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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Ethiopian Women Dominate a Windy TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon by Paul Gains By Paul Gains

TORONTO, ON (October 15, 2023) – As some predicted Ethiopian women swept the first four places at the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon today but the seven second gap between the winner Buze Diriba and Fozya Jemal confirmed the women's race in this World Athletics Elite label race was one for the ages.

Buze crossed the finish line in 2:23:11 on a day where a cold 22km/hour wind wrecked chances of anyone breaking Kenyan Magalyne Masai's 2019 course record (2:22:16). Joining her on the podium were Waganesh Mekasha (2:23:12) and Afera Godfay (2:23:15).

The four had closely followed the excellent pacemaking of Canada's Kevin Coffey who pointed to upcoming fueling stations, potholes at the side of the road and encouraged them all the way through the first half in 1:11:01 and onto 30km where he stopped. It was here that Waganesh Mekasha - the 2023 Ottawa Marathon winner - suffered a fuel bottle mishap. But Diriba's confidence grew the closer to the finish they ran.

"I have been training well and I was expecting to win but after 40km I was confident," said the winner, who lived for a time in Albuquerque, New Mexico and can understand and speak English well. "I knew I could finish well. With one kilometer left I felt it was possible and I think I was focused in the last 500 meters, and I kept pushing. I didn't see my time."

Asked if she feared one of her rivals might catch her, she laughed and nodded.

"It was windy, but I managed. I was ok," she offered. Her result was a substantial improvement over her previous marathon personal best - 2:28:06 from the 2019 Houston Marathon.

The men's field agreed at Saturday's technical meeting they wanted to run 2:07 pace taking into consideration the cross wind forecasted. So, when the lead pack passed the halfway point in 62:30 observers worried they had gone too fast.

Once the eager pacemakers had dropped out by 30km the Kenyan duo of Alfred Kipchirchir and Elvis Cheboi set out after the C\$20,000 first place prize money. Kipchirchir has three times beaten 60 minutes in the half marathon distance and Toronto Waterfront was his debut at the full distance. The early pace took its toll, and he faded in the final kilometers.

Cheboi won in 2:09:20, a new personal best.

"It was a very tough course," he said. "I managed it. I don't know, I think it was about 30km or more that I broke away. I made a move but later on it was very tough and windy.

"The first half was very fast but the end one was very tough, so I struggled a little bit."

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Cheboi had only arrived in Toronto on Friday night having missed his flight from Eldoret to Nairobi. Landing in Toronto he was briefly detained by Canadian immigration authorities, so he was all smiles once he settled into the race hotel.

A jovial character, he gifted his winner's laurels to the anti-doping control officer who accompanied him to the awards ceremony and post-race press conference.

As Kiprchrir paid for his overzealous start, Adugna Takele of Ethiopia passed him to claim second place in 2:10:26.

"Overall, I am happy with second place, but it was really windy," Adugna admitted. "I couldn't push through it. The course is good but the wind?"

The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon also served as the 2023 Canadian Marathon Championships. The men's and women's winners were both surprises and both marathon debutantes.

Carolyn Pomerleau of Quebec City ran 2:34:44 to capture the \$8,000 winner's purse along with the gold medal, while Vancouver's Thomas Broatch took the men's race running solo for most of the second half. He ran 2:16:25 which also earned him sixth place overall.

"It's an interesting distance. A lot of things people told me about the marathon were true," Broatch, who was still running 1,500m races four months ago said. "The first half I felt really easy. I thought I was going to be able to pick it up but then in the final 7 or 8km I was surprised how much I slowed down. Thankfully it was really late in the race."

Meanwhile Pomerleau was delighted and surprised with her performance.

"They didn't think about me, they were like 'who is this girl we don't know her?'" She said with a good nature laugh.

"It's my first marathon of all time. My half marathon personal best was 1:13:14 and I ran that in Ottawa. I finished third in the Canadian 10km championship with 33:16 so the time in my 10k is more competitive than in the marathon. I only had eight weeks of training for this marathon. I was ok. My goal was to do a sub 2:35 and I did it."

Among the many Americans who were using Toronto Waterfront to either qualify for the US Olympic Trials or to bolster their confidence going into that race, Emily Durgin, a resident of Flagstaff, Arizona came out on top. She finished fifth overall in personal best 2:26:46.

"I honestly didn't know my pace; it was all over the place because of the wind," Durgin revealed. "I ended up not going with the leaders because I thought that effort in the wind might be a little too much."

"I felt good honestly all the way through; this is a stepping stone for our Olympic trials in February. Getting that Olympic standard definitely gives you a little more confidence. This isn't a Berlin, this isn't a Chicago, I kind of had to not compare my time to what women ran the past couple of weeks. At the trials I can take little more risk with the confidence this race has given me."

This year's TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon sold out with a record 5,849 entries. Along with the half marathon and the 5km run today, more than 25,000 runners enjoyed the weekend and \$3 million was raised for 159 official charities, so many more than just the elite athletes went home happy.

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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.

About Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

Tata Consultancy Services is an IT services, consulting and business solutions organization that has been partnering with many of the world's largest businesses in their transformation journeys for over 50 years. TCS offers a consulting-led, cognitive powered, integrated portfolio of business, technology and engineering services and solutions. This is delivered through its unique Location Independent Agile™ delivery model, recognized as a benchmark of excellence in software development.

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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