

CABADA'S DEDICATION PAYS OFF WITH MARATHON WIN

By DON SIKORSKI
Special to the Bulletin

Fernando Cabada knows what it's like to suffer. The pain threshold he has developed from a difficult upbringing and the multiple ups and downs of his running career may have provided just the edge he was looking for to outrun a very competitive field to win last weekend's USA Men's Marathon Championship in Minneapolis.

The 26 year-old Boulder, Colorado resident ignored the rain, wind, and chilly temperatures and shook the competition near the 18 mile mark to earn the win at the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon in a time of 2:16:32. The early lead pack over two dozen plus began to be whittled down miles after mile, with the threatening weather conditions inducing more harm than the pace of the race. Cabada would break things open by 30K and run solo to the finish, citing inspiration from his Mother, younger brother, and the tough times he has faced throughout his life. The win certainly quieted the critics that believed Cabada's career had fallen victim to his lack of discipline and inconsistent training plan. Instead, Cabada has set himself up for big opportunities in the future. The Twin Cities race served as a one-day qualifier for the 2012 Olympic Trials Marathon with the top 10 finishers meeting the qualifying standard. Cabada and runner-up Matt Gabrielson of Minneapolis (2nd in 2:17:38), have also earned spots on the 2009 United States World Championship IAAF team that will compete in Germany next August.

Cabada earned \$25,000 for his win plus additional bonus money and incentives, an amount of money that Cabada would consider to have been beyond his comprehension and a youngster growing up in Fresno, CA. Raised by a single mother on welfare with an absentee Father who spent the majority of Cabada's childhood years in prison, Fernando survived a difficult upbringing that includes drugs and an arrest. They often had little to eat, and there were frequent fist fights at school. Still, his Mother was determined to make a better life for her son, working hard to earn a living and taking every opportunity to teach young Fernando the value of hard work and develop an appreciation for the gifts he would realize later in life. Cabada began running in high school and recognized tremendous success thanks to a growth spurt in his junior year. Colleges soon noticed Cabada, who would attend the University of Arkansas on an athletic scholarship. But faced with the unfamiliar setting of a big-time college campus and a significant increase in training volume, Cabada left Arkansas after just two years and transferred to Fresno State in 2002. But Fresno State would soon drop its cross-country and track programs, and Cabada made the decision to return to Arkansas. With no scholarship available and faced with the challenges of juggling school, athletics, and full-time work, Cabada's return to Arkansas was short-lived. A brief time away from running to work construction was rejuvenated when Cabada headed for Minot State University in North Dakota to run for Coach Scott Simmons. But a coaching change would have Cabada following Simmons to Virginia Intermont College. Cabada would later turn pro and signed a contact with Reebok. His post-collegiate career has been a roller-coaster of performances. Despite a 2006 season that included a U.S. record for 25 kilometers (1:14:21) and a marathon debut of 2:12:27 (9th fastest U.S. debut ever), the past year has been a struggle for Cabada. But a recent reflection on his priorities has brought with it great success. He has changed coaches (to former marathon world record holder Steve Jones), improved his discipline, and changed his approach. Twin Cities was his first marathon since a poor performance at the World Championships in Osaka, Japan in August 2007. The cash will come in handy for Cabada and his family as well; his Mom and younger brother reside with him in Boulder today. And look for him to make his family proud in the future with some big results. Fernando Cabada has fallen down plenty of times. His latest effort shows that he has the will to get back up.

Racing Roundup

The Twin Cities Marathon also serves as the Master's (40+) Marathon Championships. Dennis Simonaitis of Utah claimed his second Masters marathon title in 2:27:23, while Susan Empey of Washington was the top female Master in 2:50:05.....Olympian Kara Goucher won the USA Women's 10 Mile Championship in Twin Cities in a course record time of 53:44, outdistancing runner-up Katie McGregor (55:04) and earning \$10,000 for her efforts.....Ledyard's Jeff Wadecki and Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas posted excellent performances at the Niantic Bay Half-Marathon recently. Wadecki finished in 1:12:18, good enough for runner-up honors behind race winner Dean Charette of Stamford (1:11:15), while Perkins-Banas was the top female finisher in 1:25:33, good enough for 16th overall.....Conditions are expected to be favorable for the 40,000+ runners that will be competing in today's Chicago Marathon. The weather forecast is a drastic change from last year's Chicago event that faced dramatically warm and humid conditions that caused the event to be shut down during the late stages and wrecked havoc on the marathoners.....A special thank you to those who have donated to the Yale Hemophilia Center in support of my wife Catherine's fundraising effort. Catherine will be competing in today's B.A.A. Half Marathon and hopes to raise \$5,000 or more for the organization that treats our youngest son Kyle, age 4. Kyle and others like him will live with Hemophilia for a lifetime; Catherine anticipates experiencing pain and suffering for less than two hours. The sacrifice is insignificant compared to the medical challenges that Kyle has tackled in the last four years. Please consider a contribution to Kyle's Treatment Center in hopes that other children like him can continue to live and act like other healthy little boys. Donations can be mailed to 33 Greenwich Court, Norwich, CT 06360 with checks made payable to "Yale Hemophilia Center". Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you in advance for your generosity and support of Yale Hemophilia Center.

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