

DOS SANTOS, RADCLIFFE THE CLASS OF NEW YORK

By DON SIKORSKI
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Racing a marathon is unpredictable, and experience helps in winning against a competitive field. This year's ING New York City Marathon field features a few runners accustomed to the winner's podium, as well as others anxious to join them this year. Morocco's Abderrahman Goumri, best known for his role as last year's runner-up, was part of the competitive filed vying for top honors and taking turns hammering each other through the five boroughs of New York City. A big time move to the front just before the 20 mile mark dropped the majority of the field and by 22, Goumri looked to be the victor.

American runners were clearly intent on making their mark in the Big Apple. A strong contingent of top American runners led into the headwind early on, with Abdi Abdirahman, James Carney, Josh Rohatinsky, and New Englander Nate Jenkins out in front. But by five miles, only Abdirahman remained as the international field took over. Hendrick Ramaala of South Africa, a past champion in New York, led a pack of a dozen plus through the next stages. By First Avenue, the pace ratcheted up another notch and the serious racing began. One by one they would fall and then a major move by Goumri thinned out the contending field even more.

Marilson Gomes Dos Santos of Brazil was familiar with Gourmri's position. In 2006, Dos Santos' move was largely ignored by the field until it was too late. Not he was the hunter instead of the hunted. Going shoulder to shoulder, Dos Santos finally surrendered the lead to Gourmi, dropping back nearly 100 yards and seemingly out of contention. Goumri headed into Central Park and hung on for dear life and looked back to see Dos Santos in pursuit. This race was clearly not over. When Gourmi surrender the lead with 800 meters to go, the fates had been reversed, as Dos Santos headed for the finish to break the tape in 2:08:43, 24 second up on Gourmi. The chase pack saw Kenyans Daniel Rono and Paul Tergat in for the 3-4 spots, with American's claiming 4 positions in the top 10 with Abdirahman 6th (2:14:17), Rohatinsky 7th (2:14:23), Jason Lehmkuhle 8th (2:14:30), and Luke Humphrey 10th (2:16:37). Marilson Gomes Dos Santos had proved to his competitors that his 2006 win was no fluke.

The women's race had plenty of big names, an American presence, and some drama as well. Great Britain's Paula Radcliffe was the world record holder, defending champion in New York, and had never lost a non-Olympic marathon. Kara Goucher is the new American sweetheart and was running her first marathon. She ran with the heart and conviction of a seasoned veteran. The headwind seemed to be Radcliffe's only challenge early on as she pushed the pace from the gun, intent on overcoming her Olympic Games disappointment. Yet by the halfway mark, Goucher was one of a few contenders that had worked their way up to the front-running Radcliffe, including world marathon points leader Gete Wami, 2008 Boston Marathon champion Dire Tune, marathon veteran Catherine Ndereba, Rita Jeptoo, and Russian Masters runner Ludmila Petrova. Radcliffe continued to apply pressure, and similar to the men's race, the contenders began to slip away. Goucher had dropped back only to later return to the front of the field, yet Radcliffe proved to be too strong. By 22 miles, she was alone and in front, winning by nearly a 2 minute margin in 2:23:56. Petrova would hang on for 2nd in 2:25:43 while Goucher would run down a fading Tune for 3rd, finishing just 10 seconds later, an American debut marathon record. That effort would round out a strong day for the American runners in New York and serve notice that the resurgence looks to continue.

Racing Roundup

Brendan Callahan, 27, of West Hartford was the top Connecticut finisher in New York with a very impressive 2:23:25 clocking, good enough for 27th place overall. Stanley Mickus of Mystic ran 2:53:08 to earn top local honors.....Runners looking for an old-school racing event from the days of cross-country terrain and inexpensive entry fees can make the trip to Thompson, CT on Sunday, November 16th for the 5K Cross-Country Turkey Trot. The race takes place over the wheel-measured course at the West Thompson Dam beginning at 2:05pm and offers awards to the top finishers in each age division. There is also a 2.5K "Turkey Wobble" walk event that precedes the race with a 1:00pm start. With an entry fee of only \$5, this event offers an inexpensive opportunity to pre-burn some calories in preparation for the Thanksgiving holiday. Contact the Thompson Recreation Office at (860) 923-9440 or e-mail Mike Lajeunesse at mikeinthompson@charter.net for more race information.....Westerly's Jay Lustgarten not only made good on his plan to run 8 marathons and ultra-marathon in an 8 week span, he took things one step further by adding a ninth race to his ambitious schedule. On Sunday, October 26th, Lustgarten finished the Cape Cod Marathon in 4 hours and 12 minutes to compete his 8th race of 26.2 miles or more in an 8 week span. A week later, he made the trek north to Manchester, NH for the Manchester Marathon, finishing 154th overall in 3:46:37, his fastest finish of the bunch. That makes 9 races totaling over 300 miles and 60+ hours of running in a 44 day stretch for the resilient Lustgarten.....The Tarzan Brown Road Race in Mystic, with its scenic course and rich tradition dating back to 1976, has always been a favorite of area runners. This year's race on November 2nd also delivered its strongest field in years. Groton's Mark Olivier, a former standout at neighboring Fitch High School, earned the victory with his brisk 27:21 clocking over the 5.5 mile course to outdistance Mt. Washington Road Race champion Eric Blake of New Britain (27:59) and Ledyard's Jeff Wadecki (3rd in 28:15). Marie Davenport ran 30:21 to earn top female honors, good enough for 11th place overall. There were 676 official finishers.....The Manchester Road Race is proud to feature a very special guest speaker prior to their event. On Thursday, November 20th, Joan Benoit Samuelson will be speaking about her running and athletic career. Samuelson is best known for her runaway victory in the first ever Women's Olympic Marathon in Los Angeles. Earning notoriety by winning the 1979 Boston Marathon in an American record time, Samuelson would go on to earn a spot on the Olympic team by winning the 1984 U.S. Marathon Trials race just 17 days after arthroscopic knee surgery. She would later set a world record for the distance. Samuelson also recently set a national age group record in the U.S. 5K Championship race in Providence on September 21st, running 17:24 at the age of 50 to clip 4 seconds off the previous mark. The speaking event takes place at 7:30pm at the Manchester Community College Auditorium. Admission is free but seating is limited. Tickets can be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to Leo V. Diana, Diana, Conte, & Tunila, 1091 Main Street, Manchester, CT 06040. Contact Mr. Diana at LDiana@DCTLaw.com for more information.

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