

# ELITE WEEKEND IN BOSTON

By DON SIKORSKI  
*Special to the Bulletin*

The Celtics were gearing up for a playoff run as the top seed in the East; a position they hadn't been familiar with since the Reagan administration. The Red Sox were back to winning, posting the best record in the American League to date. The Bruins were preparing to face the Montreal Canadiens in Game 7 in the NHL playoffs. And then there were the runners. They show up in masses every year at Patriots Day, and the city was once again preparing to host the famed 26.2 mile footrace from Hopkinton to downtown Boston in its 112<sup>th</sup> running. This year, there was also a special twist added to marathon weekend, with the Women's U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials taking place in the city a day prior. No doubt Beantown was busting last weekend, and for sports fans, there was plenty going on.

## **Kastor the class of the field; Cinderella story earns Olympic berth**

Magdalena Lewy-Boulet is not a household name, but with nearly a two minute lead on the best female American marathoners we have through 14 miles, something either very good or very bad was about to happen to her in the next hour. While 2004 Olympic bronze medalist Deena Kastor gave chase and eventually overtook Lewy-Boulet at mile 24 to claim the win in a time of 2:29:35, Lewy-Boulet valiantly hung on for 2<sup>nd</sup> place, a personal best time, and an Olympic berth of her own. It will be Kastor's third Olympic trip.

Surprisingly, Lewy-Boulet's fearless front running was the extremely risky bold move it appeared to be. Clicking off even splits from the start, the pack was content to let Lewy-Boulet get away. It wasn't until mile 21 when she began to tire, and Kastor, who was clearly the most accomplished runner in the field, took full advantage of that fatigue. Lewy-Boulet, born in Poland and earning her American citizenship on 9/11/2001, would hang on to finish strong in 2:30:19 earning runner-up honors. Blake Russell, who had finished in the jinxed 4<sup>th</sup> position in the 2004 Trials race, moved up one notch this time around to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2:32:40 to earn her first Olympic team berth. All three runners reside in California, adding an element to the argument for the advantages of a warm weather running climate. Also of note was an outstanding effort by Joan (Benoit) Samuelson, who had approached this Trials race with a goal of running under 3 hours. The oldest of the 146 runners in the field, Samuelson posted a time of 2:49:08 to set an American record for 50-plus female runners. Best known for her dominant performance at the inaugural 1984 Women's Olympic Marathon race in Los Angeles, Samuelson finished wearing a Red Sox baseball cap, similar to her look in winning the 1979 Boston Marathon.

## **Kenya again a dominant force**

Robert Cheruiyot knows how to win the Boston Marathon, and this year, taking advantage of a weaker field than in past years, Cheruiyot made every effort to put this one out of reach. In contrast, Ethiopia's Dire Tune would earn the women's title in a much closer contest. Under perfect conditions, Cheruiyot would earn his 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive Boston title and 4<sup>th</sup> overall and help to secure his place on Kenya's Olympic team. His time of 2:07:46 was the 6<sup>th</sup> fastest in the race's 112 year history and a mere 32 seconds off his own 2006 course record. In a field lacking the top quality of recent years, Cheruiyot gradually outdistanced the chase pack and race alone for much of the race. Moroccan runners Abderrahime Bouramdane (2:09:04) and Khalid El Boumlili (2:10:35) earned the next two spots. With this year's win, Cheruiyot trails only the legendary Clarence DeMar in total Boston victories. DeMar earned seven titles from 1911 to 1930.

The women's race was not so lopsided. Tune edged Russia's Alevtina Biktimirova by a scant 2 seconds for the win in 2:25:25 to become the youngest runner to win in Boston since Joan Benoit's 1979 victory at the age of 21. Kenya's Rita Jeptoo was 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2:26:34. In the celebrity watch category, Amby Burfoot, a former Fitch High School standout now residing in Emmaus, PA, toed the line in Hopkinton for the first time in many years and clocked an official time of 3:51:04. 40 years ago, Burfoot was a 21 year-old senior at Wesleyan University when he ran 2:22:17 to win the 1968 Boston Marathon. Seven-time Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong finished his 3<sup>rd</sup> marathon (1<sup>st</sup> Boston) in an impressive 2:50:58. The B.A.A.'s decision to provide Armstrong with his own finishers tape as he crossed the line was a cheesy marketing stunt bordering on ridiculous, but to Armstrong's credit, he was clearly confused by the special attention.

## **Racing Roundup**

If you weren't fast enough to qualify for the Olympic Trials or the Boston Marathon, there's still plenty of local road racing options for you in near future. On Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual 5K River Run for the Fund will take place at Ocean Beach Park in New London. All proceeds benefit the James Greenleaf, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund, which has been established in honor of Greenleaf, a former St. Bernard High School student/athlete who lost his life as a result of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. Proceeds are used to provide financial assistance to students attending St. Bernard High School. The provides book scholarships annually to incoming freshmen, as well as four partial tuition scholarships and an additional \$2,500 grant to a high school senior towards the college of their choice. The fund will also be providing a Waterford High School Senior with a \$1,000 scholarship towards college tuition. The Greenleaf Committee is hoping to raise funds to add to these scholarships going forward. Check out [www.jamesgreenleaf.org](http://www.jamesgreenleaf.org) to download a race application and learn more about these fundraising efforts.....One week later, The Riverfront Children's Center, a non-profit organization serving low-income families, will be hosting their 2nd Annual Riverfront Run 5K Race and One Mile Family Walk/Run at 9:00am at Eastern Point Beach in Groton. The May 17<sup>th</sup> event hopes to fund the Tuition Assistance Program which provides scholarships to some of our neediest and most at risk children, as well as promoting a healthy and inexpensive family activity. On-line registration is available at [active.com](http://active.com) or call the Riverfront Children's Center at (860) 445-2831 for race information, to make a donation, or to volunteer on race day.....Alan Webb was a DNF at the Carlsbad 5000, dropping out with a half mile remaining with nothing left in the tank. Terefe Maregu Zewdie of Ethiopia earned the win in 13:34, while Vivian Cheruiyot led a Kenyan sweep in the women's field to win in 15:14.....Former Griswold High School standout Gavin Coombs, now competing for North Carolina State, posted a terrific double at the ACC Outdoor Track Championships at Georgia Tech University last weekend. Coombs finished 4<sup>th</sup> in the 3,000 meter steeplechase on Friday in 8:53.52 and returned the next day to finish 11<sup>th</sup> in the 5,000 meter final on Saturday in 14:36.94.

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