

# 2001 RUNNING IN REVIEW

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2001 was truly a memorable year in the world of distance running. The United States suffered a major tragedy on September 11<sup>th</sup>; a day that the world will never forget. But through it all, our country and our athletes persevered. Major events like the Marine Corps (Washington D.C.) Marathon and the New York City Marathon grew stronger and prouder with a rise of patriotism in our proud country. In May, Virginia High School Miler Alan Webb ran the mile in 3:53.43 at the Prefontaine Classic to shatter Jim Ryan's long-standing record from 1965. The women's marathon world record was also broken not once but twice, and both within a week of each other. On the local race scene, some of the area's top runners continued to dominate the leader board all season long. A number of local races attracted stronger and deeper fields; as always thanks to the help of our Race Directors and volunteers. Across Connecticut and throughout New England, there were many terrific events and quality performances. Here are my personal choices for running's top performers and performances of 2001:

## **RUNNERS OF THE YEAR (LOCAL):**

**MALE: CHAD JOHNSON, CANTERBURY** – Chad Johnson's return to racing was a shot in the arm for the Mohegan Striders, who, behind Johnson, would go on to re-claim the USATF Open team title in 2001. Early in the season, Johnson had some company up front in teammates Stephen Herrera and Chadwick Brown. By mid-summer, Johnson had clearly established himself at the area's top runner. Standout performances included individual state championships at 5 Miles, 5,000 meters (track), and 8K (cross-country). But two of his best performances were at longer distances: a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in the Rose City Challenge in June (the USATF 10 Mile Championship event) and a 17<sup>th</sup> place overall finish at the prestigious New Haven 20K in 1:04:40 in September, which served as the U.S. Championships for 20K. Herrera, hampered by a stress fracture suffered at the New Haven race, was the state's top runner during the spring, winning the state 5K championship in Simsbury (15:12) as well as a handful of local races. Johnson, Herrera, and Brown also finished 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively behind Hartford TC's Chris Chisholm in the USATF Grand Prix Race standings for the year. Three other runners: New London's Kevin Grant, Lebanon's Peter Oviatt, and Uncasville's Todd Bennett, also won a number of road races across the state and ran very well all season long. Oakdale's Lance Baier produced two exceptional marathon efforts, running 2:48:57 at Boston in April (322<sup>nd</sup> place) and coming back in October to produce a 2:41:01 7<sup>th</sup> place finish in the Hartford Marathon.

**FEMALE: MELISSA PERKINS-BANAS, NORWICH** – Melissa Perkins-Banas raced often and won often in 2001, from every distance ranging from 5K to the marathon. Her outstanding 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in 2:52:57 at the inaugural Mystic Places (formerly East Lyme) Marathon was a personal best for Perkins-Banas, bettering her 2:57:56 effort at the Sugarloaf (ME) Marathon in May. Long distance races were clearly Perkins-Banas' strong suit, as she posted impressive performances at Norwich's Rose City Challenge (4<sup>th</sup>), the Fairfield Half Marathon, New London's Kelly Race (1<sup>st</sup>), the New Haven 20K (1:16:18), and the Hartford Half-Marathon (2<sup>nd</sup>). Mystic's Martha Merz again won a number of road races and raced well against strong competition all year long.

## **RUNNERS OF THE YEAR (WORLD):**

**MEN: HICHAM EL GUERROUJ, MORROCCO** – Hicham El Guerrouj finished 2001 unbeaten and clearly the best middle distance runner in the world. El Guerrouj first won the IAAF 3,000 meter World Indoor Championships in March. Then his 3:49.92 win in the mile race at the Prefontaine Classic in June (overshadowed by Alan Webb's 5<sup>th</sup> place finish to best Jim Ryan's High School mark) was the fastest mile ever run on American soil. The summer would see El Guerrouj run a 3:44.95 mile in Rome and come back with a 3:26.12 1,500m in Brussels. Kenyan athletes again dominated the road racing circuit, as Paul Tergat made a successful transition from cross-country and track to the marathon. Tergat, a former world cross-country champion and Olympic medallist at 10,000 meters on the track, finished 2<sup>nd</sup> at both the London Marathon in April (2:08:15) and the Chicago Marathon in October (2:08:56). John Korir won at a number of major road races in 2001 including Falmouth (32:26), Bix 7 (32:24), the Cherry Blossom 10 Miler (46:12), Peachtree (28:19), and the Utica Boilermaker 15K (42:57). Kenya's Sammy Kipketer tied his own world 5K road record, running 13:00 at Carlsbad in April. He also set a new 10K world road record (27:18) a week later.

