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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Canadian Champion Thomas Broatch Returns to TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

By Paul Gains

Thomas Broatch will line up in defence of his Canadian marathon title October 20th as the 2024 TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon once again hosts the national championships.

A year ago the Vancouver native surprised many with his victory - which also saw him finish 6th place overall in this World Athletics Elite Label race.

Most impressive was that this was his marathon debut. Three months later he took five minutes off his Toronto time running 2:11:54 for 7th place in the Houston Marathon. Lessons learned in Toronto, he believes, helped in Houston.

“In Toronto I felt pretty good in the last 10km, in terms of breathing and energy, but my legs were completely destroyed,” the 25-year-old remembers, “and I wasn’t able to really push the last 10km. So I made some adjustments in training for Houston.

“For Toronto I did pretty much all of my long runs on gravel or soft surfaces. For Houston I did all those on concrete which I think really helped. My legs felt great in the last 10km and, even though I was hurting, I was able to push. That’s something I have taken forward to make sure the legs are ready for 42km of pounding.”

The Canadian championship gold medal was accompanied by \$8,000 in prize money - he also collected \$2,000 for his 6th place overall finish - giving him what he calls “a generous prize pool for Canadians.”

Besides his ‘new preference’ for running on concrete he has increased his weekly training volume from 180km to 200km under the guidance of coach Chris Johnson at the Vancouver Thunderbirds Track and Field Club.

Until two years ago Broatch was still focusing on track racing (5,000m and 10,000m) while the marathon was simply a distance to be contemplated for the future. Now with a couple of positive experiences he realizes it is logically his best event.

“Yes definitely,” he declares. “I think I will still do other distances to help with the marathon. But I think, especially because the first one went quite well and then I was able to improve even more, I definitely see myself focusing on the marathon.”

That hasn't stopped him from dropping down on occasion. In April he finished second in the Vancouver Sun Run 10k with a personal best of 28:58. He explains that this was right at the end of an exhausting buildup for the Copenhagen Marathon, which flew under the radar and even escaped the keen eyes of the World Athletics statisticians.

"The Sun Run was a really good race. It actually wasn't the big focus of the Spring," he says almost apologetically. "I actually ran the Copenhagen marathon two weeks after Sun Run so this was more of a prep race for that marathon.

"I think that showed me that the marathon training doesn't really hurt my speed but gives me that extra strength which helps my 10k. That was by far my fastest 10k and the course is not even that fast."

The Copenhagen Marathon didn't go as well as he had hoped so he's not concerned few knew about it. After running Houston and coming away with a strong personal best he wondered if an even faster time was in the cards. Confidently, he went out harder than his body could handle.

"I went out in 2:10 pace (65 minutes at halfway) for the first 27km then pretty much collapsed the last third of the race," he reveals. "It was a pretty spectacular blow up."

Basically, he jogged home just to finish.

Among the things he realized is that his marathon training helped his 10k form but the racing effort at the Sun Run might have taken too much out of him coming that close to the Copenhagen race. Another lesson learned.

Broatch works as a software engineer for a renewable energy company called 'Clear' writing software for wind farm owners. In his free time he has been enjoying playing golf with family and friends as well as online chess. He admits to being a fan of 'The Three Body Problem' trilogy of books.

It is hard to believe that Broatch is still 25 and has many years ahead of him. As he looks toward Toronto Waterfront he seems wiser and confident in the approach he is taking.

"Training has been pretty good," he reports. "I have been able to run consistently 190 to 200km a week for the last three months now. No injuries, no illness. Definitely, pretty tired. But I think that has been a feature of all my marathon builds.

"I know the Toronto Waterfront course is pretty quick, the organization is great, and they give us a good chance to run a fast time. So, I definitely would like to improve my Houston time. I think going under 2:11 and getting in that 2:10 club would be pretty good result. I would be quite happy with that."

Winning national championships also offers tremendous bonus World Athletics points which are used for qualification for the 2025 World Championships in Tokyo. He has never represented his country. An international call-up is, he says, something that “is in the back of my mind!”

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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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