



Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon  
264 The Esplanade / Toronto, ON M5A 4J6  
416.944.2765 / STWM.ca

## **Jake Robertson To Challenge Philemon Rono at the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon, by Paul Gains**

Earlier this year Jake Robertson made his long-awaited marathon debut racing to a New Zealand national record for the distance. Now he has turned his attention to overcoming a world-class field at the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon on October 21st.

The 28-year-old knows this means preventing Kenya's ever so popular Philemon Rono from achieving a glorious 'three-peat', but Robertson knows only one thing - he is determined to run to his utmost potential when he toes the line of this IAAF Gold Label race.

"I would like to win the race, first and foremost," he declares exuding confidence bred from a string of memorable performances. "If the pacemaking is set up to run a 2:05 then I would like to run 2:05. If it's 2:06 pace, then 2:06. I would like to break the course record. I am not putting any limits on time and I'll just see what happens."

Rono, it must be remembered, set a Canadian all comers' a year ago with his 2:06:52 clocking at Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront. But Robertson has been building up for marathon running with some excellent half marathon races. Earlier this year (January 14th) he won the Houston Half Marathon in 60:01 matching the personal best he achieved in Lisbon ten months earlier.

"I have been training for the marathon for the last four years with the prediction that I was going to be running a marathon sooner or later," he explains. "I had already been training for the marathon without really focusing on it. Maybe that's why I was confident about the marathon. My training kind of suggested I would be a better marathoner than any other event."

Robertson has been on a tear throughout 2018 at a variety of distances. At the Commonwealth Games he broke the New Zealand 10,000m record with a time of 27:30.90. On the roads he has also scored a pair of impressive 10k victories at Crescent City (27:28, another New Zealand record) and last weekend, at the Beach to Beacon (27:37), besides that superb Houston Half Marathon finish.

The marathon debut of 2:08:26 earned him third place at Japan's Lake Biwa Marathon in March. Most athletes would gladly accept this as a remarkable accomplishment but not the Kiwi who appears to be rarely satisfied with his performance.

"Honestly, I wasn't pleased with it," Robertson reveals. "I believed I was in about 2:05 shape. I didn't even know I had broken the New Zealand record because that didn't even feature in my thought process. I was thinking about the course record (Wilson Kipsang's 2:06:13) and that



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didn't happen, and I didn't win the race. I kind of had many emotions and I decided to enjoy that I had finished on the podium and then started thinking about the next one."

This appetite for success has become a characteristic ever since he and his twin brother Zane, packed up their worldly possessions and moved to Iten, Kenya, almost twelve years ago. They were barely out of high school.

"Obviously Kenya has the dominance in long distance running and the way they train together in large groups of athletes obviously attracted us," he remembers. "Also, the altitude - yeah, basically those three things we decided if we want to be the best then we have got something to learn and go and live with the best and train with them."

With little money or food the pair struggled in the beginning but support came from an unlikely source: world 3,000m steeplechase record holder and local resident Saif Saaeed Shaheen. The two-time world champion was born Stephen Cheronon but had changed his name to compete for Qatar.

"Shaheen basically found us in a pretty bad situation," says Robertson. "We were staying in a local camp where we kind of got robbed, t-shirt by t-shirt, until we had the bare minimum to train; like we had one pair of shoes left. Shaheen took us out of that situation, found us a house right next to him and he said, 'you're staying with me, I am covering your rent and your food and your training with me; keep focused.'"

The Robertsons also received help from Patrick Sang, coach of Philemon Rono and Olympic marathon champion, Eliud Kipchoge. They would have stayed at his training camp but, at the time, it was completely full. Returning home was not an option and both twins are now firmly settled in Kenya.

"I live with my fiancé Magdalene Masai and we are getting married - it has taken time to get legal documents," Jake reveals. "We built a house on a half-acre of land in the last year. So it's very comfortable. We have running water through our taps, hot water. It's like almost anywhere else.

"We are planning on building a guest house for the community and for foreign athletes coming out. As for living here long term, probably not. If we have kids in the future I would like for my kids to have full opportunity to anything they want to do. It's not available here. We will have to put the kids first."



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Robertson's very public marriage proposal made news around the world. After pushing six-time Olympic gold medalist Mo Farah to the limit at the 2017 Great North Run - he finished second -he proposed to Magdalene on bended knee at the finish line. She finished fourth in the women's race.

"I didn't expect it to go as viral as it did," he recalls revealing a chink in his tough exterior. "But I was happy to capture the moment."

Most of his training is done early in the morning before traffic builds along the dirt roads and kicks up too much dust. There is also the danger of being hit by vehicles. He sometimes trains with a group but prefers to run alone on his easy days. He doesn't train with his brother.

"No, I am self-coached and Zane doesn't want to be coached by me," Jake says. "He's just coming back from his problems so, no, we haven't trained a lot together recently."

Robertson hopes that his preparations once again go right. A victory in Toronto would not only solidify his place as a world class marathoner but would also prove financially beneficial. But will he ever be satisfied?

"Jake is an outstanding addition to this year's race," says Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Race Director, Alan Brookes. "His remarkable story of triumph over adversity in life, and determination to attain the highest levels of success in athletics against seemingly insurmountable odds, have shown what he's made of."

"His results over the past couple of years, including his marathon debut at Lake Biwa fill us with huge anticipation for what is to come."

For further information and entry to Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon 2018 see [www.STWM.ca](http://www.STWM.ca)



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### **About the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon**

One of only 5 IAAF Gold Label marathons in all of The Americas, the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon is Canada's premier, big-city running event, the Athletics Canada National Marathon Championships, and the Grand Finale of the 8-race Canada Running Series. In 2017 it attracted 26,000 participants from 74 countries, raised \$3.24 million for 182 charities through the Scotiabank Charity Challenge, and contributed an estimated \$35 million to the local economy. The livestream broadcast was watched by more than 160,000 viewers from 142 countries. [www.STWM.ca](http://www.STWM.ca)

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