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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Ethiopia's Gizealew Ayana Returns To The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

By Paul Gains

Gizealew Ayana returns to the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon October 18 aiming to win this World Athletics Elite Label Race.

It is the Ethiopian's second visit to Canada's largest city and he hopes for a successful competition - a redemption of sorts. Two years ago he finished 6th here - a performance that fell far below his expectations since he had won the Paris Marathon a year earlier.

"After half way, when the surges started I was struggling but I did my best to finish the race," he remembers of that day in Toronto. Racing along Lake Ontario's waterfront again is something he relishes and he says his goal is to take home the winner's prize of \$25,000 CDN.

His objective is certainly attainable. Earlier this year he lowered his personal best to 2:06:48 while finishing 5th in Dubai. He went on to finish second at the Ottawa Marathon in May just four seconds behind the winner, Elvis Cheboi of Kenya. Cheboi was the 2023 Toronto Waterfront winner.

Training under coach Nigatu Worku is progressing well, says Gizealew, as he is covering roughly 180 to 200 kilometres a week - at altitudes of between 2300m and 2500m. Among his training group is his elder brother Tsedat Abeje and two past Toronto Waterfront champions, Mulugeta Uma, the 2024 winner, and Yihunilign Adane who triumphed in 2022. This group certainly has an affinity to Toronto.

Remarkably, Gizealew is just 23 years old. He will be accompanied to Toronto by a strong contingent of his compatriots including the previously announced Ayinadis Teshome. She is attempting to win the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon women's title. Ayinadis is also a member of Nigatu Worku's training group managed by Moyo Sports.

Asked if he enjoyed Toronto on his first visit to Canada Gizealew replies "Yes of course. Toronto is beautiful," he says, adding "I met (Ethiopian journalist) Bizuayehu Wagaw; he was there and did everything to make us (Ethiopians) comfortable."

Bizuayehu now makes Toronto his home and reports on African athletes from here and in Europe. Over the years it has been helpful for the Ethiopian athletes to have Amharic speaking members of the Toronto community show them their customary hospitality.

Gizealew grew up hearing the numerous successes of Haile Gebrselassie, the former world record holder, and for a short time, also did some training with Kenenisa Bekele, a three-time Olympic gold medalist. But watching his older brother Tsedat have success in road racing was perhaps the greatest motivation for the young man.



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There is seven years between Tsedat and himself but he is slowly narrowing the gap performance-wise. Tsedat ran 2:05:47 in Hamburg in April.

Six years ago Gizealew decided a move to Addis was necessary if he was serious about his running. He rents a room in the Ethiopian capital and relies on his brother to drive him to the training sessions which are normally outside the city. The pair also have a younger sister, Tigist Ayana, who runs 5k and 10k races.

A victory at Toronto Waterfront will not be easy. The field also includes defending champion, Leonard Langat of Kenya. But Gizealew has confidence that he can prevail. And he also looks to the future with ambition.

“Yes I am young and I want to represent Ethiopia in the World Championships and Olympics and want to run fast times,” he replies.

A victory at the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon would mean so much to his fortunes and would announce his quality to the Ethiopia Athletics Federation. The \$25,000 CDN prize would also be useful.

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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



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