

## FUKUOKA MARATHON JAPAN, 3RD DECEMBER

**H**AILE Gebrselassie claimed the 60th Fukuoka Marathon, surging away from double World Championship Marathon gold medallist Jaouad Gharib of Morocco and defending Fukuoka titlist Dmytro Baranovsky of Ukraine over the final 3km.

In crossing the line in 2.06.52, the 33-year-old four-time World and two-time Olympic 10,000m champion fell one second short of the race record set by Atsushi Fujita in 2000. However, 'The Emperor' still holds the fastest time of the year, following his 2.05.56 Berlin Marathon effort.

The Ethiopian became the second runner to record four career sub 2.07 marathon races. The first to do so was Kenyan Felix Limo.

In unseasonably cold conditions (7°C) with strong winds (4m/s), the race started slowly with a huge pack passing through 5km in 15.44. From this point, the pace quickened and remained steady at around 3min/km.

A pack of nearly 20 runners passed 10km in 30.56, 15km in 45.57, and 20km in 1.00.59. Gebrselassie, Baranovsky, Fujita and Kenyan Paul Biwott sat comfortably behind the pace setters.

The first half marathon was passed in 1.04.18. The pace began to quicken again, with the following 5km split dipping under 15 minutes. This increase in pace saw the lead pack pass through the 25km marker in 1.15.54 and now only consisted of ten runners. This was reduced by one more as they passed through 30km (1.30.47)

The pace makers dropped out of the race at 31.6km, leaving only six runners left with any hope of winning the race. This was reduced by another two as Japan's Toshinari Suwa and Paul Biwott fell behind, leaving Gebrselassie, Baranovsky, Gharib and Japanese runner Wataru Okutani to fight out the final 10km.

A 2.47 km split between 33km and 34km left Okutani solely in 4th place, as he was no longer able to stay with the pace. Gebrselassie made his push for the finish from 38km, clocking another fast split of 2.56 and putting strain on Gharib's and Baranovsky's abilities to stay with the pace. A similar km split between 39km and 40km (2.54) saw Gharib and Baranovsky left behind. At this point, Gebrselassie was now six seconds ahead of Gharib, who in turn was another six seconds ahead of Baranovsky. 4th place was over a minute behind.

Gebrselassie kept adding agony to the efforts of the pursuers, covering 40km to 41km in 2.51. Winning the race in 2.06.52, Gebrselassie covered the last half marathon in 1.02.34, a negative split of 1 min 44 sec.

The defending champion Baranovsky passed Gharib on the final approach to the finish, claiming second in 2.07.15. It was a huge improvement for the Ukrainian, as he sliced over a minute off his personal best and national record of 2.08.29 and moved to 7th place on the all-time European list. Gharib was third with 2.07.19.



Haile Gebrselassie wins the 2006 Fukuoka Marathon in 2.06.52. Getty Images

## IRIS LOTTO CROSS CUP BRUSSELS, BELGIUM 17TH DECEMBER

**K**ENYAN Bernard Chepkok surprised both spectators and competitors, storming through the finish line to claim victory in the IAAF XC Permit meet, the IRIS Lotto Cross Cup.

Continuous rain the night before made the course extremely muddy and challenging. However, it did not stop the 22-year-old from breaking away from the lead group on the penultimate lap to take his first major victory at the international level.

Young Belgian Pieter Desmet delighted the local fans when he took the lead in the first lap of the 7-lap race. As a result, a leading group of six athletes was formed, with Ukraine's Sergey Lebid recovering from a bad start to close the gap and join them. Ethiopian Tadesse Tola Woldegebrhel and Kenyans Moses Kigen and Chepkok kept the pace high and, surprisingly, Britain's European Cross Country Champion Mo Farah was the first victim. Farah dropped back into the first chasing group but dramatically faded at the

halfway mark of the race.

Accelerating on the steepest section of the course, Chepkok ended the hopes of Portugal's Fernando Silva and early leader Desmet as they lost contact with the lead group. With four candidates left and Lebid always trailing at the back, Chepkok changed into a higher gear again, and the race was effectively over. Suddenly, Lebid stopped for ten seconds to do some breathing exercises and was ultimately forced to settle for fourth place.

In the penultimate lap, Chepkok broke away from his remaining opponents and took his first major victory on the international level. Kigen out-sprinted Woldegebrhel for second place, and Silva secured fifth place ahead of Desmet.

In the women's race, Hungry's Aniko Kalovics set off at a furious pace. Giving chase was a distinctive group including Portugal's Analia Rosa, Belgian Veerle Dejaeghere, Briton Hayley Yelling, and the Ethiopians Genet Getaneh and Teyiba Erkesso.

Pre-race favourite, Uganda's Dorcus Inzikuru, failed to figure in the race after losing a shoe early in the muddy terrain.

Of the early pursuers, only Erkesso could close in on the early leader. In the duel for victory, Kalovics was worn down by Erkesso, who imposed a steady pace. Gradually, the Ethiopian built up her advantage on the Hungarian to secure a second consecutive win in Brussels, but immediately after the race she showed signs of exhaustion and had to be taken care of by the Red Cross.

