

2007 RUNNING IN REVIEW

By DON SIKORSKI
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The sports year 2007 witness the re-emergences of New England on the championship scene, from the World Series title of the once ill-fated Boston Red Sox to the undefeated (to date) season of the New England Patriots. Even the once-lowly Celtics look reborn for the first time since Larry Bird left town. UConn Football finds itself playing a major bowl game and Notre Dame is left home. How times have changed.

In the world of distance running, American athletes continued to emerge as world contenders in preparation for next year's Olympic Games. Surrounded by snow and ice, it's hard to remember back to October's Chicago Marathon shutting down due to extreme heat and humidity. And sadly, the passing of Ryan Shay, one of America's brightest distance running stars, dampened what was to be an outstanding racing weekend in New York City this November. Local road races and runners continued to produce good events for good causes and good people. Again as always, a special thanks to all of the Race Directors, SNERRO timing officials, and volunteers that keep these events going. Here's a look at running's top performers and performances in 2007:

LOCAL RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: STEPHEN HERRERA, WATERFORD – Herrera raced plenty and won plenty, fending off injuries and running well at every distance from 5K to the Half Marathon. In addition to a dozen or more local race wins, Herrera ran well against the state's best competition, finishing 4th overall in the WSSAC 4 Miler (20:42) and claiming the USATF-CT champion at the Half Marathon distance (1:12:06). Fellow Waterford resident Chadwick Brown (7th at Branford 5M; 2nd at USATF 5K Championship) posted another outstanding season and Ledyard's Jeff Wadecki continued to emerge as another top contender, with outstanding performances in state championship events (8th at 4M, 7th at 5M, 7th at 5K, 3rd at Half Marathon). Chris McCormack of Gales Ferry, a former state champion at 800 meters, also ran very well, especially at the shorter distances. Other locals who posted strong efforts in 2007 included Christopher Kane, Scott Bessette, Jimmy Grant, John Hadcock, Scott Delongchamps, Brad Overturf, John Babcock, and high schooler Zack Eckard. Grandmasters Joe Banas, Tim Smith, Tim Kane, and Wayne Jolley all ran well and are proved capable of mixing it up with their younger competitors.

FEMALE: MELISSA PERKINS-BANAS, NORWICH – Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas was slowed by a nagging foot injury in 2007, yet still raced enough and raced fast enough to earn Local Runner Of The Year honors. Perkins-Banas was outstanding at the longer distances, running a brisk 2:58:56 at the Sugarloaf (Maine) Marathon in May (2nd female), posting another successful title defense at the 11.6 mile Kelley/Ocean Beach Road Race (1:15:52), and posting a 1:22:45 clocking at the New Haven 20K. Uncasville's Allison Gallerani (3:29:20 debut at Hartford Marathon) and Mystic's Heather Bessette (Tarzan Brown race champion) both ran very well as Masters runners.

CONNECTICUT RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: ERIC BLAKE, NEW BRITAIN – Blake, 28, the Assistant Cross-Country and Track coach at Central Connecticut State University, finished 18th overall (1st state finisher) against a loaded field in the New Haven 20K (1:04:18). A member of the 2007 NACAC Mountain Running U.S. Championship team, Blake also posted two terrific marathon efforts in 2007, finishing 14th overall at Grandma's (MN) Marathon (2:24:35) and surviving the brutal heat of this year's Chicago Marathon to finish 10th overall and 2nd American (2:26:55).

FEMALE: CLAUDIA CAMARGO, DANBURY – The 36 year-old Camargo continued to race often at every distance from the mile to the marathon. Camargo did a majority of her best racing in New York, posting times of 16:41 for 5K, 57:34 for 10 miles, and 1:17:27 for the Half Marathon. Camargo also won the Vancouver International Marathon in 2:35:50 to cap a busy racing season. Stratford's Zofia Wiecekowska also raced often in 2007 and was the state's best Masters runner.