**WOMEN: CATHERINE NDEREBA, KENYA** – Japan's Naoko Takahashi kept rolling after her 2000 Olympic marathon record win by becoming the first female to run a marathon under 2:20 with her 2:19:46 effort at Rotterdam in October. Her record didn't stand up long. A mere week later, Kenya's Catherine Ndereba did her one better, running a blazing 2:18:47 at the Chicago Marathon on October 7th. Ndereba also won the Boston Marathon in April in 2:23:53, as well as a number of major road races throughout the country. In track, Gabriela Szabo of Romania set a world indoor record at 3,000 meters in February (8:32.88), while Great Britain's Paula Radcliffe claimed the World Cross Country title in Belgium in March.

## **HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUTS (LOCAL):**

BOYS: NFA Junior John Paul Mandelburg assumed the mantle of honor passed down to him by former Wildcat State Open XC champions Chad Johnson and Chris Andrew. He did not disappoint. Mandelburg claimed the ECC title in cross-country in the fall and went on to finish 3<sup>rd</sup> in the XC State Open. He will return as the favorite in 2002. Gerry Chester's Griswold team, lead by senior Mike Charron (4<sup>th</sup> overall in the State Open) and sophomore Gavin Coombs (7<sup>th</sup>), earned impressive runner-up honors to Danbury and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> overall at New England Championships. Ledyard, Fitch, Stonington, and NFA all had very strong cross-country seasons as well.

GIRLS: Killingly junior Meghan Owen again owned the headlines. Owen cruised through state competition unchallenged, again winning Cross-Country titles at the ECC Championships, the Class M race, the State Open, and at New England's. Her second win at the XC State Open extended the ECC cross-country winning streak to 12 of the past 13 individual titles (Liz Mueller-4, Jill Akus-3, Jessica Schenk-3, Owen-2). Griswold's Abbey Sadowski, Woodstock's Amy Hicks, and Fitch's Betsy Boucher all contended with the state's top runners but had to chase Owen all season long.

#### **BEST PERFORMANCE (LOCAL):**

MALE - Chad Johnson's 17<sup>th</sup> place finish in 1:04:40 at the New Haven 20K US National Championships showed how well he measured up against some of the country's best distance runners in the US Championship event.

FEMALE - Melissa Perkins-Banas' 2:52:57 marathon at Mystic Places in October (3<sup>rd</sup> place female) was a 5 minute personal best and clearly proved that the marathon is her best race distance.

#### **BEST PERFORMANCE (UNITED STATES):**

MALE – High School athletes stole the show, as Alan Webb's 3:53.43 mile at the US Championships in Eugene, Oregon and Michigan's Dathan Ritzenhein's 13:44.70 in the 5,000 meter run (just a mere .07 seconds off Gerry Lindgren's 37 year old high school mark) both rejuvenated the hopes for the future of American distance running. Rod Dehaven's 6<sup>th</sup> place finish at the Chicago Marathon in a personal best of 2:11:40 (following his 2:12:41 6<sup>th</sup> place finish in Boston in April) also deserves a mention.

FEMALE - Deena Drossin's 2:26:58 effort in her marathon debut at New York City in November made her the fastest American female ever in New York, the 2001 US marathon champion, and the 4<sup>th</sup> fastest American female marathoner in history.

#### **BEST PERFORMANCE (WORLD):**

MALE – Hicham El Guerro's 3:44.95 mile in Rome clearly established him as the fastest middle distance runner in the world.

FEMALE – Hands down, Catherine Ndereba's world record at the Chicago Marathon on October 7<sup>th</sup> was the best performance in the world in 2001. Not only for how fast she ran but also because of the way she ran, posting negative splits (including a 1:08:33 2<sup>nd</sup> half marathon) and a 10 mile split from miles 10 to 20 of 51:54, only 36 seconds off the world record for 10 miles.

#### **BEST ROAD RACE (LOCAL):**

JOHN J. KELLY ROAD RACE, August 4th – New London's Kelly Race is unique for being New England longest running free road race. Named after the legendary marathoner John J. (the younger) Kelly, (Mystic's two-time Olympian and 1957 Boston Marathon winner) the race is a true New England event, with warm weather, a challenging course, and complimentary post-race food and beverages. Since there's never been an entry fee for the Kelly race, it's a free day at the beach for anyone willing to tackle the 11.6-mile race. There were 349 finishers in the 2001 race, as Tuft's Senior Cross-Country Captain and former Fitch High School standout Ben Smith got past Uncasville's Chadwick Brown in the final half mile to nail down a 10 second win in 1:04:29. Norwich's Melissa Perkins-Banas posted her first Kelly Race victory in an impressive 1:12:15. Race Director Way Hedding helps insure that the Kelly Race continues to be one of the highlights on every runner's summer schedule.