## 'SAN SILVESTRE VALLECANA' 10KM

MADRID, 31ST DECEMBER

**K**ENYA'S Eluid Kipchoge celebrated bringing in the New Year in spectator fashion by winning at the 'San Silvestre Vallecana', a 10km road race held on New Year's Eve. Kipchoge not only took a 40 second chunk out of his own year-old course record, but also

established a new 10km road World Record. Breaking the 27min barrier for the first time, the Kenyan sliced 8 seconds of the previous best held by distance legend Ethiopian Haile Gebrselassie. However, due to the net loss of 55m in altitude between the start and finish of the course, Kipchoge's time can be rewarded neither World nor National Record status.

Kipchoge dominated the race from the outset, setting an early frantic pace. 2.5km into the race and only World 20km Champion, Eritrea's Zersenay Tadesse, and Australia's Craig Mottram where able to stay at his shoulder. Portugal's Rui Silva and Spanish runners Chema Martinez and Jesus Espana formed the chase pack. Kipchoge and Tadesse took turns setting the pace at the front of the race, with the clear intention to 'run the legs' off Mottram.

The first 3km was covered in 8.03, and by 4km

Kipchoge had increased the pace, again building a small gap between Mottram and Tadesse. Kipchoge passed through 5km in 13.16.

Shortly before 6km, it became a race of two, with Tadesse working back up onto Kipchoge's feet, while Mottram faded and cemented 3rd place.

For the remaining 4km the two Africans tussled, but it was Kipchoge who maintained at the head of the race, with Tadesse in hot pursuit.

Finally, the Kenyan romped home, clocking 26.54. Tadesse was given the same time, but the Eritrean's challenge was never really a threat to Kipchoge's win. Further, it was sweet revenge for Kipchoge ending Mottram's road 10km streak of 12 races and leveling the score following his defeat by Mottram at the Gateshead Great North 3km Road Race in late September.

In the women's event, Latvia's Jelena Prokopcuka benefited from the mixed race situations, applying pressure early to her competitors before sewing the win up with 4km still to travel.

The two-time New York City Marathon champion was challenged initially by Australia's Bentia Johnson before opening up a handsome 41 second margin to cross the line in 31.27 and 26th position overall.

Johnson, who won a half marathon in Japan just before Christmas, had not quite recovered sufficiently to stay with Prokucuka in the second half of the race. However, she held on for second in 32.08, with Spanish European 5000m champion Marta Dominquez finishing 3rd in 33.15.



Kenyan Bernard Chepkok stole the show with a surprise victory at the IRIS Lotto Cross Cup in Brussels, Belgium. Getty Images

RESULTS		
<b>FUKUOKA MARATHON</b>		
1. Haile Gebrselassie	ETH	2.06.52
2. Dmytro Baranovsky	UKR	2.07.17
3. Jaouad Gharib	MAR	2.07.19
4. Wataru Okutani	JPN	2.08.49
5. Toshinari Suwa	JPN	2.08.52
6. Tsuyoshi Ogata	JPN	2.10.48
7. Jon Brown	GBR	2.11.46
8. Atsushi Fujita	JPN	2.11.50
9. Fernando Cabada	USA	2.12.27
10. Tomoyuki Sato	JPN	2.12.29
<b>IRIS LOTTO CROSS CUP MEN</b>		
1. Bernard Chepkok	KEN	33.24
2. Moses Kigen	KEN	33.43
3. Tadesse Tola Woldegebrhel	ETH	33.45
4. Sergey Lebid	UKR	34.13
5. Fernando Silva	POR	34.31
6. Pieter Desmet	BEL	34.32
7. Steve Vernon	GBR	34.38
8. Mustapha Essaid	FRA	34.38
<b>WOMEN</b>		
1. Teyiba Erkesso	ETH	21.35
2. Aniko Kalovics	HUN	21.37
3. Analia Rosa	POR	21.38
4. Veerle Dejaeghere	BEL	21.39
5. Fionuala Briton	IRL	21.39
6. Genet Getaneh	ETH	21.41
7. Hayley Yelling	GBR	21.41
8. Caroline Chepkwony	KEN	21.57
<b>'SAN SILVESTRE VALLECANA' MEN</b>		
1. Eluid Kipchoge	KEN	26.54
2. Zersenay Tadesse	ERI	26.54
3. Craig Mottram	AUS	27.39
4. Chema Martinez	ESP	28.19
5. Jesus Espana	ESP	28.20
6. Rui Silva	POR	29.04
7. Dan Browne	USA	29.12
8. Andrew Letherby	AUS	29.17
9. Juan Carlos Higuero	ESP	29.41
10. Terence Doherty	USA	29.43
<b>WOMEN</b>		
1. Jelena Prokopcuka	LAT	31.27
2. Bentia Johnson	AUS	32.08
3. Marta Dominquez	ESP	33.15
4. Maria Abel	ESP	33.33