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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Elvis Cheboi Carries Kenyan Hopes at TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon by Paul Gains

TORONTO, ON (*September 19, 2023*) - Although he may not have the fastest personal best time in the field Kenya's Elvis Cheboi will certainly be a contender when the 2023 TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon gets underway October 15th.

The 27-year-old made his debut at the Vienna Marathon April 23rd and after running with the leaders through the first half in 62:44 he struggled home in 7th place with a time of 2:10:21. The result left him wondering if he would ever put himself through such torture again.

"It was tough but I accepted it," he says with a smile during a video call from Iten, Kenya. "You see, it was my first attempt so I can say I tried my best.

"After I finished I felt like I would never again run the marathon. My body was feeling pain. My coach Gabriele (Nicola) helped me and encouraged me with a lot of wisdom and said 'don't give up you will do it one day'."

At this point coach Nicola, who is sitting with him in the lobby of Kerio View Hotel listening in, interjects pointing out that five months before Vienna his charge had recorded a personal best half marathon time of 59:15 to finish 3rd at the Barcelona Half Marathon. That's ten seconds faster than world marathon record holder Eliud Kipchoge has ever run. Unfortunately, when Cheboi returned to Iten following that splendid result it was with a slight injury.

The pair had expected he was capable of running 2:06 or 2:07 in Vienna. Indeed the race was won in 2:05:08 by his countryman Samwel Mailu.

"This time we started preparation for Toronto in June," Nicola reveals. "Immediately his body started to react the way it reacted when he ran 59:15 for the half marathon in 2022.

"Now he is building the shape. It's not hard to imagine him running sub 2:06. He will be ready to run well. How well? We will see on the streets of Toronto."

Cheboi trains with the Demadonna Athletic group in Iten. Among the 35 athletes that train with Nicola about a dozen stay at the Kerio View Hotel through the week but Cheboi isn't one of them. That's because he and his wife, Ruth Korir, have two very young children - a daughter named Sharline Jerotich, 5, and a 1-year-old son, Shalom Kiplagat.

Their house is about five kilometres from the training centre and sits on some land they own.

"When I am done with training, like this evening, I play with my children and also teach my girl, who is now in school, how to do her homework," he says. "I help her with education.

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“At night I usually watch television mostly CNN. My favourite is CNN and maybe National Geographic. There are so many animals on that channel.”

Like many professional runners in East Africa he is using his earnings from running to prepare for his family’s future.

“Back at my home I also farm,” he says with a smile. “I have animals and also plant maize, potatoes and wheat. This year I have cows, sheep and goats and also I planted some wheat and maize. You know, here in Kenya we like maize because of Ugali.”

Ugali, of course, is a staple on the tables at homes in Kenya and served often with beef stew.

Among those he trains with are two world class marathoners in Joshua Belet who ran 2:04:33 in the 2023 Hamburg Marathon and Kiprono Kipkemoi who was second at Toronto Waterfront Marathon last year.

“I don’t know much about Toronto but I asked Kiprono about Toronto but he didn’t tell me much yet,” he says. “But I will meet with him again about it.”

Among Nicola’s female athletes is Magdalyn Masai who set a Toronto Waterfront Marathon course record of 2:22:16 in 2019. The coach has arranged a meeting with her so Cheboi can gain more insight into the course and all its features.

Cheboi is still a bit of a novice at the marathon but in training Nicola has ensured he becomes comfortable with taking drinks on the run. The coach will ride in a minibus with bottles for all the athletes training. Every five kilometres they hand the bottles to them.

“It’s not exactly like a refreshment station but you learn to drink on the run,” Nicola explains. “Secondly you will know how to grab a bottle and not lose time during the race.”

Unusual for a Kenyan runner when asked whose performances inspired him when he was starting out as a runner Cheboi answers ‘Kenenisa Bekele,’ the Ethiopian superstar who won three Olympic gold medals and held the world 5,000m and 10,000m records until 2020.

“I can say I love Bekele. The way he ran and also from his background of running until now,” he admits although he has never met his idol.

“I encouraged myself. How Bekele runs his performances from way back you see he ran very well.”

These days there is much respect for Uganda’s Joshua Cheptegei who broke both of Bekele’s records on the track and won his third consecutive world 10,000m title in Eugene last month. Cheboi remembers an encounter he had with the latest African superstar.

“I remember the world junior championships in Eugene (2014),” he says, recalling he was leading the 10,000m race with two hundred metres remaining before Cheptegei chased him down. “He overtook me 150 metres before the finish. I remember.”

He smiles at the memory. Asked if he would like to race him again he laughs and says ‘yes’.

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The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is once again a World Athletics Elite Label race and as such will have a very strong field. It's a chance for athletes on the world stage to earn prize money. Moreover, it's a chance for Elvis Cheboi to show he is a world class marathoner.

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About the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

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 national marathon championship race and has doubled as the Olympic trials. 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, visit www.torontowaterfrontmarathon.com

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A part of the Tata group, India's largest multinational business group, TCS has over 614,000 of the world's best-trained consultants in 55 countries. The company generated consolidated revenues of US \$27.9 billion in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2023, and is listed on the BSE (formerly Bombay Stock Exchange) and the NSE (National Stock Exchange) in India. TCS' proactive stance on climate change and award-winning work with communities across the world have earned it a place in leading sustainability indices such as the MSCI Global Sustainability Index and the FTSE4Good Emerging Index.

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