U.S. RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: RYAN HALL, CALIFORNIA / BERNARD LAGAT, NEW YORK – Hall's remarkable performance in easily winning Olympic Trials Marathon over the rolling hills of New York's Central Park (2:09:02) proved to the competition that his earlier effort in April's London Marathon (7th overall in 2:08:24) was no fluke. Lagat's 1,500-5,000 meter double victory at the IAAF World Championships in Japan was the first ever and sends a strong message to the competition heading into an Olympic year. Alan Webb also demonstrated a strong resurgence on the track, setting a U.S. record at the 1,500 meter distance. There were plenty of other big names that posted strong performances in 2007, including Dathan Ritzenhein, Brian Sell (2nd and 3rd respectively behind Hall at the Marathon Trials), Med Keflezighi (runner-up at Falmouth), Jason Lehmkuhle (2nd at Twin Cities 10M), Abdi Abdirahman (2nd at Peachtree 10K) Dan Browne (New Haven 20K champion, 3rd at Providence 5K), James Carney (7th overall at Falmouth), and Anthony Famiglietti (USA 8K Champion).

FEMALE: DEENA KASTOR, CALIFORNIA – Kastor won the gate River Run 15K (47:19), finished 5th female (1st American)

in April's Boston Marathon (2:35:09), and won the Tufts Health Plan 10K (32:01). Kastor also posted a strong performance at the IAAF World Championships Half Marathon, finishing 16th in 1:09:38 against the world's top runners. Other top performers included former Marblehead, MA resident Shalane Flanagan (1st at Providence 5K in 15:25), Katie McGregor (runner up to Kastor at Tufts, 32:40), Kara Goucher (BUPA Great North Run winner), and Jen Rhines (2nd at Carlsbad 5K in 15:21). New Englanders Kate O'Neill and Molly Huddle both had strong 2007 seasons as well.

WORLD'S BEST RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MEN: MICAH KOGO, KENYA / MARTIN LEL, KENYA – Another young Kenyan distance runner making his mark on the world scene, the 21 year-old Kogo ran the 3rd fastest road 10K ever run (27:07, just 5 seconds short of Haile Gebrselassie's world mark). Last year's #1 ranked runner in the world at 10,000 meters, Kogo won the Falmouth Road Race (31:53) and the BUPA Great Manchester 10K (27:21) against strong competition. Martin Lel excelled at the 26.2 mile distance in 2007, winning both the Flora London Marathon in April (2:07:41) and the ING New York City Marathon in November (2:09:04). Fellow countryman Edwin Soi (winning 3 spring races against the world best runners), Martin Lrungu (Peachtree 10K winner), and John Korir (1st at Lilac Bloomsday 12K) all made the Kenyan runners a remarkable force in almost any top road race. Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie posted a new world record at the Berlin Marathon in September, running an outstanding 2:04:26 to claim his 24th world record at the age of 34.

WOMEN: LORNAH KIPLAGAT, NETHERLANDS – Kiplagat again proved the runner to beat, finishing 5th at the prestigious Flora London Marathon in April (2:24:46) and winning the New York Mini 10K in June (32:10) and the IAAF World Half Marathon in October (1:06:25). Great Britain's Paul Radcliffe, the marathon world record holder, returned to top form after the birth of her daughter 9 months earlier to reclaim her crown as the top marathon runner in the world, running away from Ethiopia's Grete Wami in the final mile to win the ING New York City Marathon in 2:23:09.

BEST PERFORMANCE – LOCAL: Lisbon's Chris Croff, concluding a summer base building period for his sophomore season at Southern Connecticut State University, finished in the runner-up position for the second consecutive year at the Kelley/Ocean Beach race in August. Croff, who was runner-up to former high school teammate Gavin Coombs in 2006, ran sub 5:30 pace (1:03:42) to finish 2nd behind winner Eric Blake. On the women's side, Melissa Perkins-Banas posted another sub 3 hour marathon, finishing 2nd at the Sugarloaf Marathon in 2:56:58 in May.

