

2008 RUNNING IN REVIEW

By DON SIKORSKI
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The 2008 sports year included a perfect regular season record by the New England Patriots foiled by a resilient New York Giants team in Super Bowl XXXII, the Boston Celtics return to glory, a dominating 8 for 8 Olympic gold medal performance by swimmer Michael Phelps, and the New York Yankees spending the most money in baseball history yet missing the playoffs for the first time in a dozen years (while the over-achieving Tampa Bay Devil Rays play quality ball all year long to eliminate the defending champion Red Sox). In the running world, an Olympic year provided us with a summer of outstanding athletic performances. From the blazing speed of Jamaica's Usain Bolt to the amazing endurance of the Kenyan and Ethiopian distance runners, there was plenty of action for Track & Field fans in 2008. American athletes fared well against Olympic competition as well, highlighted by Marblehead, MA native Shalane Flanagan's bronze medal at 10,000 meters. On the local running scene, there were plenty of racing events that yielded strong performances for good causes. As always, a special thank you goes out to all of the Race Directors, SNERRO timing officials, and race volunteers that keep these events going strong. Here's a look at running's top performers and performances in 2008:

LOCAL RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: MARK OLIVIER, GROTON / JON PAUL MANDELBURG, QUAKER HILL – This honor was too close to call, as former E.C.C. rivals Mark Olivier (Fitch) and Jon Paul Mandelburg (NFA) trained together, raced together, and won together often in 2008. Olivier and Mandelburg finished 1-2 at the Delaney Dash 5 Miler, the Ocean Beach/Kelley Road Race, and at the Deary 5 Mile Race in Putnam. Olivier also scored a strong win at the Tarzan Brown Road Race (earning a 38 second win over Eric Blake) and finished 19th overall at the CVS Downtown Providence 5K in 14:54 (with Mandelburg just 4 places back in 15:00). With 4-time Runner of the Year honoree Stephen Herrera sidelined a majority of the season with injuries, it was Ledyard's Jeff Wadecki that stepped up and notched his strongest season to date, scoring big wins at the New London Sailfest 5K (15:43) and the USATF 10 Mile State Championship and was the runner-up at the Niantic Bay Half Marathon (1:12:18). Chadwick Brown, John Babcock, Chris McCormack, Christopher Kane, Scott Bessette, John Hadcock, Leszek Woiciechowski, Brad Overturf, and Zack Eckard all ran well in 2008. Grandmasters Joe Banas, Mark Novotny, Wayne Jolley, and Bob Stack each battled as divisional rivals and ran very well all season long.

FEMALE: MELISSA PERKINS-BANAS, NORWICH – Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas again proved to be the class of field in 2008, earning her 5th consecutive Runner of the Year honor. Perkins-Banas won plenty of races in 2008, including the East Hartford Riverfest 5K, the Niantic Bay Half Marathon (1:25:33), EBAC Fall Challenge (29:34), and the Tough Ten Mile Turkey Trot Race (1:05:12). She also posted strong performances at the Mount Washington Road Race (1:23:26) and at the Kelley Race (3rd female in 1:16:04). Mystic's Heather Bessette was the area's top Masters runner, posting a 3:19:38 finish at the Cox Sports Marathon in Providence and a 1:29:27 clocking at the Niantic Bay Half Marathon.

CONNECTICUT RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: ERIC BLAKE, NEW BRITAIN / BRENDAN CALLAHAN, WEST HARTFORD – The 29 year-old Blake, a Mountain Racing specialist who competes for the Boston Athletic Association, won the Mount Washington Road Race (1:00:39), was runner-up at the Stowe (VT) 8 Miler (42:12), finished 7th at the New England 10K Championships, 21st at the New Haven 20K (1:04:23), and was 21st overall at the Manchester Road Race. Callahan, 27, won the USATF 5K in Milford (15:26), ran a strong 2:23:25 at the ING New York City Marathon in November (good enough for 27th place overall) and finished one spot behind Blake in New Haven (22nd in 1:04:42) and one spot in front of Blake in Manchester (20th overall).

