

2006 WORLD CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Aussie girls shined and Bekele maintained his unprecedented dominance at the 2006 World Cross, held in Japan's picturesque coastal city of Fukuoka.

THE WORLD Cross Country Championships is always a highlight of the athletics calendar, bringing together the world's elite middle and long distance runners. This year's event saw Bekele attempting to gain 10 World Cross victories in a row, on a relatively fast two kilometre course that featured a few sharp hills and tight corners. The conditions over the weekend weren't conducive to fast times, with strong winds and low temperatures hampering anyone planning an assault from the front of the pack. Instead it made for exciting racing as large packs formed in most races and the eventual winners were only victorious by narrow margins gained in the last few hundred metres.

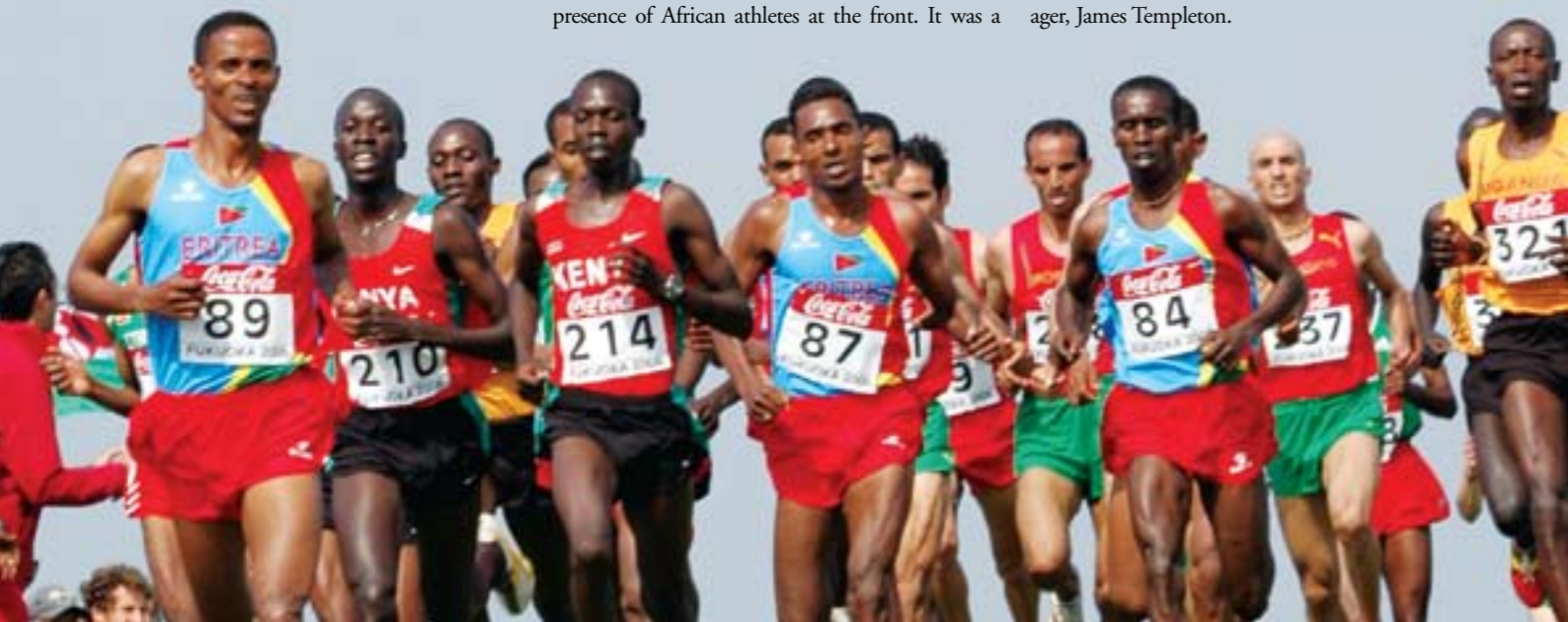
Junior Men's 8km

A slow early pace meant a large pack quickly formed, but as usual there was an overwhelming presence of African athletes at the front. It was a

showcase of future stars and also had many already established athletes, including pre-race favourite Tariku Bekele, younger brother of the great Kenenisa Bekele.