BEST PERFORMANCE - UNITED STATES: Ryan Hall's dominating performance at the U.S. Men's Olympic Marathon Trials, running 2:09:02 and cruising home comfortably over the final 5 miles, was as strong a performance as you'll see at the marathon distance. On the track, Bernard Lagat's 1,500-5,000 double at the IAAF World Championships and Alan Webb's 1,500 meter world record both stand out as top performances. For the ladies, Shalane Flanagan's American record for 3,000 meters (2nd in 8:33.25 at the Reebok Indoor Games) was a standout performance early in the season.

BEST PERFORMANCE - WORLD:

Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie proved to the world that he still has plenty left in the tank in running a world record time of 2:04:26 at the Berlin Marathon. For the ladies, China's Chunxiu Zhou 2:20:38 clocking at the Flora London Marathon in April was good enough for 14th overall and a win against the strongest women's marathon field assembled in 2007.

BEST LOCAL ROAD RACE:

JOHN J. KELLEY / OCEAN BEACH ROAD RACE, August 4th – The 45th annual Kelley road race was once again the marquee road race in Southeastern Connecticut and once again completely free. The 11.6 mile road race posted over 300 finishers and continued its long-standing tradition of charging no entry fee. New Britain's Eric Blake (1:03:18) claimed his first Kelley race win, while Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas (1:15:52) claimed her third consecutive title.

BEST CONNECTICUT ROAD RACE:

MANCHESTER ROAD RACE, MANCHESTER, November 22nd – This year's Thanksgiving weather cooperated fully, and the holiday tradition continued at the Manchester Road Race in fine fashion. Honorary Race Chairman Frank Shorter was making his first trip to Manchester, while 7 time winner Amby Burfoot made in 45 in a row. Australia's Andrew Lethersby outkicked former Providence ace Martin Fagan to win for the 2nd time and Oregon's Amy Begley claimed victory in her Manchester debut. There were over 9,500 official finishers for the 71st annual running.

Local Runners:

MEN'S OPEN

2007 Stephen Herrera
 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

Melissa Perkins-Banas
 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

2007 John Hadcock
 2006 Dan Dillon
 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

Allison Gallerani
 Martha Merz
 Martha Merz
 Martha Merz
 Martha Merz
 Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley
 Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley
 Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley

MEN'S GRANDMASTERS

2007 Joe Banas
 2006 Tim Smith
 2005 Tim Smith
 2004 Richard England
 2003 Tim Smith
 2002 Wayne Jolley
 2001 Tim Smith
 2000 Dennis Crowe
 Dennis Crowe
 1998 Tim Smith

1999

State Runners:**MEN**

2007 Eric Blake
 2006 Eric Blake
 2005 Gideon Mutisya
 2004 Chadwick Brown
 2003 Chad Johnson / Stephen Herrera
 2002 Chad Johnson / Stephen Herrera
 2001 Chris Chisholm
 Steve Swift
 1999 Steve Swift
 1998 Steve Swift

WOMEN

Claudia Camargo
 Marie McMahon-Davenport / Claudia Camargo
 Marie McMahon-Davenport
 Kate O'Neill
 Heather Gardiner
 Sue Faber
 Marie McMahon-Davenport
 Zofia Wieciorkowska
 Christine Junkerman
 Kerry Arsenault

2000

High School Runners:**LOCAL BOYS**

2007 Jason Cusack (GRISWOLD)
 2006 Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)/Jake Sullivan (FITCH)
 2005 Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)
 2004 Gavin Coombs and Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)Betsy Boucher (FITCH)/Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)
 2003 Gavin Coombs (GRISWOLD)
 2002 Gavin Coombs (GRISWOLD)
 2001 Jon-Paul Mandelburg (NFA)
 2000 Mark Brissette (STONINGTON)
 1999 Chris Andrew (NFA)
 1998 Chris Andrew (NFA)

LOCAL GIRLS

Meegan Joly (NFA)
 Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)
 Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)
 Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)/Betsy Boucher (FITCH)
 Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
 Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
 Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
 Jessica Schenk (FITCH)
 Jessica Schenk (FITCH)

