

Ethiopian Asimarech Naga to Race TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

By Paul Gains

Up until two years ago Asimarech Naga was a promising track athlete favouring the 3,000m steeplechase event. Now, the 26-year-old Ethiopian expects to contend for the \$25,000 CDN first place prize money at the 2025 TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon on October 19.

"If it is God's will I want to win as I am preparing well for it," she declares. "I know the Toronto Waterfront Marathon is the biggest marathon in Canada and the course is flat. I am so excited to be there for the first time and do something great."

Plagued by injuries she believes were caused by wearing track spikes for her chosen event she made the decision to join legendary coach Haji Adillo's marathon training group in 2023. The decision has paid off handsomely.

Last year she won the Dublin Marathon in a time of 2:24:13 setting a new course record in the process. And in March of this year, she finished second in the Wuxi Marathon in China running a solid 2:24:21 and firming up her status as an Ethiopian marathon runner to keep an eye on. Having successfully immersed herself in coach Haji's training program the Toronto Waterfront Marathon, a World Athletics Elite Label race, is a challenge she welcomes.

"I have so many strong athletes (to train with) and as the coaching program is great it is really helping me," Asimarech says adding she has drawn inspiration from a variety of influences during her ascent in the world of marathoning.

"My first inspiration, and the one who built up my morale, was my sport teacher back in my elementary school. And from athletes I am inspired by the athlete Derartu Tulu."

Derartu Tulu became the first black African woman to win an Olympic gold medal when she won the 1992 Barcelona 10,000m. Like many of the country's Olympic champions she is a national hero.

On her first visit to this continent Asimarech will be accompanied by the aforementioned Haji Adillo a sure sign he has high expectations for his latest charge. Considering he has trained several Olympic and world champions plus numerous winners of World Marathon Majors during his coaching career his interest in seeing Asimarech succeed is noteworthy.

"I have coached her two years," he says. "If everything goes as planned and also if there will be a good pacer she will run 2:22, 2:23."

His training groups can number over one hundred athletes on any given day and have included some of the world's best including the three-time Olympic track champions Tirunesh Dibaba who is the cousin of Derartu Tulu and Kenenisa Bekele.

After unequalled track careers Tirunesh was the 2017 Chicago Marathon champion while

Kenenisa won the Berlin Marathon twice. Other standouts have included Lelisa Desisa, the 2019 World Champion and two-time Boston Marathon champion.

“There are many successes I can mention,” Haji responds when asked which performance is most treasured. “But if I have to mention one, it was and will always remain in my heart, Mare Dibaba's 2017 World Championships win. This was the first women's World Championships marathon win for me and also for my country, Ethiopia. And being able to deliver this win for Ethiopia is the biggest success of all.

“I am so proud of all my athletes' achievements and what these great athletes have reached. All were able to earn great results which make me proud but, as I mentioned earlier, the greatest moment for me is Mare's first World Championship win.”

It should be noted that Mare Dibaba, no relation to Tirunesh, finished second in the 2011 Toronto Waterfront Marathon.

Haji himself was an international marathon runner during his younger days and ran 2:12:25 for the distance in the 1999 Graz Marathon in Austria. A former classmate of Haile Gebrselassie - the two-time Olympic champion and former world record holder at distances from 5,000m to the marathon - the pair traveled by bus from their town of Arsi to the Ethiopian capital of Addis as young men. But Haji suffered serious health issues while at the height of his running prowess.

“I think it was around 2000, and it was something related to what I ate which led me to having surgery,” he offers. The surgery did not go well, and he underwent another surgery a week later. The compounded effects put an end to his running career.

While Haile continued his progress setting 27 world records and winning multiple World Championship and Olympic gold medals Haji began to think about coaching. He laughs when asked how many medals his athletes have won at major championships from African to World and Olympics.

“Too many to count as my athletes are still getting medals,” he responds. “Maybe over a thousand? But I think I can say there might not be a personal coach to get as many as I have so far.”

Clearly, he has an extraordinary ability to recognize extremely talented athletes and develop them into world beaters. Could it be that Asimarech Naga is his latest rising star?

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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



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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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