#### **BEST ROAD RACE (CONNECTICUT):**

NEW HAVEN 20K, September 3rd – New Haven's Labor Day Road Race has all the making of a national class event. This year's race again drew an exceptionally talented field, and was the first time that the race served as both the men's and the women's United States 20K Championship. Although the addition of the women's national championship caused a controversial elimination of non-citizen prize money (which kept the Kenyan runners away), there was no shortage of talent and quality racing up front. Dan Browne of Boulder, CO, a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant in the United States Army, outran a talented field of American's to claim the 20K National title in 1:00:09. Milena Glusac of San Diego, CA (1:07:47) also earned \$4,000 for her win. The New Haven event also served as the USATF CT Grand Prix Championship for 20K, as the Athlete's Foot Hi-Tek Racing Team swept the open team titles. With a relatively flat and fast course, a national class field, and New Haven's "back to college" Labor Day atmosphere around the green, the New Haven 20K continues to be one of the country's top road races.

#### **THE BEST DISTANCE RUNNERS OF 2001:**

##### Local Runners:

MEN'S OPEN

1) Chad Johnson

WOMEN'S OPEN

1) Melissa Perkins-Banas

- 2) Stephen Herrera
- 3) Chadwick Brown
- 4) Kevin Grant
- 5) Peter Oviatt

- 2) Martha Merz
- 3) Kris-Anne Kane
- 4) Heather Bessette
- 5) Jeanne Lucey

**MEN'S MASTERS**

- 1) Bob Stack
- 1) Bobby Clark
- 3) Joe Banas

**WOMEN'S MASTERS/GM**

- 1) Rebecca Stockdale-Wolley
- 2) Carla Thompson
- 3) Diane Kodama

**MEN'S GRANDMASTERS**

- 1) Tim Smith
- 2) Wayne Jolley
- 3) Dennis Crowe

State Runners:

**MEN**

- 1) Chris Chisholm
- 2) Sergio Ribeiro
- 3) Joe Lemay
- 4) Chad Johnson
- 5) Stephen Herrera

**WOMEN**

- 1) Marie McMahon-Davenport
- 2) Heather Porch
- 3) Zofia Wieceiorkowska
- 4) Sue Faber
- 5) Melissa Perkins-Banas

High School Runners:

**LOCAL BOYS**

- 1) Jon-Paul Mandelburg (NFA)
- 2) Mike Charron (GRISWOLD)
- 3) Gavin Coombs (GRISWOLD)

**LOCAL GIRLS**

- 1) Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
- 2) Abbey Sadowski (GRISWOLD)
- 3) Amy Hicks (WOODSTOCK)

**STATE BOYS**

- 1) Brian McGovern (FAIRFIELD PREP)
- 2) Steve Mucchetti (RIDGEFIELD)
- 3) Ramon Laboy (DANBURY)

**STATE GIRLS**

- 1) Meghan Owen (KILLINGLY)
- 2) Chelsea Lenge (CONARD)
- 3) Lisa Stubic (CROSBY)

New England Runners:

**MEN**

- 1) Mike Donnelly, MA
- 2) Dave Hinga, MA
- 3) Keith Kelly, MA
- 4) Eric Morse, VT
- 5) Chris Teague, MA

**WOMEN**

- 1) Amy Rudolph, RI
- 2) Sarah Hann, MA
- 3) Judi St. Hilaire, MA
- 4) Jessica Blake, MA
- 5) Diana Bowser, MA

United States Runners:

**MEN**

- 1) Rod Dehaven
- 2) Khalid Khanouchi
- 3) Dan Browne
- 4) Alan Webb
- 5) Meb Keflezighi

**WOMEN**

- 1) Deena Drossin
- 2) Colleen DeReuck
- 3) Milena Glusac
- 4) Sylvia Mosqueda
- 5) Jennifer Rhines

World Runners:

**MEN**

- 1) Hicham El Guerrouj, MORROCCO
- 2) Paul Tergat, KENYA
- 3) Sammy Kipkeeter, KENYA
- 4) John Korir, KENYA
- 5) Haile Gebrselassie, ETHIOPIA

**WOMEN**

- 1) Catherine Ndereba, KENYA
- 2) Paula Radcliffe, BRITAIN
- 3) Naoko Takahashi, JAPAN
- 4) Lornah Kiplagat, KENYA
- 5) Gabriela Szabo, ROMANIA

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