No one asserted himself on the race until very late in the piece when Bekele made a strog run for home with just under a kilometre to go. It was a bold move that he later admitted may have costed him the race, because running down the final straight into the blustery wind, Mangata Ndiwa and Leonard Komon of Kenya trailed close behind, protected from the gale. Both timed their runs to the line with perfection and swept past Bekele with little over a hundred metres remaining, to take first and second respectively.

Unfortunately there were no Australian athletes in this event, but with next years World Cross to be held in the home of distance running, Kenya, I'm sure the young guns will rise to the occasion and we'll field a full team. However, there was an Aussie connection to the event with first placed athlete, Ndiwa, being managed by leading Australian manager, James Templeton.



RESULTS - JUNIOR MEN'S 8KM

1. Ndiwa Mangata	KEN	23:53
2. Komon Leonard	KEN	23:54
3. Bekele Tariku	ETH	23:56
4. Ebuya Joseph	KEN	23:59
5. Gashu Ibrahim Jellian	ETH	24:04
6. Awash Habtamu Fedaku	ETH	24:04
7. Ali Thamer Kamal	QAT	24:05
8. Tesfamariam Samuel	ERI	24:06

RESULTS - JUNIOR WOMEN'S 6KM

1. Korikwang Pauline	KEN	19:27
2. Wanjiru Veronica	KEN	19:27
3. Kosgei Mercy	KEN	19:45
4. Chepkirui Emmy	KEN	19:52
5. Gebre Belainesh	ETH	19:56
6. Ayano Workitu	ETH	19:57
7. Bedada Emebet	ETH	20:05
8. Lisoreng Pamela	KEN	20:06
18. Heiner Madeline	AUS	20:39
36. Starrat Lucy	AUS	21:21
43. Tamslett Lara	AUS	21:40
64. Green Rachel	AUS	22:40
72. Grahame Sarah	AUS	23:28

The men's long course field tightly packed down the hill on the second lap.

RESULTS - MEN'S SHORT COURSE 4KM

1. Bekele Kenenisa	ETH	10:54
2. Songol Isaac	KEN	10:55
3. Kaouch Adil	MAR	10:57
4. Limo Benjamin	KEN	11:00
5. Ali Aboosh Mohamed	ETH	11:01
6. Goucher Adam	USA	11:02
7. Choge Augustine	KEN	11:03
8. Soi Edwin Cheruiyot	KEN	11:06
11. Mottram Craig	AUS	11:10
42. Dent Martin	AUS	11:28
58. Roff Jeremy	AUS	11:35
87. Byrne David	AUS	11:59
93. Stevenson Alastair	AUS	12:04

RESULTS - WOMEN'S SHORT COURSE 4KM

1. Bati Gelete	ETH	12:51
2. Ngetich Jepletting Priscah	KEN	12:53
3. Melkamu Meselech	ETH	12:54
4. Johnson Benita	AUS	12:55
5. Kiplagat Lornah	NED	12:55
6. Jephumba Beatrice	KEN	12:58
7. El Kamch Zohr	MAR	13:03
8. Cheruiyot Vivian	KEN	13:10
11. Rollison Melissa	AUS	13:11
25. Thompson Anna	AUS	13:27
29. MacFarlane Donna	AUS	13:34
33. Mitchell Victoria	AUS	13:36
39. Wellings Eloise	AUS	13:41

RESULTS - MEN'S LONG COURSE 12KM

1. Bekele Kenenisa	ETH	35:40
2. Sihine Sileshi	ETH	35:43
3. Mathathi Martin Irungu	KEN	35:44
4. Tadesse Zersenay	ERI	35:47
5. Kigen Mike Kipruto	KEN	35:54
6. Machariyang Hosea	KEN	36:02
7. Kifle Yonas	ERI	36:05
8. Abdallah Ali	ERI	36:18
45. Dent Martin	AUS	37:36
54. Cartwright Bret	AUS	37:52
112. Dessaix-Chin Russell	AUS	40:17
121. Ruschena David	AUS	41:05

