

## **Benson Kipruto To Defend Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon Title** by Paul Gains

Winning the 2018 Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon represented Benson Kipruto's first marathon victory and now the 28-year-old Kenyan has confirmed he will return to Canada's largest city to defend his title, October 20th.

"If I can defend my Toronto [Waterfront] Marathon title it will be very good for me and for my marathon career," he declares with a smile. He remembers well the joy his 2:07:24 performance brought him and the festivities which followed upon his return to Kenya.

"I started the celebration at the (Eldoret) airport with my family, my friends and my training mates and also my coach," he recalls of the celebration which included drinking fermented milk called Mursik in the Kalenjin warriors' tradition. "We extended the celebration to my camp. We feasted on some goats with my friends and training mates.

"This year I would like to run my personal best in Toronto. Hopefully, if the weather will be good and also, if the pacemakers do a good job, I am hoping to run maybe 2:06 and maybe try to run a course record."

Kipruto's best is 2:07:11 set in finishing third at the 2018 Seoul Marathon and he also ran 2:07:21 at the 2017 Gongju Dong-A Marathon in Korea. With three recent 2:07 results he is clearly on the verge of another major breakthrough which could see him tackle the current Toronto course record held by his compatriot Philemon Rono (2:06:52 in 2017).

Asked what his greatest impression from last year's five-day visit to Toronto was he is quick to credit the organizers.

"The people I met, they are friendly like the first one, Alan Brookes the Race Director, he is very friendly," he reveals. "The course itself is good. And, I think the weather that day was not so good."

Last year runners awakened to temperatures hovering near freezing point and also encountered a strong headwind coming off Lake Ontario. Still, winning this IAAF Gold Label race caught the attention of the world's marathon running aficionados.

"I would say it opened doors to my future," Kipruto explains. "I was invited to the 2019 Boston Marathon because of Toronto. So, my name has grown. (Toronto) was my first victory."

"Boston was a good performance for me; I managed to finish, first. I was injured during the race."

Kipruto's feet were badly blistered during the race. But his coach Claudio Berardelli offers another explanation saying that he pushed Kipruto perhaps too much over the final three weeks of his preparation and so he was also over-trained. Ultimately, he finished a respectable 10th in 2:09:53 within two minutes of the winner Lawrence Cherono, also from Kenya.

Performing at this level has paid dividends for Kipruto. First place in Toronto earns CAD\$30,000 while a course record is worth another CAD\$40,000. In a country where the per capita income is less than \$2,000 it is a lucrative business. He sees it as an investment for the future.

Though he was born in the village of Tolilet he recently bought some land 40 kilometres away in Kapsabet and moved his wife and one-year old daughter, who is called Princess Camille Chemutai, to the place.

Now his family is nearer to the training camp where he resides during the week and where he trains with such elite athletes as Amos Kipruto (2:05:43 personal best), Vincent Kipchumba (2:06:56), Solomon Yego (2:06:23) and Barselius Kipyego (2:07:57). He goes home on weekends.

The runners live in a basic dormitory and begin their morning runs before the sun rises. This is to avoid traffic which can pose a danger not to mention the dust that is kicked up on the dirt roads surrounding Kapsabet.

“We run very early in the morning and as the race approaches, we run twice a day,” he confirms. “After doing a morning run, we go for an evening run. We take all our meals together After eating we tells stories and watch TV Sports. Currently we are watching the African Cup of Nations football. For football clubs I like Barcelona.

“We train together and motivate each other. I would like to represent my country in the Tokyo Olympics if possible.”

Like many Kenyan runners Kipruto has been running since he was a child. It didn't hurt that one of his older brothers is Dickson Chumba who, besides winning both the Chicago and Tokyo marathons, finished 2nd in Toronto in 2017. Chumba no longer trains in Berardelli's group, however.

There is no doubt that Kipruto has a bright future but since few Kenyan runners compete purely for the enjoyment of running, he has already begun preparation for life after running.

“I have some rental houses and I also raise some animals,” he reveals. “Maybe I can run six to seven more years. I would be grateful.”

Another victory in Toronto would further solidify his family's future.

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Registration is now open for runners of all levels to join in the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon, Half or 5k, at [www.stwm.ca](http://www.stwm.ca)