

## FAST EFFORTS START 2009 ON THE RIGHT TRACK

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For runners, especially those residing in the New England region, the months of January and February are usually reserved for building back a distance base with as many long, slow miles as the body and mind are willing to tolerate in the snow, darkness, and single digit temperatures. But with the approach of spring, there's plenty to look forward to as the layers of clothing begin to be shed and the light remaining into the evening just a bit longer. Here's a look at some impressive running efforts that have taken place to date and what we can expect to see soon:

Two local runners who tore up the roads in 2008 continued with that trend this past January, as Groton's Mark Olivier and Quaker Hill's Jon Paul Mandelburg toed the line with the country's best at the 2009 USA Half Marathon Championships in Houston, Texas. High school rivals and collegiate teammates at Columbia University, both runners not only established themselves as two of the state's top open runners last year but continue to train and race with national aspirations. Olivier, a former Fitch High School standout, finished in 43<sup>rd</sup> place overall in 1:08:59, while Mandelburg, who raced against Olivier often during his running days at Norwich Free Academy, was 48<sup>th</sup> in 1:10:55. 2004 Olympic Marathon silver medalist Meb Keflezghi eared a hard fought victory in 1:01:25, 10 seconds up on runner-up Dathan Ritzenhein, a 9<sup>th</sup> place finisher in the 2008 Olympic Marathon. Magdalena Boulet of Oakland, CA, also a 2008 Olympian in the marathon, won the women's title in 1:11:47. Amy Rudolph of Providence, RI finished 5<sup>th</sup> (1:12:35), while former Yale University harrier Kate O'Neill, now training in Palo Alto, CA, was 11<sup>th</sup> in 1:14:05. Look for Mark Olivier and Jon Paul Mandelburg to continue their progression in 2009.....Most of the big names delivered big-time performances at the 2009 Reebok Boston Indoor Games on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Kara Goucher used her 3,000 meter race as a tune-up and opportunity to hit the streets of Boston in training for April's Boston Marathon. Goucher, a clear crowd favorite, outran Sally Kipyego of Kenya to earn the victory in 8:46.65. Goucher planned to run 20 miles on the marathon route the next morning. The Boy's High School Mile was clearly the race of the day. A frantic finish saw San Diego's Mac Fleet come out of nowhere in the final meters to earn the win in 4:09.06. Westerly's Andrew Springer did the bulk of the work up front before surrendering his lead in the final lap and finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> in 4:09.16 in a photo finish that saw 4 runners under the 4:10 mark. Shalane Flanagan and Ethiopia's Sentayehu Ejigu might also have something to say about which race provided the most dramatic finish. Both runners posted an identical winning time of 14:47.62 in the Women's 5,000 meter race. The decision was given to Ejigu, but Flanagan's run set an American record and earned her a \$25,000 cash bonus for the effort.....I had recently interviewed another former NFA distance running standout, Bill Krohn, for a feature article last month. Krohn, who now resides in Stockholm, Sweden and just recently turned 50, had resumed training and racing on the track. As his times continued to progress, Krohn believed that he had an opportunity to take down the American 1,500 meter record for 50+. Just last week, Krohn capitalized on that opportunity by running a time of 4 minutes, 13.98 seconds to eclipse the former mark of 4:15.64 set by another former Connecticut runner, Albin Swenson, back in 1998. The world record mark for 50+ is 4:09.98; a time that seemed far out of reach for Krohn just a few weeks ago but is now a real possibility.....Krohn isn't the only runner posting fast track times in Stockholm. Ethiopia's Meseret Defar recently broke the women's 5,000 meter indoor world record by more than three seconds at the G.E. Gala Track Meet in February. Defar ran a very brisk 14:24.37 to dip under the previous mark of 14:27.42 set by fellow Ethiopian and rival Tirunesh Dibaba, set in 2007. Defar, the Olympic gold medalist, has now won 18 consecutive indoor races, with her last defeat coming in March 2003.....Oregon's Galen Rupp also joins Flanagan in the U.S. record books. At the Tyson Invitational 5,000 meter run, Rupp surrendered his late-race lead to Ethiopia's Bekana Daba, who would go on to win in 13:17.89. Rupp would hit the finish line in 13:18.12, a time that broke both the collegiate and U.S. marks. Certainly worth special recognition is Doug Padilla's 27 year-old former mark of 13:20, run at the 1982 Millrose Games. The Madison Square Garden wooden oval is not one of the faster tracks out there.....On February 14<sup>th</sup>, University of Oregon's Matthew Centrowicz ran 3:57.92 to join the elite club of sub 4 minute milers. The young Centrowicz joins his Dad on that list, as Matt Sr. ran 3:59.2 back in 1975.....The 2009 USATF Racing Schedule kicks off on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> with 2009 Greater Hartford 1/4 Marathon (6.55 miles). The race begins at 10:00am at the MDC Reservoir in West Hartford. Go to <http://hartfordtrackclub.org> for registration and race information. In addition to competing in a state championship event, the race also offers one of the better opportunities to earn a personal best at a new distance.

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