



## **TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon Race Report by Paul Gains**

Records were not threatened today at the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon despite fast splits in the first 25km. But the racing was outstanding.

Once again world class fields were assembled for this World Athletics Elite Label race which also doubled as the Canadian marathon championships. The pacemakers for the elite men's race took a pack of seven through the halfway point in an ambitious 62:27 and 30km in 1:29:40 and the Canadian All Comers' record of 2:05:00 was still possible.

Once the pacers retired Kenya's Felix Kandie assumed the lead and opened up a gap which split up the contenders into a single file procession. Over the final ten kilometres Yihunilign Adane ate up the gap and coasted to victory in 2:07:18. This was the second victory this year for the 26 year old Ethiopian as he also won Barcelona last April.

Kandie also submitted to the closing attack of his countryman Kiprono Kipkemoi (2:08:24) finishing 20 seconds later in third place.

"I knew I would catch him in the latter stages," Yihunilign said afterwards. He was less pleased about the street car tracks and some potholes along one stretch. "I am happy I won but the roadway was not as good as I expected I could have done better. When there was about 4km left I decided then to run the pace that I could make until the end."

Kipkemoi would later explain he had tied his shoes too tight and twice had to stop during the race to repair the damage.

"I tied them too tight," he revealed while rubbing his calves. "And then I used a lot of energy and my leg was paralysed. The course was good but it was a little windy. But the course is flat and good."

Once again the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon served as the Canadian marathon championships and defending men's champion, Trevor Hofbauer fought off a side stitch and the relentless pursuit of Rory Linkletter to finish 5th overall in 2:11:00. It was his third Canadian title. Linkletter came home for the silver medal in 2:13:32. Born in Calgary he lives in Flagstaff, Arizona with his wife and infant son who were in attendance at the finish.

The 'running vet' Lee Wesselius ran 2:16:51 to claim the bronze medal.

The women's elite race was expected to be a battle between defending champion and record holder (2:22:16 Magdalyne Masai of Kenya and the Ethiopian woman whose All Comers record she had beaten by one second, Gelete Burka).

Burka had set her standard in Ottawa and was scheduled to race there again last May. But though she received a Canadian visa, her passport was not returned in time to travel. Consequently, she was highly motivated for this competition.

Like Kandie in the men's race, Gelete took charge with about 10 kilometres remaining and looked as if the first place prize money of \$25,000 was hers for the taking. The early pace, however, had taken its toll on the women's field too. A pair of Kenyans, Antonina Kwambai and Ruth Chebitok went past her to fill the top two places in 2:23:20 and 2:23:58. The Ethiopian finished in 2:24:31. All three could hardly stand once they crossed the line.

"I passed her (Gelete) at 37km," said the winner of her Ethiopian rival. "She was tiring. This is my first time here in Toronto. It was amazing for me. I am really excited and really happy."

She planned to go sightseeing before her Monday evening departure.

Gelete Burka was happy that she was able to finish. Although the \$25,000 first place prize money evaded her, she will collect \$10,000 for third.

"I was looking for the win, but I had a problem," she said moments after exchanging high fives with Magdalyne Masai who had faded to 5th. "After 26km I was feeling my back and I was having a problem. Then I felt it in my hamstring so I could not push it anymore. I just controlled myself to finish in position three."

Malindi Elmore won the Canadian title in 2:25:14. That was not far off her former Canadian record (2:24:50) set in Houston back in January of 2020. Most significantly she placed 4th overall ahead of Masai and Tseginesh Mekonnin of Ethiopia. It was another bold performance for the woman who finished a superb 9th in the 2021 Olympic marathon.

"That was the goal today," Elmore said of her Canadian title. "That's why I came here; I love winning Canadian Championships. It means a lot to me to win them and add that to my resume. It was so great having my family along the course. It made me smile inside every time I went by them."

The Canadian Championship prize money earned her \$8,000 and she also collects \$5,000 for her overall fourth place finish.

Defending Canadian champion Dayna Pidhoresky finished second in the Canadian Championship race and seventh place overall. Her time was a commendable 2:30:58, her second best performance ever. Sasha Gollish claimed the bronze in a personal best of 2:31:40.

"It was wonderful to return to in-person racing and with a new sponsor TCS," said race director Alan Brookes. "The athletes made it an exciting day. And with the attention on records, we often forget about racing. Who could have predicted the outcome during the last ten kilometres?"