



TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Bedatu Hirpa To Challenge Superstars at the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon By: Paul Gains

Most athletes take up marathon running after exhausting their potential on the track, but not Ethiopia's Bedatu Hirpa. Today she is a legitimate world-class marathoner taking aim at the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, October 16th.

The 23-year-old from Arsi earned the 1,500m gold medal at the 2015 World Youth (Under 18) championships in Cali, Colombia which was a strong indication she could achieve much at the senior level. But, after moving to Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, and changing coaches, she transitioned to the 42 km distance within two years.

At the 2018 Frankfurt Marathon she recorded a stunning personal best time of 2:21:32.

"Almost all the last four years I have been training with Coach Gemedu (Dedafo)," she explains. "It is amazing that the one who inspired me to become a marathoner is not even an athlete. She is one of my friends who told me I have to run the marathon and she was right."

Of her change in athletics career path, she hints at having initial reluctance despite her friend's advice.

"I was not mature enough to decide," Bedatu remembers, "and also I didn't have a good manager to advise me and help me to upgrade my career at that time on the track. No, I don't think I accomplished everything I could on the track."

Regardless, the move has not been without financial rewards. There is far more money to be earned on the roads than on the track when one is as consistent a performer as Bedatu. She has also benefited from being represented by seasoned Italian manager Gianni Demadonna.

Last spring, she finished 4th in the Prague Marathon in 2:22:58. In January 2020 she was 3rd in Dubai with a time of 2:21:55 and in March 2019 she was 5th in Tokyo (2:23:43) - one of the Abbott World Marathon Majors.

"I moved to Addis Ababa in 2015 after the Cali World Youth championships," Bedatu says. "I have been living in Addis Ababa from 2015 and, up to June 2022, I lived in a rented house. Now I have moved to Legatafo near Addis Ababa and have my own house."

Her training group meets up with Coach Gemedu at least three times a week in such popular training sites as Sendefa, Sululta and Entoto. Bedatu bought herself a car to drive herself to and from training sessions.

The field for the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is once again stacked. It is after all a 'World Elite Label' race.

She will line up against her compatriots Gelete Burka (personal best of 2:20:45), who won a senior world indoor 1500m title and represented Ethiopia at three Olympic Games before turning to the marathon, her training partner Netsanet Gudeta (a former world half marathon record holder) as well as Kenya's Magdalyne Masai, who set a Canadian All Comers' record of 2:22:16 when she won the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon in 2019.

There are a host of other excellent runners ensuring a competitive race. When asked about the formidable opposition she shows maturity beyond her years.

"I think it is good to give respect to experienced athletes but it doesn't mean that they are the only athletes who make a difference in a race," she responds. "Anyone who works hard can make a difference in any race and make the race harder than anyone expects."

"I do training with Netsanet when we have program together maybe two days or three days in a week, as a team, and we all push each other. Netsanet is like family for me and she is my best friend."

Looking ahead to Toronto, Bedatu is clear in her objectives. "I want to run my personal best and I want to win the race," she declares.

Like all young Ethiopians Bedatu grew up knowing the history of Ethiopian athletics and the success Ethiopians have had at the Olympics and World Championships. The two women she most admires are Derartu Tulu, who won the 1992 Olympic 10,000m gold and, in doing so, became the first female black African Olympic champion and Derartu's cousin, Tirunesh Dibaba, a three-time Olympic gold medalist.

"Both of them are icons for all Ethiopian athletes and my favourite is Tirunesh Dibaba," she admits. "I grew up watching her."

"It is every athlete's dream to participate in both the Olympics and World Championships. At least I have one medal in World Youth Championship and now I really want to participate in the Olympic games and want to have a medal - if it is the will of Allah."

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About the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

One of only two World Athletics Elite Label races in Canada, the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is Canada's premier running event and the grand finale of the Canada Running Series (CRS). Since 2017, the race has served as the Athletics Canada Canadian Marathon Championship and has doubled as the Olympic trials. During the 2021 event, participants raised over \$3.08 million for 151 community charities. Using innovation and organization as guiding principles, Canada Running Series stages great experiences for runners of all levels, from Canadian Olympians to recreational and charity runners. With a mission of "building community

through the sport of running,” CRS is committed to making sport part of sustainable communities and the city-building process.

To learn more about the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, please visit www.torontowaterfrontmarathon.com.

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