FEMALE: SHANNON MCHALE, WEST SIMSBURY / MARIE MCMAHON-DAVENPORT, GUILFORD – Both McHale and McMahon-Davenport possess national class credentials and both ran fast in 2008. McHale, at age 37, ran an outstanding 2:42:40 to finish 37th overall at the U.S. Olympic Trials Race in Boston, MA in April. McMahon-Davenport ran 22:42 for 4 miles in Wakefield, MA and won the Narragansett 10 Miler in 1:01:23. Danbury's Claudia Camargo and Stratford's Zofia Wieceiorkowska once again raced with great frequency and with good results, proving to be the state's top Masters runners.

U.S. RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MALE: DATHAN RITZENHEIN, OREGON – Although most of the focus was on teammate Ryan Hall's medal chances at the 2008 Olympic Games Marathon, it was Ritzenhein that proved to be the country's top finisher with his 9th place effort in 2:11:59 (one place ahead of Hall). "Ritz" also won the U.S. 12K XC Championships in San Diego. Many U.S. runners posted strong season in 2008, including Hall, Matt Tegenkamp, Galen Rupp, Jason Lehmkuhle, Abdi Abdirahman, Brent Vaughan, Antony Famniglietti, Jorge Torres, and Brian Sell.

FEMALE: SHALANE FLANAGAN, NORTH CAROLINA – Flanagan, with ties to the area (Dad Steve ran at the University of

Connecticut and hails from Brooklyn, CT), successfully completed the 5,000-10,000 meter double to get to the Olympic Games and made the decision to compete in both events. She made the most of the decision, earning a Bronze medal at 10,000 meters in an American record of 30:22.22 and followed with a strong, 10th place finish at 5,000 meters (15:50.80). Kara Goucher also proved capable of running with Flanagan and also qualified for the same Olympic double, finishing 10th at 10,000 meters and 9th at 5,000 meters. Goucher also showed her range with an impressive marathon debut in New York City, finishing 3rd in 2:25:53. Other top performers in 2008 included Olympic Trails Marathon winner Deena Kastor, Katie McGregor, Amy Yoder Begley, Jen Rhines, Arianna Lambie, Kate O'Neill, Lauren Fleshman, and Molly Huddle.

WORLD'S BEST RUNNERS OF THE YEAR:

MEN: KENENISA BEKELE, ETHIOPIA – While his Kenyan distance running rivals were hitting the roads, Bekele's focus was the track and the 2008 Olympic Games. That focus paid off as Bekele earned the gold medal double, winning the 10,000 meter race in 27:01.17 and 6 days later, adding a second victory by winning at 5,000 meters (12:57.82). Bekele also earned 10 other major victories in 2008, including the World Cross Country Championships (12K) in Edinburgh, Scotland.

WOMEN: TIRUNESH DIBADA, ETHIOPIA – Dibada was a dominant runners throughout 2008, scoring major victories at the Reebok Indoor Games in Boston at 3,000 meters (8:33.37), the World Cross-Country Championships 8K in Scotland, and a 5K-10K double (15:41.40, 29:54.66) at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

BEST PERFORMANCE – LOCAL: Groton's Mark Olivier delivered a 19th place finish at the CVS / Downtown Providence 5K, positing a time of 14:54 against a very competitive field. For the females, Melissa Perkins-Banas' 1:25:33 clocking at the Niantic Bay Half Marathon stands out as one of the area's best performance of 2008.

BEST PERFORMANCE - UNITED STATES: Being an Olympic year, there were plenty. But with Bernard Lagat disappointing Olympic finish at both the 1,500 and 5,000 meter distances, it would be Dathan Ritzenhein's 9th place finish at the 2008 Olympic Marathon that deserves the honor. Shalane Flanagan's gutsy effort and intelligent race tactics in the Olympic 10,000 meter race earned her a bronze medal, the first since Lynn Jennings accomplished the same feat in 1992.

