



TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Defending Champion Dayna Pidhoresky Seeks Perfect Race at TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

By: Paul Gains

Since winning the 2019 Canadian Olympic trials, Dayna Pidhoresky has encountered mixed fortunes. It is not surprising that the 35-year-old Vancouver resident is seeking a perfect race at this year's TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, the site of her greatest triumph.

"I definitely want to run a personal best," she says of her return to this World Athletics Elite Label race scheduled for October 16th. "I just want to get the most out of myself on the day. I felt this past spring gave me a lot of confidence, my training went really well.

"I feel like this is the year [in Toronto]. I can just take a little bit more risk and try to empty the tank and hopefully that is something I will have the opportunity to do on the day. I just want to race well, execute well, and leave it all out there."

In April 2022, she won the BMO Vancouver Marathon in 2:34:30. Then just four weeks later, finished 6th at the Tamarack Ottawa Marathon. Both races yielded times well off her Olympic qualifying mark from 2019. On that day, three years ago, with the Canadian champion guaranteed an Olympic berth — provided they had made the standard — she came through with a stunning result. Pidhoresky, who is originally from Tecumseh, Ontario, ran a huge personal best time of 2:29:03 which cemented her place in the Tokyo Olympics.

While other athletes chased standards through the remaining qualifying period, Pidhoresky had the luxury of knowing she could train specifically for her dream race. It was not to be, however. In Sapporo, where the marathons and race walks were held, she struggled home 73rd nursing an injury after what she describes as a 'nightmare.'

At Team Canada's pre-Olympic training camp in Gifu, she and her coach and husband, Josh Seifarth, received word that someone on their Vancouver to Tokyo flight had tested positive for Covid.

"We got a call from one of the Athletics Canada guys and he told us we were 'close contacts' [of fellow passengers] and that we would have to basically stay in our room the whole time," she explains. "We weren't able to leave the room at any point of time, at all. That was about a week. Then I flew to Sapporo where the race was taking place."

Canadian officials brought a stationary bike to her room during the quarantine, for which she was grateful. When the time came to fly on to Sapporo though, Seifarth was informed he would not be permitted to accompany Pidhoresky. Instead, he flew home to Vancouver.

“We thought it would be normal again and I would be able to interact with the team but I was still considered a ‘close contact’ even when we were in Sapporo,” she continues. “It was mentally draining to be in that situation.

“I was also battling a tendon injury. I was relying on being around my teammates to feel like I was having an Olympic experience. I felt that wasn’t even possible. I was robbed of having an Olympics experience outside of the race itself.”

Currently, her training is going better than in her buildup to the Olympic trials. The anticipation of a great performance is clearly visible in her facial expressions.

“We are definitely ahead of the game right now,” she says with a smile. “At the moment, we are in the 175-185km [weekly volume] range, which for me is more than I have generally averaged. In the past, I would do ten weeks of 160km a week and have maybe a 170km in there. It doesn’t actually feel that different.”

During the spring, she and Josh bought a house near the University of British Columbia which provides immediate access to running trails. Occasionally she meets up with Canadian international Catherine Watkins but most of her long runs are done alone while she listens to running podcasts. One of her favourites, she reveals, is that hosted by triathlete Paula Findlay.

She fills her days with a little photography when time permits, and with some part time work for Seifarth’s company, Visifii.

The addition of Pidhoresky means race director Alan Brookes has been successful in bringing back both Canadian champions, Trevor Hofbauer — who earned his Olympic berth in 2019 as well — and the two overall champions from 2019, as Kenya’s Magdalyne Masai and Philemon Rono will also return. But Pidhoresky is looking for more than defending her 2019 title.

“I am less concerned with placing,” she reveals. “I hope that I can sort of look around and find a good group and we can work together to run fast times together. I would rather run a big PB than feel I am running tactically. Maybe those are one and the same on the day. I just hope I can run to the best of my ability on the day.”

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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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