

With the European Track season finishing following another highly successful and competitive Golden League Series, World Cup and World Athletics Final, athlete interest is now heavily focused on the road.

BERLIN MARATHON 24TH SEPTEMBER, GERMANY

HAILE Gebrselassie won the 33rd Berlin Marathon, but he missed Paul Tergat's World Record once again over the difficult final stages. In warm conditions with temperatures climbing well over 20°C two hours into the race, the 33-year-old Ethiopian clocked 2.05.56, the fastest in the world this year. Gebrselassie also improved his personal best and national record of 2.06.20, set a year ago in Amsterdam, by 24 seconds.

Gebrselassie's win was the first Ethiopian victory in the history of the Berlin Marathon. And he was soon joined by Gete Wami in the women's, as the two provided an Ethiopian double. Wami won in a world class time of 2.21.34, an Ethiopian record as well. The previous Ethiopian standard of 2.21.52 was set in London earlier this year by Berhane Adere.

While Gebrselassie's strongest opponent, Sammy Korir (Kenya), dropped out of the race due to a hamstring injury, it didn't stop him from clocking the fastest marathon time of the year. Another Ethiopian, Gudisa Shentema Kudam, finished second in 2.10.43. Japanese Kurao Umeki took out third in 2.13.43.

Gebrselassie's big goal, the Marathon World Record, remained out of reach in his fourth marathon (not counting one race at the age of 15 in Addis Ababa). He completed the first half in 62.46 with the support of the pace makers, but at an inconsistent pace. With one pacemaker after another dropping off, only Kenyan James Kwambai remained until he ended his services at about the 28km point. At 30 and 35 km (1.29.06/1.43.37) it looked as if Gebrselassie could be successful in his quest, but between 35 and 40 km it appeared unlikely. This had been Tergat's strongest part in the race in 2003, while it was the weakest part for Gebrselassie. With seven kilometres to go, he had an advantage of 22 seconds on Tergat's record. However, by 40km this had turned into a 22-second deficit. For the 40th kilometre, he clocked 3.14.

In the women's race the battle between Kenya and Ethiopia was decided early on as well. Before the 20km mark, Gete Wami had already left behind Salina Kosgei. The Ethiopian reached the half-way mark in 70.22, 22 seconds ahead of Kosgei. The Kenyan continued to drop further back, and it was only at the very end that Wami began to show signs of exhaustion and let her pace drop.

Stopping the clock at 2.21.34, Wami finished almost 2 minutes ahead of Kosgei. Third place was taken by Polish runner Monic Drybulska in 2.30.12.



Above: Haile Gebrselassie and Gete Wami after winning the 2006 Berlin Marathon. Getty Images

GATESHEAD GREAT NORTH 3KM ROAD RACE 30TH SEPTEMBER, ENGLAND

Australia's Craig Mottram and Ethiopia's Meseret Defar capped their brilliant seasons by becoming the fastest ever over 3km on the roads, each beating the previous best by around seven seconds. Just two weeks after outkicking Kenenisa Bekele to the World Cup title in Athens, Mottram demonstrated his finishing speed again to beat Kenya's former world 5000m champion, Eliud Kipchoge, to the men's Newcastle/Gateshead Great North 3km Road Race title in 7.41.7. Defar notched up her third world best of the year with a runaway victory in the women's race, clocking 8.46.9.

The men's race was a two-man affair from the beginning as Kipchoge, who beat Mottram in this race last year, set off at the front, clearly aiming to run the legs off the Australian. But Mottram hung on to the Kenyan's heels as they went through 1km in 2.32 and the half-way point in 3.50, four seconds inside world best pace and seven in front of the chasing pack.

Mottram left it late, but when he kicked for the line, Kipchoge had no answer. Mottram's finishing time obliterated the 16-year-old world best of 7.49 set by Morocco's Brahim Boutayeb in Helsinki back in 1990; while Kipchoge, with 7.43.1, was also well inside the old mark. Spain's Ivan Hierro was third in 7.54.0.

There was little fun in Defar's effort, with the Ethiopian having to overcome crippling stomach cramps and the lack of any serious opposition to break the old world best of 8.53 set by Germany's Luminita Zaituc in 2001. She set off hard from the start, leaving Shobukhova, the World Indoor 3000m record holder and the rest of the international field in her wake. She completed the first lap of the two-lap course in 4.26, six seconds ahead of her closest challenger, and passed 2km in 5.54 with a lead of more than 100m.

She crashed through the finish line in 8.46.9, fall-

ing into the arms of her manager before sinking to the curbside clutching her abdomen. Shobukhova crossed the line in 9.07.9, with Eloise Wellings completing a good afternoon for Australians by finishing third in 9.11.1.

IAAF WORLD ROAD RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIPS 8TH OCTOBER, HUNGARY

Zersenay Tadesse, 2004 Olympic 10000m bronze medallist, secured his and Eritrea's first global title, just 13 seconds adrift of the World record for 20km. In doing so, he convincingly won the inaugural men's title at the IAAF World Road Running Championships.

