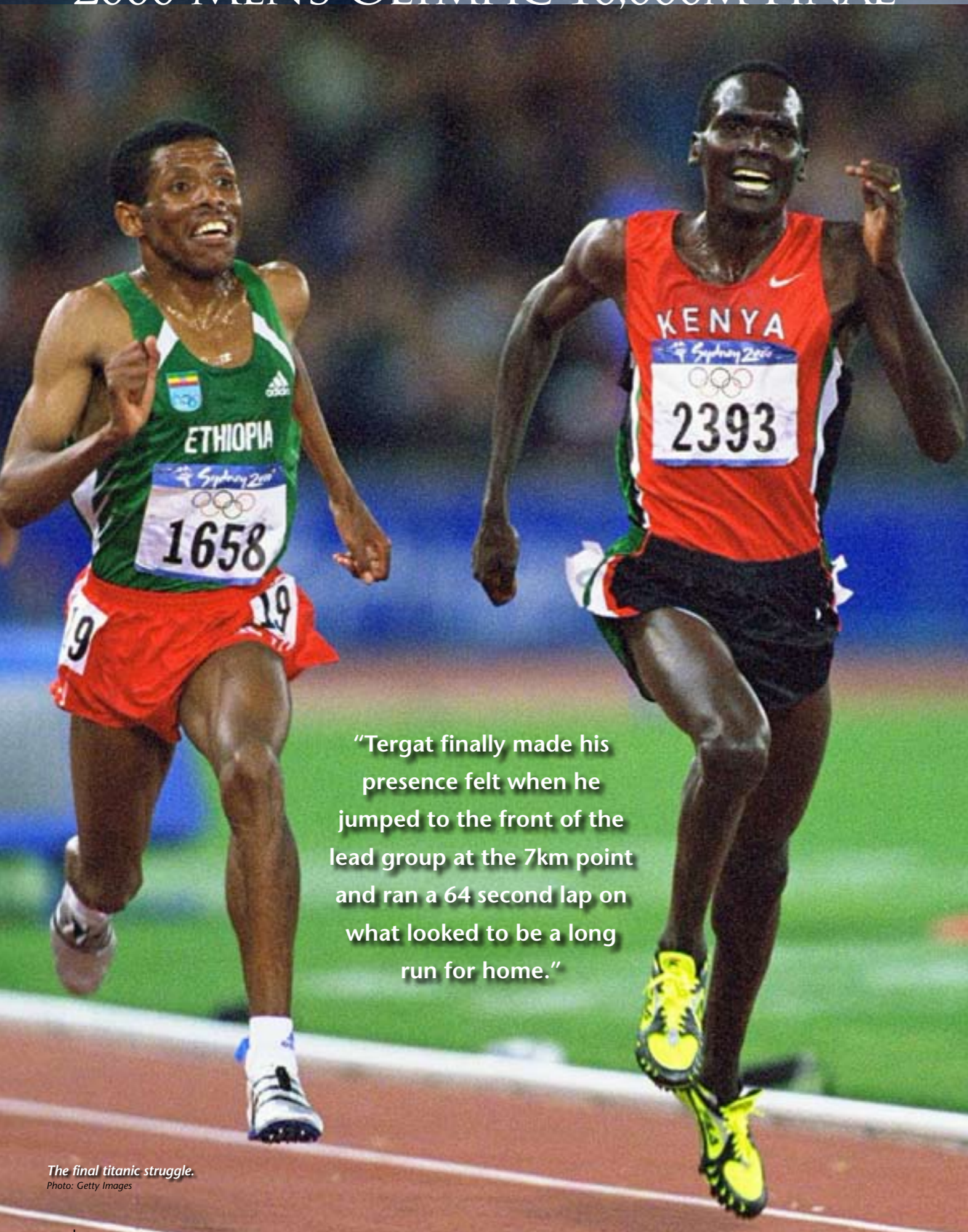


# 2000 MEN'S OLYMPIC 10,000M FINAL



“Tergat finally made his presence felt when he jumped to the front of the lead group at the 7km point and ran a 64 second lap on what looked to be a long run for home.”

The final titanic struggle.  
Photo: Getty Images

In the previous edition of R4YL's Greatest Races of All Time, we featured the amazing battle between Haile Gebrselassie and Paul Tergat at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. Fast forward another four years and Paul Tergat is planning his final assault on the track and trying to finally take a major title away from the Emperor of Ethiopia, Gebrselassie. It is the 2000 Sydney Olympic 10000m final and the runners are on their mark.

SINCE 1996 the record books over 5000m and 10000m had been completely rewritten. At the Zurich Golden League meeting in 1997, Gebrselassie took another massive chunk (3 seconds) off his own 5000m world record only to have it taken from him by Kenya's Daniel Komen less than 12 days later, with Komen running a phenomenal 12.39. It took Gebrselassie 12 months to reclaim the record, sneaking under Komen's mark by less than half a second.