RESULTS - WOMEN'S LONG COURSE 8KM

1. Dibaba Tirunesh	ETH	25:21
2. Kiplagat Lornah	NED	25:26
3. Melkamu Meselech	ETH	25:38
4. Johnson Benita	AUS	25:43
5. Yimer Wude	ETH	25:47
6. Fukushi Kayoko	JPN	25:51
7. Tufa Mestawet	ETH	25:59
8. Nganga Evelynne	KEN	26:11
22. Wellings Eloise	AUS	26:46
27. Thompson Anna	AUS	26:54
34. Mitchell Victoria	AUS	27:12
54. Rilen Emma	AUS	27:49
75. Michelsson Susan	AUS	29:01

Junior Women's 6km

From the gun it was clear the race was to be run hard and fast. The intense rivalry between Kenya and Ethiopia always leads to aggressive racing and this was to be no exception. The early stages saw the Ethiopians and Kenyans swapping the lead and maintaining a solid pace that caused a lead pack of around 15 to form. But coming into the third lap Kenya's Pauline Korikwang and Veronica Wanjiru pulled away, leaving two compatriots and an Ethiopian to fight it out for the bronze. In the end it was an exciting sprint for the gold with the two girls shoulder to shoulder right to the line. With but a few metres remaining Korikwang managed to seal half a stride and crossed the tape in celebration. Completing a clean sweep for Kenya was Mercy Kosgei.

The Australian contingent was lead home by Madeline Heiner who after a poor start managed to claw her way through the field to finish in 18th place. The other members of the junior women's team also ran solidly, showing things look good for the future of the sport.



Benita fights it out with Lornah Kiplagat and Melkamu Meselech down the final straight in the short course event.

Men's Short Course 4km

The short course event was always going to be the harder of the two races for Bekele to win, as there were several challengers in great form, including Australia's Craig Mottram. From the beginning the Kenyans made their race plans clear, pushing a fast pace from the front. Quickly a pack of about 20 formed, containing all the favourites. But with less than a kilometre completed there was a fall that saw one of Bekele's greatest threats, countryman Sileshi Sihine, fall when challenging for the lead. The intensity at the front meant the slightest mistake would cost you any chance of a medal, and although Sihine managed to quickly gain his feet, the pack had slipped away.

The first two kilometre lap was completed in a swift 5.26, with Mottram leading the field. His confidence was justified by his scintillating performance two weeks earlier at the Commonwealth Games, and the hopes of there being a non-African victor rested on his shoulders. Unfortunately for us his stint at the front was short lived, and he was swamped by the pack, pushing him outside the top ten. The lead was taken up by Ben Limo who forced a solid clip, but Bekele never looked unsettled and tucked in comfortably. With 400m metres to go Bekele surged to a small lead running up the last of the rises, and approaching the final straight only Isaac Songok of Kenya managed to stay in contact. With a short glimpse over his shoulder before the tape, Bekele crossed the line to win his 9th straight World Cross title, one second ahead of Songok and three seconds in front of a fast-finishing 1500m specialist, Adil Kaouch of Morocco.

Women's Short Course 4km

The wind blew at its strongest for the weekend

for the entirety of the race, making it a war of attrition for all those taking part. As expected there were no runaway winners from the gun, with the usual forming of a lead pack and a procession of athletes trailing behind for a kilometre. All the big names were present at the front of the field, with Australia's Benita Johnson well in contention for a medal. Coming into the second lap there was a sudden change of pace with Gelete Bati

