

## **Cam Levins Returning to Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon, by Paul Gains**

Running fans across the continent rejoiced last October when Cam Levins beat the 43-year-old Canadian marathon record with his stunning debut of 2:09:25 at the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon. More excitement is, apparently, in the cards.

Today, the Black Creek, British Columbia native announced he will return to Toronto Waterfront on October 20th and attempt to lower the record even further.

"I was thrilled with how I performed, and I will probably remember crossing the finish line there for the rest of my life," Levins says of that memorable day.

"It's exciting to go back to a race where I now know the entire course. I also feel like I know what to expect. I may not feel the same as I did last year but, if I can go and have a similar experience, I will be happy."

Levins was clearly comfortable that day, running to a pre-determined pace to get under Jerome Drayton's magical standard, and he might well have run faster.

"Yeah, I think I probably could have run a bit faster if I had paced a little bit differently," he agrees. "Like if I'd gone out a little bit quicker, stayed a little bit more on pace from 30 - 40km. There is no perfect race. I don't think anyone ever really gets to experience the perfect race."

A knee injury prevented him from running the London Marathon this past April, but he had penciled in a return to Toronto Waterfront ever since his record-breaking performance.

The fact that Canadians are well accommodated in Toronto when it comes to individual goals was an important consideration and so too was the announcement that this IAAF Gold Label race will, once again, be the Canadian Championship race and a key part of Athletics Canada's 2020 Olympic selection criteria.

The first Canadian male and female finishers will receive automatic pre-selection for the Tokyo Olympic marathon next August, providing they achieve the 2:11:30 and 2:29:30 standards. If they do not go under those standards on October 20th, a place will still be held open for them until May 31st next year, to allow them to attain the standard. Anyone else hoping to represent Canada in the marathon in Tokyo will have to wait until June 1st next year before selections are announced, so the Toronto Championship race offers a huge incentive.

In addition, organizers have both increased the Canadian prize money this year and are offering Tokyo 2020 incentive bonuses. All Canadians who run the qualifying standard (2:11:30/2:29:30) will receive a \$5,000 bonus; those running 2:13:00/2:31:00 will claim \$3,000; those achieving 2:14:00 /2:32:00 or better get \$2,000 and those running 2:15:00/2:33:00 will get \$1,000.

"With (Race Director) Alan (Brookes) and just everyone that was there I felt like I could probably have asked just about anything and they would have bent over backwards to do it for me," Levins explains.

“That isn’t anything I want to take advantage of but, if I really needed something, I think there is no hesitation on their part in helping me be as prepared as possible for race day.

“And, once Athletics Canada came out with their recent standards for qualifying it seemed the best choice to be qualified for the Olympics next year was Toronto. I really considered doing the World Championships in Doha because I felt it would be great preparation for conditions faced in Tokyo. But it just seemed the safest and best choice at this point was Toronto (Waterfront).”

The Olympics is an important target for the 30-year-old Levins. It is coming up to seven years since he ran both the 5000m and 10000m at the 2012 London Olympics. He went on to set a Canadian 10,000m record (27:07:51) in 2015 and was ascending in the world order. But again, injury and untimely foot surgery ended his hopes of racing in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

“I don’t think most athletes would pass up an opportunity to go to the Olympics once, twice or how many times,” he says of his ambition. “I think making an Olympics again would be another way to show myself that I am back in it. Just going to the Olympics again would be great. I am hopeful if I continue to improve, I can get a competitive placing there. I really don’t know where my limits are. I think I can do some good things at the Olympics in the future in the marathon.”

The best place by a Canadian in the modern Olympic marathon is Jerome Drayton’s 6th place finish in 1976. Following his landmark finish in Toronto last year Levins contacted Drayton enjoying a short telephone call.

“It was essentially him giving me advice on things I might be missing in my training which was actually pretty great,” Levins reveals. “getting insight into what he did and looking at things from a little bit of different perspective in my own training. That was fun. Obviously, there was a little of him congratulating me and me being honoured to have my name alongside his.”

Drayton who like Levins put in extremely high weekly training volumes also provided Levins with detail training diaries.

Levins and his wife continue to live in Portland, Oregon although he spends months at high altitude in Cedar City, Utah - he graduated from Southern Utah University and continues to be coached by SUU coach Eric Houle. He originally moved to Portland after graduation.

“Yeah it’s great,” he says of his living arrangements. “I like the area and have a good training situation going on. In fact, we are looking at buying a home now. We have been renting the entire time we have been in Portland, so I think we are at least planning to be here for the foreseeable future.”

A year ago, Levins finished 4th overall in Toronto’s talent laden field. The record was obviously his primary target. When he is at his peak, he has never been afraid to mix it up with the world’s best as his 2014 Commonwealth 10000m bronze medal attests. Still with four months remaining he chooses his words carefully when asked his goal.

“A lot of it going to depend on what my fitness ends up being as I get close to it,” he says ever the pragmatist. “At some point I would like to be in a situation where I can get up with the leaders and compete and try to be in the running to win the race. I think I will know that better as we get closer to the race. I would be thrilled with just a personal best.”

[All Canadian high-performance athletes with Tokyo 2020 marathon aspirations are invited to join Cam by applying by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019.](#)