



Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon  
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## Cam Levins To Make Marathon Debut at Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon, By Paul Gains

Ending nearly two years of speculation, Cam Levins has confirmed he will make his marathon debut at the 2018 Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon, October 21st.

The 29-year-old native of Black Creek, British Columbia thereby joins one of the strongest fields ever assembled for this IAAF Gold Label race.

The former Canadian 10,000m record holder (27:07.51) and 2014 Commonwealth Games 10000m bronze medalist is confident he can re-assert himself as a force on the world scene after a serious foot injury which required surgery in 2016. Though his move up to the marathon has been eagerly anticipated by running aficionados across the continent, he doesn't feel pressure to perform to anyone else's expectations.

"I think there is a part of me that is a little bit anxious of the unknown," he admits. "But I feel pretty comfortable that what I am doing will prepare me well. More than anything I am excited to do it at this point, however it goes.

"I am ready to go out there and have a good experience and learn from it whether I knock it out of the park or, if it goes very far south. But I feel confident at this point. I think it will go well."

After a successful collegiate career for Southern Utah University, which he capped with a victorious 5000m/10000m double at the 2012 NCAA championships, Levins turned professional with the Nike Oregon Project. At the time he joined Olympic medalists Mo Farah, Galen Rupp and Matthew Centrowitz in Portland, Oregon under the tutelage of Coach Alberto Salazar.

Though he improved his times in every distance from the 1,500m up, and represented Canada at the 2012 London Olympics (5000m/10000m) he never appeared fully comfortable with that program and so, a year ago he returned to his SUU coach, Eric Houle and embarked on another chapter in his career.

In March he represented Canada at the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships in Valencia recording a personal best time of 62:15 for the distance. Though he finished well back in the field it was an emphatic indication he was at last healthy and on the path to redemption. Consistent training since then has only served to embolden him.

"Yeah, I am in better shape now than I was then, for sure," he reveals. "Most days I am running about 20 to 30 miles. I haven't really been paying attention to my weekly totals, I have been

taking it day by day. If I am feeling good today I will put in good mileage. If I need to back off a bit, it will be more like 15 to 20 miles that day. But there have been a lot of good days. I am trusting my body and how it feels.”

Levins has been splitting his time between Cedar City, Utah, where he trains at elevations between 1,800m and 2,750m, and Portland, Oregon where his wife Elizabeth works as a pharmacist at Oregon Health and Science University. The ongoing wild fires catastrophe in the Pacific Northwest has forced him to occasionally run wearing a pollution mask but he has nonetheless put in the miles.

“I was in Utah from the beginning of May until basically the very end of June,” he reveals. “I went back to Vancouver Island for my brother’s wedding. I have been training really well here and I don’t really want to mess with things. I am racing the Philadelphia Half Marathon (September 16th) then I am heading to Utah from there until Toronto.”

With the help of Canadian sports physiologist, Trent Stellingwerf, Levins has been experimenting with the crucial practice of refuelling while on the run, with mixed results.

“That has been the most interesting thing starting out to try and drink,” he says laughing. “I felt like I was huffing and puffing between sips I just wasn’t taking it slow enough. I have definitely improved a lot. Starting out it was like ‘how do people do this?’”

During his collegiate years Levins was known for handling large training volumes. One of the first things Coach Salazar did was to reduce that mileage and up the intensity. Levins found the contrast challenging. And he missed the close relationship he had with Houle.

“Even though things weren’t necessarily perfect in the Oregon Project, you are right, there were times that things went well,” he concedes. “I felt like if I was moving away from the NOP the right move was to go back to something where there was some certainty that it has worked before. There was familiarity going back to Coach Houle and there is a trust there.

“I think I could talk to him about almost anything and probably not damage our relationship. At least I feel that way. I have total trust in how he feels about me and how I feel about him as a coach. Whether he was my coach or not I would still consider him a friend and mentor.”

Each time Levins returns to Utah, he either stays with Houle or with another close friend, Dr. Dutch Workman, a chiropractor who has treated him over the years. In the future, he wouldn’t mind buying a permanent place of his own.

Although many competent distance runners eventually move up to the marathon, Levins’ debut will especially be followed. Two-time Olympian Reid Coolsaet, who has come closer than any other Canadian to Jerome Drayton’s 43 year old national record of 2:10:09 is amongst the leading distance runners watching to see Levins make his mark in the marathon. His assessment of the newcomer is effervescent.

“He can handle high volume training and his half marathon is good,” Coolsaet declares. “His 10k time is low 27, that’s got to be equivalent to a 2:07 or 2:08 marathon. He definitely has the talent and definitely has the capacity. You never want to say someone can do it because a marathon is different. But he could break 2:10 in his first marathon. Usually it’s the third or fourth marathon where they figure it out.”

This year’s Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon will feature Kenya’s Philemon Rono who set a Canadian All Comers’ record of 2:06:52 when he successfully defended his title last year, and Jake Robertson, a Kenya based New Zealander whom Levins has got the better of on the track. Robertson set a national record of 2:08:26 and has said he wants to run nearer 2:05. Which brings up the question as to where Levins feels he belongs.

“Ultimately whatever event I do, I want to be competitive at the highest level,” he insists. “We both know what that takes in the marathon, you need to be mid 2:05 or even faster. I don’t know if I am that kind of marathoner, but that’s where my thoughts lie and that’s the kind of marathoner I want to be.”