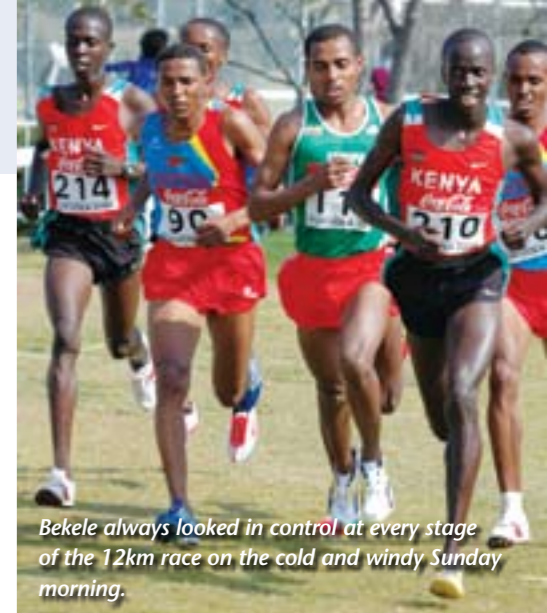
of Ethiopia and Priscah Jepletting of Kenya both making a move to skip away from the field. They gained an advantage of some 15 metres, but Bati was the stronger of the two and made a decisive move with 800m metres to go, getting 20 metres on her Kenyan rival and achieving what would eventually be an unassailable lead. Benita fought on strongly and although 6th she was

still in with a medal chance coming into the last 500m. The wind was at its most fierce down the last straight and Benita gritted her teeth, fighting to the line to finish a sensational 4th. What was even more remarkable was the performance of the rest of the Aussie girls, all of which ran out of their skins to give Australia its first ever team medal at the Championship, finishing 3rd behind Ethiopia and Kenya.

Men's Long Course 12km

There was little more that anyone could do to beat Bekele. From the outset the racing was intense, with a lead pack of all the favourites running strongly and jostling each other in an attempt to unsettle the rhythm of their rivals. The lead group was tightly packed and when the wind was blowing from behind they would spread out, but as it swung around and became a headwind, the pack would instantly tighten up again.

The first run for home was made by Eritrean Zersenay Tadesse, who made an attempt to break Bekele and the others with a mile to go. It was all in vain though as Bekele kicked strongly with 600m remaining, showing no fatigue from the short course race the day before. Countrymen Sileshi Sihine, who fell in the 4km event on the previous day, chased him all the way to the line, taking the silver, with Japan based Kenyan Martin Irungu Mathathi com-



Bekele always looked in control at every stage of the 12km race on the cold and windy Sunday morning.

ing home in third. The team title went to Kenya with Eritrea in second and Ethiopia third.

Post event Bekele stated he no longer desired to run the World Cross Country Championships, saying that he felt it was time he moved aside and let some of the younger Ethiopians come through. At 23 years of age it seems a strange and premature decision, especially considering that it's feasible he could win another 10 titles. Some sceptics are saying that he isn't keen on racing the Kenyans at home in next years World Cross, but this was scoffed at by Bekele when he aptly said that Kenya fields their strongest team possible at every championship and why should things be any different next year.

Women's Long Course 8km

Lornah Kiplagat hit the lead shortly after the first kilometre, and ran from the front for almost the entirety of the race. It was the only race of the weekend with a front running performance, with Kiplagat confident of breaking her opposition in the trying conditions. But defending long and short course champion, Tirunesh Dibaba of Ethiopia, was never more than 20m adrift and always looked composed in leading a chasing group of four Ethiopians and Australia's Benita Johnson. Benita always looked a medal chance and strode confidently, showing she had returned to the sort of form that saw her win in 2004.



In the absence of Mottram, Martin Dent led the Aussie assault in the long course race.

Coming into the final lap the pack behind Kiplagat was down to four, and the leader had a three second gap. Approaching the last hill Dibaba made her move, surging up the slope to bridge the gap, then rolling down the other side to quickly gain a 15m lead. Fighting all the way to the tape, Kiplagat was no match for the final sprint of Dibaba, who ran away with a five second victory. In third was Ethiopia's Meselech Melkamu, with Benita in fourth. **RAYL**

ROTTERDAM MARATHON - APRIL 9th, 2006

Kenyan Sammy Korir let his legs do the talking in the 26th edition of the Fortis Marathon in Rotterdam. Korir drew on his experience by choosing the perfect moment to set sail for home, once again proving why he is the second fastest marathon runner of all time as he went on to record the fastest time of the year. The Rotterdam course again proved to be one of the fastest in the world with ten athletes finishing within 2.11. The women's race was won by Mindaye Gishu of Ethiopia, who clocked 2.28.30. Finishing in second, Slovenian Helena Javornik, was the only other woman home within 2.5 hours (2.29.37).

