and Stan Mickus.

FEMALE: MARTHA MERZ, MYSTIC and MELISSA PERKINS-BANAS, NORWICH – Merz moved from Mystic to Annandale, Virginia in August 2006. She still won often enough during the first eight months of the year to earn a share of Local Runner of the Year honors. In her two USATF state championship races, Merz finished 4th at the Branford 5 Miler (30:58) and 2nd at the Milford 5K (18:29). Merz also ran 1:01:35 in the Army 10 Miler and was competitive in the overall finishes in many of her local race wins, finishing as high as 3rd overall twice. Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas ran especially well in longer races, finishing 5th female at the Fairfield Half Marathon (1:25:09), winning the Chester 4 Miler (24:30), and successfully defending her Kelley Race title (32nd in 1:14:25). Uncasville's Allison Dupont, Norwich's Catherine Sikorski, and Mystic's Heather Bessette also posted strong seasons in 2006.

CONNECTICUT RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: ERIC BLAKE, NEW BRITAIN – The 27 year old assistant XC and track coach at Central Connecticut continues to improve as a distance runner. Blake did a majority of his racing out of state, finishing 4th at the Bridge of Flowers 10K (32:25) and 4th at the Stowe 8 Miler (41:32). He also finished 21st overall (1st CT) against a national class field at the New Haven 20K (1:03:29) and won the grueling Mount Washington Road Race in 1:01:09. His most newsworthy accomplishment in 2006 was setting a world record for a Treadmill Marathon, running a time of 2:21:40 (an average pace of 5:24 per mile).

FEMALE: MARIE DAVENPORT, GUILFORD and CLAUDIA CAMARGO, DANBURY – Davenport, a native of Ireland and former Providence College standout, ran 15:20 for 5K and 32:44 for 10K in 2006. She also won the B.A.A. Half Marathon in 1:12:10 and finished 7th in the CVS Downtown 5K (16:11). Camargo, 35, raced often at every distance from the mile to the marathon. She also won often, including victories at The Little Rock (AK) Marathon in March (2:56:48) and The Pocono (PA) Marathon in May (2:47:29). She also ran 2:35:04 for top CT finisher at the New York City Marathon in November.

U.S. RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: MEBRATOM KEFLEZIGHI CALIFORNIA – "Meb" remained in top form and posted a number of strong performances in 2006, including a win at the Gate River Run 15K (43:43) and runner-up finishes at both the USA 10,000 meter championships (28:18) and the New York City half Marathon (1:01:28). Keflezighi's big race of 2006 was a 3rd place overall finish in the Boston Marathon in April (2:09:56) to lead the American resurgence. There were plenty of other notables that posted strong performances in 2006, including Brian Sell, Matt Tegenkamp, Dan Lincoln, Clint Verran, Abdi Abdirahman, Ian Dobson, Alan Webb, Dathan Ritzenhein, Ryan Hall, Alan Culpepper, Adam Goucher, Mbarak Hussein, and Peter Gilmore.

FEMALE: KATIE MCGREGOR, MINNESOTA – McGregor, a former two-time NCAA champion at Michigan, followed up a strong 2005 season with another impressive year of racing, capped by a win at the Tufts 10K in Boston in October (32:37). McGregor was also 3rd at the Gate River Run 15K (50:20), 10th at the Peachtree 10K (32:44), and finished 5th at the USA 8K XC Championships.

WORLD'S BEST RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MEN: MARTIN LEL, KENYA – No surprise to see a Kenyan athlete again at the top of the world list, Lel, 28, didn't race often, but when he did step to the starting line, he made it count, posting his personal best marathon time of 2:06:41 in a runner-up effort at London in April (just 2 seconds back of countryman Felix Limo). He also won the prestigious Peachtree 10K Road Race in Atlanta in July in a brisk 27:25.

