

Canadian Olympian Ben Flanagan To Race TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon By Paul Gains

Earning a place in the 2024 Paris Olympic 5,000m event was a career highlight for Ben Flanagan but as it turned out that success effectively delayed his marathon debut - the distance he believes will ultimately prove to be his best.

The 30-year-old Kitchener, Ontario native will finally take on the marathon October 19 when he lines up for the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon - a World Athletics Elite Label race - which doubles as the 2025 Canadian Marathon Championships.

"To be honest I think this has been an overdue transition," Flanagan says from his current home in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. "A lot of people expected me to make it three or four years ago which I was very much open to.

"At this point it was like 'ok, what event do I think is going to maximize my chances to make a big move at the Olympics?' and I always thought the marathon would be my best event. So, I think this was a late move, but, better to do it now three years before [the] LA [Olympics]."

Flanagan ran 13:04.62 indoors to qualify for the Paris Olympics a 5,000m time only two Canadians have bettered. But the roads have been his bread and butter.

After winning the 2018 NCAA 10,000m title for the University of Michigan he went on to win the famed Falmouth Road Race three times in addition to earning three Canadian 10km titles one of which, it so happens, was run along the Toronto Waterfront in 2021. That will be familiar when he runs the marathon.

In June 2024 he and his wife, Hannah, relocated to Cape Cod where her parents live. The move, the welcoming of a baby daughter - Nora is now 4 months old - weren't the only changes to Flanagan's life. After years of training under former Michigan coach Ron Warhurst and a spell as a member of the Boston Reebok Track Club he sought the help of Jon Green who also coaches fellow Canadian Olympians Rory Linkletter and John Gay in the Verde Track Club.

While Green is permanently located in Flagstaff, Arizona the pair communicate via phone and text. Precious personal time is spent at races or when Green, a Massachusetts native, returns to visit family.

Flanagan is training solo but has the option of meeting up with Boston-based athletes should he wish. On long runs he is often accompanied by his father-in-law on a bike who carries bottles. Efforts to perfect the mechanics of fuelling during races are ongoing.

"The biggest change has been the (training) volume really. That's always been a challenge for me," he reveals. "I have had a really hard time, historically, building volume without getting hurt. It's probably been one of my most challenging areas of development. I tend to thrive on

lower volume than others do.”

The focus on quality training miles has not hurt his results on the roads. Indeed, he can point to personal bests of 28:10 in the 10km and 61:00 in the half marathon. Only Canadian marathon record holder Cam Levins has run faster at the latter distance. Although they are friendly it is Rory Linkletter to whom Flanagan has turned for marathon advice.

“Rory and I were roommates at a lot of the training camps in Spain and we were roommates in Paris [Olympics] and now we have the same coach,” Flanagan explains. “Every time we step on the line we want to beat each other but we’re not afraid of being transparent with each other in terms of what we are doing; what’s worked and what hasn’t.

“He’s probably the guy I learned the most from and then Jon. One of the things that I like about Jon is he’s young, he’s the same age as me. But despite that he has a lot of extensive experience with a lot of different marathoners. The benefit of being in ‘Flag’ you are around the newest trends all the time. He is always up to date with everything.”

As he gets in his 140 kilometres a week Flanagan acknowledges the change in lifestyle, being a parent, means he must be effective in time management. When Hannah needs a break or is working with her mother’s children’s clothing store in Falmouth, Flanagan is at the ready.

“We have two dogs as well,” Flanagan reveals with a laugh. “Between looking after the dogs the baby and, my wife and I taking care of our own situations, it’s jam packed. We are never looking to kill time to be honest.

“I’m very happy with my situation in life: with running a huge part of my life but not being the same as it used to be where it was only about running.”

Qualifying for the 2024 Olympic meant Flanagan was able to extend his two-year contract with On Running until 2028. This has allowed him to be in a better position to prepare going forward. The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is the launching pad for the marathon career he has always thought about.

“The biggest goal is to walk away from [Toronto Waterfront] feeling like having a positive experience, making as few mistakes as possible and learning from the mistakes I do make and feeling I can go faster in the next one,” he declares.

“My plan is to take it relatively conservative. I want to make sure I get to 30km and feel I have a lot more in the tank I don’t want to get myself into place I haven’t been before too early. That’s the main goal.”

The Canadian Championship is a huge enticement. Besides the aforementioned three 10km titles he also has won national gold in the 5km road race and at 5,000m on the track. Winning another in the marathon would be special.

“It all comes down to LA now,” he says of the ultimate target he has set for himself. “If I want to

make that team in 2028 it's not unreasonable to think I am going to have to be a 2:06, 2:05 marathoner. So I am just trying not to chase it all at once; just get the first one in, feel good about it, then build off that and then hopefully it will come with a Canadian championship. It's a realistic goal."

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ABOUT THE TCS TORONTO WATERFRONT MARATHON

The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is Canada's premier running event, Toronto's largest marathon 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 an Olympic qualifier. 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 CANADA RUNNING SERIES (CRS)

Canada Running Series (CRS) organizes the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon. CRS is the nation's premier running circuit with 6 events, 4 in Toronto & 2 in Vancouver. It annually attracts over 60,000 participants and raises more than \$6 million for some 320 mostly-local charities. The Series includes the World Athletics Elite Label TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, and the Athletics Canada National Marathon Championships. Since 1999, CRS has gained international recognition for innovation and organization. To learn more about CRS, visit <https://canadarunningseries.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 65 years. Its consulting-led, cognitive powered, portfolio of business, technology and engineering services and solutions is delivered through its unique Location Independent Agile™ delivery model, recognized as a benchmark of excellence in software development.

As part of the Tata group, India's largest multinational business group, TCS has over 601,000 of the world's best-trained consultants in 55 countries. The company generated consolidated revenues of US \$29 billion in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024, and is listed on the BSE and NSE 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. For more information, visit www.tcs.com.

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