Men's Race

A LARGE GROUP containing a big bunch of pacemakers set out at a very fast pace. The group was headed by Dutchman Koen Raymaekers who passed the 5km in 14.50 and 10km in 29.54. Raymaekers's work was done but the pace remained constant at three minutes per kilometre, with the race passing 15km in 45.01.

A group of 21 runners were still together at 15km, with a pack of Kenyans forming a small lead group after halfway. The group remained together until the last pacemaker left the course at 25km (1.15.17).

Korir began to increase the pace through 30km (1.30.00), with only three athletes managing to stay in close contact.

Ethiopian Birhanu fell off the pace shortly after, with the three Kenyans seeking to better the course record of 2.06.14, set by Felix Limo two years ago.

The Kenyans passed 40km in 1.59.55 and at that moment it was clear who was the strongest. Korir carefully chose his moment and accelerated away to win in 2.06.38.

Kirui finished strongly, crossing the line in sec-

RESULTS

Men			Women		
1. Sammy Korir	KEN	2.06.38	1. Mindaye Gishu	ETH	2.28.30
2. Paul Kiprop Kirui	KEN	2.06.44	2. Helena Javornik	SLO	2.29.37
3. Charles Kibiwott	KEN	2.06.52	3. Isabel Eizmendi	ESP	2.31.53
4. Dejene Birhanu	ETH	2.08.46	4. Susanne Ritter	GER	2.32.34
5. Jackson Koech	KEN	2.09.15	5. Tegla Loroupe	KEN	2.33.24
6. Salim Kipsang	KEN	2.09.26	6. Viktoria Klimina	RUS	2.34.23
7. Christopher Cheboiboch	KEN	2.09.41	7. Grazyna Syrek	POL	2.34.38
8. Thomas Kiplitan	KEN	2.10.05	8. Maria Abel	ESP	2.35.30
9. Mesefin Adimasu	ETH	2.10.45	9. Anne-Mette Aagaard	DEN	2.37.03
10. Kamiel Maase	NED	2.10.45	10. Kristyna Loonen	NED	2.43.14

ond place, outlasting a struggling Kibiwott who later complained of back pains.

Women's Race

A tightly packed group of four women featuring Ethiopia's Mindaye Gishu and Kenya's Tegla Loroupe held together during the first half of the race. The bunch reached the halfway point in a modest 1.13.25, before the lead group was reduced

to three athletes.

Once the world's fastest female marathoner, Loroupe struggled to maintain the pace, losing contact around the 30km mark. Gishu and Slovenia's Helena Javornik carried on together, passing 35kms in 2.02.48. However the Ethiopian started to break away, continuing on to take the win in 2.28.30. Javornik came home a little over a minute later for second, and the strong finishing Isabel Eizmendi took third place in 2.31.53. **RAYL**



The lead pack is a sea of Africans with eventual winner Sammy Korir (No. 1) looking in control.

Photos: Getty Images

LONDON MARATHON APRIL 23rd, 2006

It had been labeled the "race of the century", when the greatest marathon field ever assembled lined up for the 2006 Flora London Marathon. Despite the late withdrawal of world record holder Paul Tergat, the race didn't disappoint. In a classic stride for stride finish, Felix Limo out sprinted fellow Kenyan and 2005 champion Martin Lel in the last 200 metres to win the men's race. In the women's race, American Deena Kastor became the 8th woman to break 2 hours 20 minutes in a dominant display of solo running.

Men's Race

The race began at a brutal pace, being fought out at better than world record pace for much of the first 25km, but eventually it slowed in the final stages to become a tactical duel.