WOMEN: LORNAH KIPLAGAT, NETHERLANDS – Kiplagat, last year's co-nominee, passed on a spring marathon to concentrate on road racing and world championship events. The strategy didn't disappoint, as the 32 year-old Kiplagat notched wins at the World's best 10K in Puerto Rico, The Peachtree 10K, and the Steamboat Classic. Her biggest win was at the IAAF World 20K Championships in Hungary, where she fended off Romania's Constantina Tomescu by a mere 2 seconds to win in a world record time of 1:03:21 (a pace of 5:06 per mile). She also earned a silver medal at the IAAF Cross-Country World Championships in Fukuoka, Japan in April and capped her 2006 season with an 8th place finish in the ING New York City Marathon (2:32:31).

BEST PERFORMANCE – LOCAL:

49 year old Dan Dillon of New London ran 26:06 in a downpour at the Manchester Road Race, good enough for 59th place overall and 4th place Master. Look out next year, as the winner of the Men's Grandmaster (50-59) division, Bob McCusker, finished 46 seconds behind Dillon.

BEST PERFORMANCE - UNITED STATES:

The American resurgence at the B.A.A. Boston Marathon, led by top 10 finishes from by Meb Keflezighi (3rd in 2:09:56), Brian Sell (4th in 2:10:55), Alan Culpepper (5th in 2:11:02), Peter Gilmore (7th in 2:12:45), and Clint Verran (10th in 2:14:12), proved that the American men were serious about making a return to the glory years of the running boom.

BEST PERFORMANCE - WORLD:

There may have been faster performances, but one of the biggest upsets in 2006 was Marilson Gomes dos Santos' win at the ING New York City Marathon. The 29 year-old Brazilian ran 2:09:58 to become the first South American to win in New York and ran away from a world class field at 19 miles in doing so, including defending champion and world record holder Paul Tergat of Kenya (third in 2:10:10), former Boston and New York City Marathon champion Rodgers Rop (fifth in 2:11:24), and 2004 Olympic champion Stefano Baldini of Italy (sixth in 2:11:33).

BEST LOCAL ROAD RACE:

JOHN J. KELLEY / OCEAN BEACH ROAD RACE, August 5th – The 44th annual Kelley road race was again the highlight of the summer racing scene in Southeastern Connecticut. NC State harrier Gavin Coombs of Griswold and defending ladies champion Melissa Perkins-Banas of Norwich earned race wins in 2006. This 11.6 mile race, with 387 official finishers, continued its long-standing 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 23rd – Despite the cold and rain that pelted the runners this past Thanksgiving morning, the Manchester Road Race tradition lived on. Former Stanford All-American Ian Dobson and Shalane Flanagan, a former NCAA champion at North Carolina, led the 8,271 official finishers to claim victory on Thanksgiving morning.

Local Runners:

MEN'S OPEN

2006 Chadwick Brown
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

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

MEN'S MASTERS

2006 Dan Dillon
2005 Dan Dillon / Mike Fritz
2004 Dan Dillon
2003 Mike Fritz
2002 Bob Stack
2001 Bob Stack

WOMEN'S MASTERS/GM

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

2000	Bob Stack	Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley
1999	Wayne Jacob / Jim Murphy	
1998	Tim Kane	

MEN'S GRANDMASTERS

2006	Tim Smith	
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
2006	Eric Blake	Marie McMahon-Davenport / Claudia Camargo
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
	Steve Swift	Zofia Wieceiorkowska
1999	Steve Swift	Christine Junkerman
1998	Steve Swift	Kerry Arsenault

High School Runners:

LOCAL BOYS		LOCAL GIRLS
2006	Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)/Jake Sullivan (FITCH)	Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)
2005	Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)	Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)
2004	Gavin Coombs and Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)	Betsy Boucher (FITCH)/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

2006	T.Ward (GRISWOLD)/Don Cabral (GLASTONBURY)	STATE GIRLS	Jamie Olson (GLASTONBURY)
2005	Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)/Jay Kolesseus (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
2006	Casey Moulton, NEW HAMPSHIRE	Amy Rudolph, RHODE ISLAND
2005	Nate Jenkins, MASSACHUSETTS	Marie McMahon-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
2006	Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	Katie McGregor, MINNESOTA
2005	Abdi Abdirahman, ARIZONA	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA

2004 Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA
2003 Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA
2002 Khalid Khannouchi, NEW YORK
2001 Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN
2000 Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN

Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA
Deena Kastor, COLORADO
Marla Runyan, OREGON
Deena Drossin, COLORADO
Libbie Hickman, COLORADO

