

SHAY'S DEATH OVERSHADOWS MARATHON WEEKEND

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

Ryan Hall looked like a child running on the playground as he cruised through New York's Central Park at a sub 5 minute per mile clip, all alone out in front at the U.S. Men's Olympic Marathon Trials race. The 25 year old Stanford graduate pumped his fist, screamed to the crowd, and probably enjoyed the final mile of a marathon more than anyone ever has. An outstanding second half split of 1:02:45 over the rolling Central Park terrain disposed of the competition that included the very best marathon runners in the country, as Hall hit the finish line tape in a brisk 2:09:02. The time was an Olympic Trials best by over a minute and a half and sent notice that Hall is a legitimate contender in Beijing next summer.

Joining Hall on the team will be young Dathan Ritzenhein (runner-up in 2:11:07) and blue-collar fan favorite Brian Sell (3rd in 2:11:47). But it was clearly Hall that was the class of a deep and talented race field. Under ideal running conditions, Hall proved his effort in April's London Marathon was no fluke (Hall's 7th place finish in 2:08:24 was the second fastest marathon ever run by an American), as he ran away from his nearest contenders at 16 miles and was never challenged. Ritzenhein, like Hall in only his second marathon start, ran a personal best by nearly three minutes for 2nd, while Sell, who had declared he would quit competitive distance running and pursue a career in dental school at age 29 if he failed to earn an Olympic team birth, moved up from 7th in the late miles to finish 40 seconds later and secure the final spot on the team. Hall, Ritzenhein, and Sell all admitted to running scared over the final miles with the presence of U.S. record holder Khalid Khannouchi lurking in the chase pack. Plagued by injuries and racing on limited training, Khannouchi posted a valiant effort to finish 4th and would serve as the first alternate should an injury occur or if Ritzenhein chooses to race 10,000 meters on the track at the Olympic Games.

There were also plenty of big names that failed to challenge in New York. 2004 silver medalist Meb Keflezighi struggled with calf problems and dehydration to place 8th, while pre-race favorites Abdi Abdirahman and Alan Culpepper both dropped out of the race. Dan Browne, who along with Keflezighi and Culpepper was a 2004 Olympic Marathon qualifier, ran in the 3rd position in the late stages of the race but struggled with leg cramps and held on valiantly for 6th. The challenging terrain of the 5 loop, Central Park layout clearly took its toll on many. Yet there were others that stepped up. Sell, a member of the Michigan based Hanson-Brooks distance program that led the 2004 Trials field in Birmingham by over a minute before fading to 15th, learned from that effort and ran the perfect tactical race, clipping off 5 minute miles to reel in the field. Jason Lehmkuhle also finished strong for 5th overall for the best marathon effort of his career. With prize money offered 15 places deep, Hall, Ritzenhein, and Sell earned \$60,000, \$40,000 and \$30,000 respectively for their efforts. Each will receive an additional \$20,000 each if they run the marathon in Beijing. And all three will be headed to the Olympic Games next summer with a ton of confidence and a shot to race against the best marathoners in the world.

New Englanders fare well

Runners from the Northeast posted strong finishes at the Trials race as well. Nate Jenkins of Lowell, Massachusetts finished an impressive 7th overall in 2:14:56, 13 seconds ahead of Keflezighi, while Matt Pelletier of Warwick, Rhode Island was 19th overall in 2:17:17. Brothers Patrick and Casey Moulton of Pelham, NH finished 28th and 83rd respectively, with Steve Meinelt of Winchester, MA (54th in 2:22:40) and Terrance Shea of Cambridge, MA (61st in 2:23:44) also posting solid efforts.

Remembering Ryan Shay

Being a runner for years and writing a running column has allowed me the privilege of meeting many elite level runners. But I never had the privilege to speak with Ryan Shay, and I wish I had. Shay, a 2002 Notre Dame graduate, former NCAA 10,000 meter champion, 9 time All-American and Olympic hopeful, collapsed near the 5.5 mile mark of the race and could not be revived. Shay, who had been diagnosed with an enlarged heart but had received medical clearance to run, was pronounced dead at New York's Lenox Hospital. Shay had been a former training partner of race winner Ryan Hall, and Shay's wife Alicia (Craig) and Hall's wife Sara (Bei) were cross-country teammates at Stanford and are also both Olympic hopefuls. Ryan Shay was one of the most well-liked and respected runners in the elite community. Notorious for his work ethic and ability to push himself to the limit, Shay was one of the favorites in the 2004 Olympic Trials race, but had struggled with a nagging hamstring injury and finished 23rd. He was a five-time U.S. national road racing champion and won the 2004 and 2006 New Haven 20K races. He was just 28 years old.

Coaching Update

If you've ever been interested in training for a triathlon but haven't the first clue how to do so, East Lyme Aquatic and Fitness and Coach Al Lyman of Pursuit Fitness are sponsoring a free information session for novice tri-athletes who are interested in learning more about how to prepare, improve, and enjoy the sport of triathlon. The class will take place on Tuesday, February 13th beginning at 6:30pm at East Lyme High School. For more information, contact Coach Al Lyman at coachal@pursuit-fitness.com or call East Lyme Aquatics at (860) 691-4681.

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