BEST PERFORMANCE - WORLD:

What can Ethiopia's Haile Gebrselassie possible do for an encore? Well, how about become the first man to run under 2 hours and 4 minutes for the 26.2 mile marathon distance. This at a time that many critics wrote Gebrselassie off and believed that his best days were well behind him. Gebrselassie's 2:03:59 clocking in Berlin on September 28th proved that skipping the Olympic Marathon in favor of racing 10,000 meters on the track proved to be the right decision for the 35 year-old Ethiopian. Sammy Wanjiru also deserves the honor by virtue of his dominant performance in the 2008 Olympic Games Marathon. The 21 year old Kenyan broke away from the field early and posted the fastest Olympic Marathon finish time in history, smashing Carlos Lopes' 1984 mark (2:09:21) with his 2:06:32 finish. For the ladies, Ethiopia's Tirunesh Dibada won both the 5,000 and 10,000 meter races at the Olympic Games to cap and outstanding season.

BEST LOCAL ROAD RACE:

JOHN J. AND JESSIE KELLEY / OCEAN BEACH ROAD RACE, August 2nd – The 46th annual Kelley race continues to be the premiere running event in Southeastern Connecticut. The fact that the race charges no entry fee makes it that much better. There were nearly 400 finishers in this year's 11.6 mile road race, with the Co-Runners of the Year Mark Olivier and John-Paul Mandelburg cruising along comfortably at near 5:30 per mile clip to tie for the win. Branford's Cheryl Anderson make quite an impression in her Southeastern Connecticut racing debut with nearly a 4 minute win against top level competition. Even a cloudy afternoon couldn't deter Race Director Way Hedding and the crew from SNERRO, who once again put on an outstanding event.

BEST CONNECTICUT ROAD RACE:

MANCHESTER ROAD RACE, MANCHESTER, November 28th – The Manchester Road Race carries a Thanksgiving tradition that is difficult to rival when looking for the state's best race. The presence of this year's Honorary Race Chairman Joan Benoit-Samuelson further enhanced the rich Manchester tradition, while 7-time winner and former Fitch High School standout Amby Burfoot made in 46 in a row this year. Former Providence College Friar Martin Fagan brought Ireland back to the winner's circle and avenged his defeat in 2007, while Teyba Naser of Bahrain outran five-time Manchester champion Amy Rudolph to earn the women's title. There were over 10,400 official finishers in the race's 72nd consecutive running.

Local Runners:

MEN'S OPEN

2008 Mark Olivier / Jon Paul Mandelburg
 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
 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

2008 Christopher Kane
 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

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

MEN'S GRANDMASTERS

2008 Joe Banas / Bob Stack
 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

2008 Eric Blake / Brendan Callahan
 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

Shannon McHale / Marie McMahan-Davenport
 Claudia Camargo
 Marie McMahan-Davenport / Claudia Camargo
 Marie McMahan-Davenport
 Kate O'Neill
 Heather Gardiner
 Sue Faber
 Marie McMahan-Davenport
 Zofia Wieceorkowska
 Christine Junkerman
 Kerry Arsenault

2000

High School Runners:

LOCAL BOYS

2008 Josh Porizky (FITCH)
 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)

LOCAL GIRLS

Sarah Eagan (NFA)
 Meegan Joly (NFA)
 Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)
 Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)
 Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)/Betsy Boucher (FITCH)
 Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
 Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)

2000 Mark Brissette (STONINGTON)
1999 Chris Andrew (NFA)
1998 Chris Andrew (NFA)

Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
Jessica Schenk (FITCH)
Jessica Schenk (FITCH)

STATE BOYS

2008 Tucker Schaefer (DANBURY)
2007 Don Cabral (GLASTONBURY)
2006 T.Ward (GRISWOLD)/Don Cabral (GLASTONBURY)
2005 Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)/Jay Koleseus (GUILFORD)
2004 Gavin Coombs and Tradelle Ward (GRISWOLD)
2003 Gavin Coombs (GRISWOLD)
2002 Ahmed Haji (CONARD)
2001 Brian McGovern (FAIRFIELD PREP)
2000 Brian McGovern (FAIRFIELD PREP)
1999 Chris Andrew (NFA)
1998 Ren Provey (FAIRFIELD)

