



TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon Men's Race Preview

By: Paul Gains

Once again, the 2022 TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon will come down to an East African bust-up with Ethiopians Yihunilign Adane and Kebede Wami tackling a strong Kenyan squad led by Barselius Kipyego, Felix Kandie and Felix Kibitok.

The Kenyan presence would have been even stronger were it not for the late withdrawal through injury of the man who set the Canadian All-comers record of 2:05:00 here in 2019, Philemon Rono.

As it is, Kipyego's focus is acutely set on that record, especially since his personal best is 2:04:48, a performance recorded at the 2021 Paris Marathon. Like many of his Kenyan compatriots, he has sacrificed time with his family by living in his '2Running Club' training camp seven days a week in preparation for Toronto. While most athletes return home on weekends, Kipyego has gone that extra step.

With a personal best of 2:06:03, Felix Kandie returns to Toronto after a 3rd place finish in the 2018 edition of the race. A seasoned veteran (now 35) he has proved his mettle by finishing 4th in Boston and 5th in Berlin in 2019 - both 'Abbott World Marathon Majors'. Watching the 2019 Toronto livestream inspired him to think about breaking the course record if his fellow elite are up for the challenge.

Earlier this year Kibitok finished 5th in the Barcelona Marathon running a personal best of 2:06:28. Having run under one hour for the half marathon on three occasions, including 59:33 in January this year, he is starting to realize his marathon potential.

The Ethiopian pair, both 26 years of age, will line up hoping to end the Kenyan dominance of this race. The last time an Ethiopian emerged the victor was in 2013 when Derissa Chimsa ran 2:07:05. At the time, this was a Canadian All-comers' record.

Yihunilign Adane will be encouraged that his training partner, Leul Gebrsilase, finished 2nd in the recent London Marathon. With his personal best of 2:05:53 - a new Barcelona course record - he knows he can mix it up with the mighty Kenyans on the quick Toronto Waterfront course. He is hungry to explore his massive potential at the distance.

The other Ethiopian who bears watching, Kebede Wami, was 3rd in Barcelona this past May - just ten seconds behind Yihunilign, recording a personal best of 2:06:03, and also appears on an upward trajectory. In 2021 he was 6th in Rotterdam (2:06:27) and 5th in Sienna, Italy (2:06:32) displaying great consistency in his last three marathon starts. A member of the Dutch

based NN Running Team, he trains with coach Tessema Abshero making remarkable progress since taking up marathon running in 2020.

Word spread across both Ethiopia and Kenya in 2019 when four men finished within 13 seconds of each other led by Philemon Rono's Canadian All-comers' record (2:05:00). The crew of world-class athletes are aware of what the streets of Toronto offer.

The Athletics Canada National Championships are held concurrently with the World Athletics Elite Label race and the field is led by defending champion Trevor Hofbauer (2:09:51 in 2019) and Rory Linkletter who set a personal best of 2:10:24 while finishing a solid 20th place in the 2022 World Championships.

Linkletter, born in Calgary but residing in Flagstaff, Arizona, will be looking for another personal best which could see him pick off any of the frontrunners who falter in the latter stages of the race. Meanwhile, Hofbauer who was so magnificent while finishing 7th in the 2019 edition of this race, becoming only the second Canadian to get under 2:10, struggled home in the Olympic Games. A good performance in Toronto will wipe the slate clean.

Canadians will also be keen to see what result running veterinarian Lee Wesselius can muster on the day. He ran a personal best (2:16:41) to finish 2nd at the 2021 Indianapolis Marathon. Earlier this year he claimed the bronze medal at the NACAC Half Marathon Championships. His day-to-day duties working with large animals in a rural county can sometimes be an obstacle most of his peers do not encounter. Nonetheless, he continues to improve.

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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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