World Runners:

MEN

2006 Martin Lel, KENYA
2005 Gilbert Okari, KENYA
2004 Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO
2003 John Korir, KENYA / Paul Tergat, KENYA
2002 Paul Kosgei / Khalid Khannouchi / Rogers Rop
2001 Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO
2000 Reuban Cheruiyot, KENYA
1999 Hicham El Guerrouj / Khalid Khannouchi, MORROCCO
1998 Khalid Khannouchi, MORROCCO

WOMEN

Lornah Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS
L.Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS / P.Radcliffe, BRITAIN
Susan Chepkemei, KENYA
Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
Catherine Ndereba, KENYA
Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA
Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA / Tegla Laroupe, KENYA
Catherine Ndereba, KENYA

Best Performances (Local):

MALE

2006 Dan Dillon's 26:06 at the Manchester Road Race
2005 Tim Smith's 3:00:00 clocking at the Hartford Marathon
2004 Chadwick Brown Mystic Places Relay and Marathon
2003 Chad Johnson 1st @ the Rose City Challenge
2002 Steve Herrera 6th @ Mystic Places Marathon
2001 Chad Johnson 17th @ New Haven 20K
2000 Mike Slinsky defends title @ Rose City Challenge
1999 Mike Slinsky wins first Rose City Challenge

FEMALE

Melissa Perkins-Banas 5th place at Fairfield Half Marathon
Melissa Perkins-Banas sub 3 marathon at Mystic Places
Martha Merz 1:17:44 20K in New Haven
Carolyn Verdon's 3:07:29 Marathon @ Vermont City
Martha Merz 1st Master @ Army 10 Miler
Melissa Perkins finishes 3rd @ Mystic Places Marathon

Best Performances (United States):

MALE

2006 American performance at B.A.A. Boston Marathon
2005 Brian Sell's 9th place finish at World Champs Marathon
2004 Meb Keflezighi's Silver Medal in the Olympic Marathon
2003 Eddy Hellebuyck's win at Twin Cities Marathon
2002 Khalid Khannouchi's 4th win @ Chicago
2001 Alan Webb breaks high school mile record
2000 Rod Dehaven wins Olympic Marathon Trials

FEMALE

Deena Kastor's 2:19:36 win at the London Marathon
Deena Kastor's win at the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon
Deena Kastor's Bronze Medal in the Olympic Marathon
Marla Runyan's win over De Reuck at New Haven 20K
Marla Runyan's 5th place finish @ NYC Marathon
Deena Drossin runs 2:26:58 debut @ NYC Marathon
Christine Clark wins Olympic Marathon Trials

Best Performances (World):

MEN

2006 Marilson Gomes dos Santos' win at the NYC Marathon
2005 Paul Tergat's 1 second win at the New York Marathon
2004 Hicham El Guerrero's 1,500/5,000m Olympic double
2003 World T+F Championships 5,000 meter final in Paris
2002 Khalid Khannouchi's record run @ London
2001 Hicham El Guerrero run 3:44.95 mile in Rome
2000 Haile Gebrselassie's Olympic 10,000 meter win
1999 Khalid Khannouchi record run @ Chicago
1998 Ronaldo da Costa's record run @ Berlin

WOMEN

Lornah Kiplagat's 20K World Record run (1:03:21)
Paula Radcliffe's 2:17:42 marathon win in London
Paula Radcliffe's win at the ING New York City Marathon
Paula Radcliffe's record run @ London
Paula Radcliffe's record run @ Chicago
Catherine Ndereba record run @ Chicago

Tegla Laroupe's record run @ Rotterdam

Road Races:

LOCAL

2006 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race
2005 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race
2004 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race
2003 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race
2002 Mystic Places Marathon
2001 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race
2000 Rose City Challenge
1999 L & M Hospital Spring Stride
1998 L & M Hospital Spring Stride / Tarzan Brown

STATE

Manchester Road Race
Manchester Road Race
Christopher Martin 5K
New Haven 20K / Manchester Road Race
Moonlight Run 5K, New Milford
New Haven 20K
Litchfield Hills Road Race
Manchester Road Race
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@sbcglobal.net.