



Ethiopia's Maritu Ketema Chasing Victory and A Course Record

By Paul Gains

Maritu Ketema knocked four minutes off her personal best time when she last raced a marathon. The Ethiopian star believes she is capable of another massive improvement which she hopes will take her to victory at the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon on October 18th.

In Dubai this past February she recorded a time of 2:21:52 crossing the line in 5th place. The Toronto Waterfront course record is 2:20:44 and was set by her compatriot, Waganesh Mekasha, in 2024.

"My training has been going very well," she reports. "I feel that my condition and fitness are much better now than when I was preparing for Dubai. The hard work makes me very proud."

Maritu trains in a large group under the watchful eye of renowned coach Gemedu Dedefo. It is a talented team of men and women that she meets up with several times a week in training sites in and around Addis Ababa including Sendafa and Sululta.

Among the women's group are notable athletes such as Tigst Assefa, who holds the world record in a women's only marathon race, and three-time Toronto Waterfront winner Shure Demise. The latter won here last year and also in 2015 and 2016.

Success emanates from this group and Maritu is one of the newer beneficiaries. But her career wasn't always headed toward elite marathon running.

As a junior athlete she competed in the 3,000m steeplechase and at the age of 17 years she ran in the Hengelo FBK Games (Netherlands) where she ran a solid time of 9:39.55. To put things in perspective that time would rank her in the top ten Canadians all-time.

Later that same year she took the silver medal at the 2017 African Under 20 Championships, again in the 3,000m steeplechase. It appeared she was going to become a world-class steeplechaser especially after invitations to compete in the Diamond League meetings in Rabat, Morocco (2017) and in Shanghai (2018). But, instead, she endured two years of injuries during which she did not compete.

"I had problems with my leg and back," she explains. "So I decided to move to the marathon because I felt it would be better for me."

Her debut came at the Malaga Marathon (Spain) where she finished 5th in 2:29:51. Then in 2023 she took 2nd place in a marathon held in Suzhou (China). It is her Dubai result though which has unnerved her rivals as she is now a contender in every race in which she competes.

Maritu grew up in Holeta a town thirty-five kilometres west of the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. "My family are farmers," she reveals. "I have been living and training in Addis Ababa for eight years."

The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is again a World Athletics Elite Label race and offers CAD\$25,000 to the winner. Both the men's and women's fields will be extremely competitive and Maritu expects her best performance.

"My goal is to run a good race and achieve a personal best," she declares. "If the conditions are good, I believe I can run around 2:18:40."



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2 Berkely St, Unit 305 | Toronto, ON | M5A 4J5
torontowaterfrontmarathon.com

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/>.