STATE GIRLS

Moira Kenny (IMMACULATE)
Heather Stephens (RIDGEFIELD)
Jamie Olson (GLASTONBURY)
Kelly Sorrell (LYMAN)/Amie Schumacher (HOLY CROSS)
Amie Schumacher (HOLY CROSS)
M.Owen (KILLINGLY)/A.Schumacher (HOLY CROSS)
Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
Jessica Schenk (FITCH)
Jessica Schenk (FITCH)

New England Runners:

MEN	WOMEN
2008 Matt Pelletier, RHODE ISLAND	Molly Huddle, RHODE ISLAND
2007 Nate Jenkins, MASSACHUSETTS	Molly Huddle, RHODE ISLAND
2006 Casey Moulton, NEW HAMPSHIRE	Amy Rudolph, RHODE ISLAND
2005 Nate Jenkins, MASSACHUSETTS	Marie McMahon-Davenport, CONNECTICUT
2004 John Mortimer, MASSACHUSETTS	Kate O'Neill, CONNECTICUT
2003 Keith Kelly / John Mortimer, MASSACHUSETTS	Blake Russell, MASSACHUSETTS
2002 Dave Hinga, MASSACHUSETTS	Blake Russell, MASSACHUSETTS
2001 Mike Donnelly, MASSACHUSETTS	Amy Rudolph, RHODE ISLAND

United States Runners:

MEN	WOMEN
2008 Dathan Ritzenhein, OREGON	Shalane Flanagan, NORTH CAROLINA
2007 Ryan Hall, CALIFORNIA / Bernard Lagat, NEW YORK	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA
2006 Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	Katie McGregor, MINNESOTA
2005 Abdi Abdirahman, ARIZONA	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA
2004 Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	Deena Kastor, CALIFORNIA
2003 Mebrahtom Keflezighi, CALIFORNIA	Deena Kastor, COLORADO
2002 Khalid Khannouchi, NEW YORK	Marla Runyan, OREGON
2001 Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN	Deena Drossin, COLORADO
2000 Rod Dehaven, WISCONSIN	Libbie Hickman, COLORADO

World Runners:

MEN	WOMEN
2008 Kenenisa Bekele, ETHIOPIA	Tirunesh Dibaba, ETHIOPIA
2007 Micah Kogo, KENYA / Martin Lel, KENYA	Lornah Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS
2006 Martin Lel, KENYA	Lornah Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS
2005 Gilbert Okari, KENYA	L.Kiplagat, NETHERLANDS / P.Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2004 Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO	Susan Chepkemei, KENYA
2003 John Korir, KENYA / Paul Tergat, KENYA	Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2002 Paul Kosgei / Khalid Khannouchi / Rogers Rop	Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
2001 Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO	Catherine Ndereba, KENYA
2000 Reuban Cheruiyot, KENYA	Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA
1999 Hicham El Guerrouj / Khalid Khannouchi, MORROCCO	Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA / Tegla Laroupe, KENYA
1998 Khalid Khannouchi, MORROCCO	Catherine Ndereba, KENYA

Best Performances (Local):

MALE	FEMALE
2008 Mark Olivier's 19 th Place (14:54) at Providence 5K	Melissa Perkins-Banas win at Niantic Bay Half Marathon
2007 Chris Croff's 2 nd place finish at the Kelley Race	Melissa Perkins-Banas 2 nd at Sugarloaf Marathon (2:58:56)
2006 Dan Dillon's 26:06 at the Manchester Road Race	Melissa Perkins-Banas 5 th place at Fairfield Half Marathon
2005 Tim Smith's 3:00:00 clocking at the Hartford Marathon	Melissa Perkins-Banas sub 3 marathon at Mystic Places
2004 Chadwick Brown Mystic Places Relay and Marathon	Martha Merz 1:17:44 20K in New Haven
2003 Chad Johnson 1 st @ the Rose City Challenge	Carolyn Verdon's 3:07:29 Marathon @ Vermont City
2002 Steve Herrera 6 th @ Mystic Places Marathon	Martha Merz 1 st Master @ Army 10 Miler