A dozen runners reached the 20km point in 59.20. This was more than 25 seconds faster than Paul Tergat was in reaching the equivalent point in his record setting run in the 2003 Berlin Marathon.

Tucked in nicely was Ethiopian legend Haile Gebreselassie, stuck between a set of pace makers which zipped through the halfway mark in 62.33.

However, once the pacesetters stepped off at 30km, the "mind game" began. The pace began to drop significantly, with mile splits no longer taking 4.45-4.48, but as slow as 5.07. In the space of a few miles the race had changed from a world record attempt to a kickers' race. However, the tell-tale signs of distress and fatigue had begun to creep in as gaps started to appear within the lead pack.

The pace quickened as Kenya's Rodger Rop, Martin Lel and Felix Limo surged down the slope at Tower Bridge. Suddenly Gebreselassie's distinctive distress signal went out as his right hand began to flap. He would play no further role in this race. The champion's task became one similar to most of the other 35,000 runners; as someone for whom survival and finishing was all that mattered.

Following the first surge downhill, there was a brief respite in the leaders' pace, but then Lel took charge going into the final 5km. Approaching the last, stiff climb out of the Blackfriars Underpass, it looked like he had made a decisive move. South African Hendrick Ramaala, a past winner of the New York City Marathon, tried to bridge the gap,



USA's Deena Kastor runs away with the Women's event.

RESULTS

Men		
1. Felix Limo	KEN	2.06.39
2. Martin Lel	KEN	2.06.41
3. Hendrick Ramaala	RSA	2.06.55
4. Khalid Khannouchi	USA	2.07.04
5. Stefano Baldini	ITA	2.07.22
6. Rogers Rop	KEN	2.07.34
7. Hicham Chatt	MAR	2.07.59
8. Jaouad Gharib	MAR	2.08.45
9. Haile Gebrselassie	ETH	2.09.05
10. Evans Rutto	KEN	2.09.35
Women		
1. Deena Kastor	USA	2.19.36
2. Lyudmila Petrova	RUS	2.21.29
3. Susan Chepkemei	KEN	2.21.46
4. Berhane Adere	ETH	2.21.52
5. Galina Bogomolova	RUS	2.21.58
6. Mara Yamauchi	GBR	2.25.13
7. Constantina Dita	ROM	2.27.51
8. Salina Kosgei	KEN	2.28.40
9. Margaret Okayo	KEN	2.29.16
10. Eri Hayakawa	JPN	2.31.41

but couldn't. Rop lost contact and started to drift back, but Limo steadily worked his way back to Lel. The 25th mile was run in 4.33, as these two eyeballed each other before their final effort.

The 2005 London winner (Lel) dueled with last year's Chicago champion (Limo) as they passed Big Ben. Again, Lel tried to get away, and seemed again to get a stride's advantage. But Limo, who has also won both Berlin and Rotterdam in the past, was far from done. As if it were a track race, he waited until he had turned the final bend and kicked one last time. Lel could not respond and the race was won.

In the end seven athletes managed to run under 2.08, with the great man Gebreselassie struggling to the finish in 9th place.

Women's Race

Deena Kastor had made her intentions clear well before the race. She wanted to run fast and was out

to break 2hr 20m. The 33 year old American had the assistance of two male pacemakers that shadowed her through the halfway mark in 69.48.

The only woman capable of staying with Kastor was Kenyan Susan Chepkemi. However she only managed to make it as far as 25km before Kastor was left to race the clock to the finish. Salin Kosgei also tried to stay with Kastor, and the 2002 Commonwealth Games champion fell off the pace at around 10km and was never able to get back on.

The American became the fourth fastest woman of all time in the prestigious event, crossing the finishing tape in 2.19.36, breaking her own American record in the process.

Russia's Lyudmila Petrova, having run more patiently than some, came through in the last two miles to snatch second place in 2.21.29, also a national record, from Kenya's Susan Chepkemei (2.21.46). **RAYL**