A virtually identical situation occurred with the 10000m when in 1997 Gebrselassie broke his own world record, running 26.31, only to have the record taken away from him less than two months later by another Kenyan, his rival Paul Tergat (26.27). Just like the 5000m, Gebrselassie had to wait nearly 12 months before reclaiming the record, running a remarkable 26.22.

In terms of the 10000m, Gebrselassie was the undisputed king and was unbeaten since 1993, including victory in every World Championship and Olympics conducted during this time. The rivalry between Tergat and Gebrselassie had continued to grow since 1996 as Tergat finished second to Gebrselassie in both of the World Championship events prior to the 2000 Olympics.

In 2000, there was a question mark regarding Gebrselassie's form after he had suffered an Achilles injury, and with a season's best of 12.57 over 5000m he had not been as dominant on the European circuit. Was this finally Tergat's chance to step out of the bridesmaid position before focussing on the marathon?

Standing on the start line it was quite clear that Gebrselassie was not feeling the pressure as he greeted the huge Sydney crowd with his electrifying smile - he was really enjoying the moment.

A very fast opening kilometre (2.39) had the field strung out single file behind the leader, Nizigama of Burundi, the same early leader from Atlanta four years earlier. The favourites were all paying attention, Ethiopia's Gebrselassie and Tola in 2nd and 3rd, closely followed by Kenya's Tergat and Korir with Mezgebu shadowing Tergat.

After passing through 2 kilometres in 5.23 the field was still single file, but a split was forming in the middle.

The fast pace continued through the third kilometre (3km - 8.08) and Nizigama suddenly stepped away from the front just before Ivuti of Kenya

came charging through to take up the pace making duties. Ivuti led for the best part of the next 2km, but the pace had slowed significantly. Nizigama again returned to the lead and increased the tempo as they passed the halfway mark in 13.45, overall still a solid pace.

For the next two kilometres of the race the pace underwent significant fluctuations, with lap times vary-



ing from 65 to 73 seconds as Ivuti and Nizigama swapped the lead. Suddenly the second group had closed the gap to the leaders.

Tergat finally made his presence felt when he jumped to the front of the lead group at the 7km point and ran a 64 second lap on what looked to be a long run for home. Another lap in 63 seconds and Korir came to lead - Tergat had a hand at the front. Gebrselassie had not moved from second position and was ever-present on the heels of the leader at all times. Another 63 second lap and only the Kenyans, two Ethiopians and a Moroccan were still in contention. The pace was still hot as the scoreboard read 64 seconds for the most recent lap and although devastating the rest of the field, it had made little impression on Gebrselassie as he continued to look comfortable and controlled with only the slightest signs of strain appearing on his face.

The last two kilometres had been completed in a frantic 5.20 as the leaders passed through 9km in 24.44, and it was down to just five - Mezgebu and Gebrselassie versus Tergat, Korir and Ivuti.

A slower second last lap of 65 seconds saw

Mezgebu move up and box in Tergat behind Gebrselassie, who was running on Korir's shoulder. It was difficult to see him beating the great one from here. They just rolled around the top bend before entering the back straight and Tergat was forced to leap directly sideways into lane three to find some open running. He changed pace like never before, catching both Mezgebu and Gebrselassie floundering and for the first time in six years Tergat was in the lead with 200m to run. Nothing changed on the bend and they stampeded into the final straight as Tergat yet again changed gears as Gebrselassie tried to move alongside him. Fifty metres to go and Gebrselassie was still half a metre behind Tergat and had yet to make much of an impression of his lead. Tergat was going absolutely flat out as Gebrselassie drew up beside him and they were side by side with 10 metres to run. A desperate lunge at the line and Gebrselassie had beaten Tergat by less than one tenth of a second to defend his Olympic 10000m title. Tergat had forced Gebrselassie to run the last 200m in under 26 seconds to claim victory, but was again relegated to second place in what was the final track race of his illustrious career. He had thrown absolutely everything at the Emperor of Ethiopia, but Gebrselassie had just been too good. Definitely one of the most exciting races of all time!

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## RESULTS

1. H Gebrselassie ETH	27.18.20
2. P Tergat KEN	27.18.29
3. A Mezgebu ETH	27.19.75
4. P Ivuti KEN	27.20.44
5. J Korir KEN	27.24.75
6. S Berioui MAR	27.37.83
7. T Takaoka JPN	27.40.44
8. K Keska GBR	27.44.09
9. A Abdurahman BDI	27.44.56
10. A Abdurahman USA	27.46.17
11. G Tola ETH	27.49.75
12. M Keflezighi USA	27.53.63
13. J Martinez MEX	27.54.56
14. J Ramos POR	28.07.43
15. K Hanada JPN	28.08.11
16. S Moussaoui ALC	28.17.25
17. R Berradi ITA	28.45.96
18. J Rios SPA	28.50.31