2001 Chad Johnson 17th @ New Haven 20K
2000 Mike Slinsky defends title @ Rose City Challenge
1999 Mike Slinsky wins first Rose City Challenge

Melissa Perkins finishes 3rd @ Mystic Places Marathon

Best Performances (United States):

MALE	FEMALE
2008 Dathan Ritzenhein's 9 th place finish - Olympic Marathon	Shalane Flanagan's bronze medal - Olympic Games 10,000
2007 Ryan Hall's win at Olympic Trials Marathon (2:09:02)	Shalane Flanagan's 3,000m record - Reebok Indoor Games
2006 American performance at B.A.A. Boston Marathon	Deena Kastor's 2:19:36 win at the London Marathon
2005 Brian Sell's 9 th place finish at World Champs Marathon	Deena Kastor's win at the LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon
2004 Meb Keflezighi's Silver Medal in the Olympic Marathon	Deena Kastor's Bronze Medal in the Olympic Marathon
2003 Eddy Hellebuyck's win at Twin Cities Marathon	Marla Runyan's win over De Reuck at New Haven 20K
2002 Khalid Khannouchi's 4 th win @ Chicago	Marla Runyan's 5 th place finish @ NYC Marathon
2001 Alan Webb breaks high school mile record	Deena Drossin runs 2:26:58 debut @ NYC Marathon
2000 Rod Dehaven wins Olympic Marathon Trials	Christine Clark wins Olympic Marathon Trials

Best Performances (World):

MEN	WOMEN
2008 Gebrselassie's WR (2:03:59) /Wanjiru's Olympic win	Tirunesh Dibaba's Olympic 5,000-10,000 double
2007 Haile Gebrselassie's Marathon World Record (2:04:26)	China's Chunxiu Zhou 2:20:38 win at the London Marathon
2006 Marilson Gomes dos Santos' win at the NYC Marathon	Lornah Kiplagat's 20K World Record run (1:03:21)
2005 Paul Tergat's 1 second win at the New York Marathon	Paula Radcliffe's 2:17:42 marathon win in London
2004 Hicham El Guerrero's 1,500/5,000m Olympic double	Paula Radcliffe's win at the ING New York City Marathon
2003 World T+F Championships 5,000 meter final in Paris	Paula Radcliffe's record run @ London
2002 Khalid Khannouchi's record run @ London	Paula Radcliffe's record run @ Chicago
2001 Hicham El Guerrero run 3:44.95 mile in Rome	Catherine Ndereba record run @ Chicago
2000 Haile Gebrselassie's Olympic 10,000 meter win	
1999 Khalid Khannouchi record run @ Chicago	
1998 Ronaldo da Costa's record run @ Berlin	Tegla Laroupe's record run @ Rotterdam

Road Races:

LOCAL	STATE
2008 John J. & Jessie Kelley / Ocean Beach Road Race	Manchester Road Race
2007 John J. & Jessie Kelley / Ocean Beach Road Race	Manchester Road Race
2006 John J. Kelley / Ocean Beach Road Race	Manchester Road Race
2005 John J. Kelley / Ocean Beach Road Race	Manchester Road Race
2004 John J. Kelley / Ocean Beach Road Race	Christopher Martin 5K
2003 John J. Kelley / Ocean Beach Road Race	New Haven 20K / Manchester Road Race
2002 Mystic Places Marathon	Moonlight Run 5K, New Milford
2001 John J. Kelley / Ocean Beach Road Race	New Haven 20K
2000 Rose City Challenge	Litchfield Hills Road Race
1999 L & M Hospital Spring Stride	Manchester Road Race
1998 L & M Hospital Spring Stride / Tarzan Brown	New Haven 20K / Manchester Road Race

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