

Rachel Hannah Chasing Best Performance at TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

By Paul Gains

Shoe technology, better nutrition and modernized training methods are allowing distance runners to continue their careers far beyond what was once considered retirement age. Rachel Hannah is a prime example.

At 39 years of age the Port Elgin, Ontario resident is running as well as ever and is now aiming for a personal best at the 2025 TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, October 19.

Hannah ran 2:32:09 at the 2016 Houston Marathon six months after claiming the 2015 Pan Am Games marathon bronze medal in Toronto.

“That is definitely my goal for Toronto - to get a personal best,” she says between appointments for the nutrition counselling business she owns. “I tried to get one last fall. My race times have improved slightly so I feel in a better spot going into this race. I am going to go for it. To get under 2:32 would be awesome.”

Earlier this year, just four weeks after running 2:34:42 on the hilly and point-to-point Boston Marathon course, she finished 5th in the Canadian 10km championships in 33:38. Those championships were held in Ottawa. Her personal best at the latter distance is 33:08 set a decade ago. The Ottawa results surprised her. Needless to say, she is encouraged.

“I find I recovered well. I have learned to make sleep more of a priority,” Hannah admits.

“Definitely I credit my nutrition, keeping my protein high, focusing a lot on recovery nutrition.

Over the years I have been consistent, I haven’t had to take time off with injury for five or six years. I take time off after a marathon but that part of it helps.”

Twice a week now she is also doing weight training at home. Besides her home-based nutrition counselling business - she has a degree in human nutrition from Georgia State University - she is a nutritionist for the University of Guelph. Six years ago, she also earned the International Olympic Committee's Sport Nutrition Diploma.

Recently she has focused on remote interviews with Guelph students rather than making the two-hour (each way) commute. That has helped her find the time to put in the 160km to 180km a week she has been doing in preparation for what will be her fourth Toronto Waterfront.

"I am pretty consistent, I will block off my mornings to train," she reveals. "I find people want mid-day to later day appointments in nutrition counselling. Most people don't want to talk first thing in the morning.

"I do weight training in the morning, and I have to get back. If I do it in the morning. Three days a week I run doubles with a second run around appointments. I work 95% from home now."

Coached by her husband Joe Chappell she reveals she has been doing 'double threshold' workouts.

In addition to being a World Athletics Elite Label race, again, the event will be the official Athletics Canada National Marathon Championship. A year ago, Hannah claimed the Canadian Championship bronze medal in 2:34:33 here. She jokes, having run around 2:34 a few times now, she must find another two minutes to get that personal best.

Amongst a growing list of world class athletes from across the globe Hannah will join 2019 Canadian Champion and 2021 Olympian, Dayna Pidhoresky plus Ottawa resident Salome Nyirarukundo on the start line. The latter, a 2016 Olympian for Rwanda, won the Under Armour Toronto 10k finishing just ahead of Hannah. The pair have spoken many times over the years at races and have developed a friendship.

On a recent Saturday morning in August Hannah met up with Nyirarukundo and her coach, Ray Dupuis, for a 30km run in Plantagenet, Ontario, a site located midway between Ottawa and Cornwall, Ontario. Hannah was visiting family in the region.

“It was awesome,” Hannah says of the experience. “We got to know each other over the years, and we stayed at the same hotel during the 2025 Under Armour Toronto 10k. We were saying we should get together for training.”

“We talked over text a few weeks and her coach was there and brought out some other athletes. So, we had a really long run together. It was the first time to train with each other. It was really great. It was probably one of the best long runs I have done.”

Besides knowing the Toronto Waterfront course intimately Hannah credits the organization especially knowing that pacers will be provided for each group with a target pace. There is another factor that keeps her coming back.

“I think the cheer groups are really nice because you know the (people in the) cheer groups a lot of the time,” she says with a laugh. “Whereas at bigger races Chicago or Berlin I am not going to know who is cheering for me. When you put a name to the face it’s a lot nicer getting home. That’s why I like Toronto a lot.”

Like all runners Hannah will be paying attention to weather forecasts leading up to race day. Toronto generally receives cooler temperatures in October and that is just fine with the elites. Whatever the conditions she knows she will have prepared to the best of her ability with a personal best and, perhaps, a Canadian championship medal in mind.

“I feel confident, and I will go for it,” she declares.

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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