STATE BOYS**STATE GIRLS**

2007	Don Cabral (GLASTONBURY)	Heather Stephens (RIDGEFIELD)
2006	T.Ward (GRISWOLD)/Don Cabral (GLASTONBURY)	Jamie Olson (GLASTONBURY)
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	
2007	Nate Jenkins, MASSACHUSETTS	2007	Molly Huddle, RHODE ISLAND
2006	Casey Moulton, NEW HAMPSHIRE	2006	Amy Rudolph, RHODE ISLAND
2005	Nate Jenkins, MASSACHUSETTS	2005	Marie McMahon-Davenport, CONNECTICUT
2004	John Mortimer, MASSACHUSETTS	2004	Kate O'Neill, CONNECTICUT
2003	Keith Kelly / John Mortimer, MASSACHUSETTS	2003	Blake Russell, MASSACHUSETTS
2002	Dave Hinga, MASSACHUSETTS	2002	Blake Russell, MASSACHUSETTS
2001	Mike Donnelly, MASSACHUSETTS	2001	Amy Rudolph, RHODE ISLAND

United States Runners:

MEN		WOMEN	
2007	Ryan Hall, CALIFORNIA / Bernard Lagat, NEW YORK	2007	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA
2006	Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	2006	Katie McGregor, MINNESOTA
2005	Abdi Abdirahman, ARIZONA	2005	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA
2004	Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	2004	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA
2003	Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	2003	Deena Kastor, COLORADO
2002	Khalid Khannouchi, NEW YORK	2002	Marla Runyan, OREGON
2001	Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN	2001	Deena Drossin, COLORADO
2000	Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN	2000	Libbie Hickman, COLORADO

World Runners:

MEN		WOMEN	
2007	Micah Kogo, KENYA / Martin Lel, KENYA	2007	Lornah Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS
2006	Martin Lel, KENYA	2006	Lornah Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS
2005	Gilbert Okari, KENYA	2005	L.Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS / P.Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2004	Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO	2004	Susan Chepkemei, KENYA
2003	John Korir, KENYA / Paul Tergat, KENYA	2003	Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2002	Paul Kosgei / Khalid Khannouchi / Rogers Rop	2002	Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2001	Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO	2001	Catherine Ndereba, KENYA
2000	Reuban Cheruiyot, KENYA	2000	Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA
1999	Hicham El Guerrouj / Khalid Khannouchi, MORROCCO	1999	Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA / Tegla Laroupe, KENYA
1998	Khalid Khannouchi, MORROCCO	1998	Catherine Ndereba, KENYA

Best Performances (Local):

MALE		FEMALE	
2007	Chris Croff's 2 nd place finish at the Kelley Race	2007	Melissa Perkins-Banas 2 nd at Sugarloaf Marathon (2:58:56)
2006	Dan Dillon's 26:06 at the Manchester Road Race	2006	Melissa Perkins-Banas 5 th place at Fairfield Half Marathon
2005	Tim Smith's 3:00:00 clocking at the Hartford Marathon	2005	Melissa Perkins-Banas sub 3 marathon at Mystic Places
2004	Chadwick Brown Mystic Places Relay and Marathon	2004	Martha Merz 1:17:44 20K in New Haven
2003	Chad Johnson 1 st @ the Rose City Challenge	2003	Carolyn Verdon's 3:07:29 Marathon @ Vermont City
2002	Steve Herrera 6 th @ Mystic Places Marathon	2002	Martha Merz 1 st Master @ Army 10 Miler
2001	Chad Johnson 17 th @ New Haven 20K	2001	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	
2007	Ryan Hall's win at Olympic Trials Marathon (2:09:02)	2007	Shalane Flanagan's 3,000m record - Reebok Indoor Games
2006	American performance at B.A.A. Boston Marathon	2006	Deena Kastor's 2:19:36 win at the London Marathon
2005	Brian Sell's 9 th place finish at World Champs Marathon	2005	Deena Kastor's win at the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon
2004	Meb Keflezighi's Silver Medal in the Olympic Marathon	2004	Deena Kastor's Bronze 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

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

2007 Haile Gebrselassie's Marathon World Record (2:04:26)
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

China's Chunxiu Zhou 2:20:38 win at the London Marathon
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

2007 John J. Kelly / Ocean Beach Road Race
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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
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

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