Not much more than an hour after the women's 20km had been closed out in a World record, it looked like the men's event would finish in the

same manner, with a large pack of runners going through 5km in 14.05 – the precise pace required to match Haile Gebrselassie's existing World Record. The leader of the group of a dozen or more runners was Robert Kipchumba of Kenya, who was followed closely by all his compatriots. Such successful packing would eventually secure their country the overall team title.

At 10km (27.55) World Record hopes still seemed well deserved, with the leaders 6 seconds up on record schedule. But the early exotic pace of the second 5km loop been enough to finish off the medal hopes of all but four athletes. By halfway, Kipchumba and Tadesse had only Qatari Mubarak Hassan Shami, last year's World Half Marathon silver medallist, and Kenyan Wilson Kiprotich Kebenei as challengers in their fight for the gold medal.

Between 8 and 9km, Kipchumba and Tadesse had started to open up a significant margin over the other pair, an advantage which by 12km was up to 15 seconds. In the process, Tadesse was also trying his best to lose Kipchumba, and steadily more and more daylight appeared between the two leaders as the Eritreans move for gold became more obvious. While Kipchumba gamely kept up his pursuit, by 17km he was 21 seconds behind Tadesse and was slowing desperately.

But the early World Record bid had also taken its toll on Tadesse's legs, as two kilometres earlier (15km – 41.47) he had dropped two seconds below the speed necessary to improve on Gebrselassie's figures. Still, his victory was more than secure, and Eritrea was to win its first ever World Title in any major sport.

Tadesse's finishing time was 56.01, 40 seconds quicker than Kipchumba, who was himself solid in silver medal position by a huge margin. Kebenei didn't finish for the bronze medal until 57.21.

Behind the Kenyan team gold (2.51.18), Eritrea also had the delight of silver (2.53.19), while their



Lornah Kiplagat (L) and Constantina Tomescu (2nd from L) lead the women's race at the 2006 World Road Race. Getty Images

horn of Africa neighbours, Ethiopia, finished as bronze medallists.

In the women's event, Kenyan born Dutchwoman Lornah Kiplagat was pushed hard by Romania's Constantina Tomescu, the 2005 World Half Marathon Champion, but sped away in the final 2km to become the inaugural IAAF Women's Road Running Champion.

Running in the bright orange uniform of the

Netherlands, Kiplagat won her first World Title at the age of 32. She also notched up the World Record for the distance with her time of 1.03.21, shaving five seconds off the mark held by Britain's Paula Radcliffe since 2001.

Tomescu led a group of five runners away from the field immediately after the gun was fired for the start of the women's 20km. With her came Kiplagat, Japan's Kayoko Fukushi (World 15km record holder), and the Kenyans Edith Masai (three-time World Cross Country champion) and Boston marathon winner Rita Jeptoo.

The pace was scorching and the leaders passed through 5km in 15.34, 27 seconds inside Radcliffe's World Record pace. At 10km (31.11) it was down to a race of three, Kiplagat, Jeptoo and Tomescu.

There were to be no further changes to the race order until, with 37 minutes gone, one brief glance behind and Kiplagat was away with a surge of pace that only Tomescu was strong enough to follow. Jeptoo was the fallout, and the tightly packed leading trio was suddenly a pair.

Five minutes later at around the 14km mark, as the two leaders headed into the most shaded part of the 5km forest-lined loop course, the Dutchwoman took another look behind, grabbed her trademark yellow sunglasses off her nose and threw them purposely into trees. The move appeared to give Kiplagat strength. But Tomescu remained persistent, and as the two went through 15km (47.10), they were now 'only' 34 seconds ahead of World Record schedule.

However, there was distinctly only one women's >>>



... and the men are off and racing in the 2006 World Road Race Championship. Getty Images

BERLIN MARATHON

MEN		
1. Haile Gebrselassie	ETH	2:05.56 WL
2. Gudisa Shentema	ETH	2:10.43
3. Kurao Umeki	JPN	2:13.43
4. Terefe Yae	ETH	2:15.05
5. Ahmed Ezzobayry	FRA	2:15.29
6. Driss El Himer	FRA	2:16.44
7. Ombèche Mokamba	KEN	2:17.34
8. Jackson Koeh	KEN	2:17.42
WOMEN		
1. Gete Wami	ETH	2:21.34
2. Salina Kosgei	ETH	2:23.22
3. Monica Drybulska	POL	2:30.12
4. Asha Gigi	ETH	2:32.32
5. Marcia Narlock	BRA	2:35.28
6. Melanie Kraus	GER	2:35.37
7. Shitaye Gemechu	ETH	2:35.56
8. Adanech Zekiros	ETH	2:36.48

GATESHEAD GREAT NORTH 3KM ROAD RACE		
MEN		
1. Craig Mottram	AUS	7:41.7
2. Eliud Kipchoge	KEN	7:43.1
3. Ivan Hierro	SPA	7:54.0
WOMEN		
1. Meseret Defar	ETH	8:46.9
2. Liliya Shobukhova	RUS	9:07.9
3. Eloise Wellings	AUS	9:11.1

IAAF WORLD ROAD RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIPS

MEN		
1. Tadesse Zersenay	ERI	56.01
2. Robert Kipchumba	KEN	56.41
3. Wilson Kiprotich	KEN	57.15
4. Wilson Busienei	UGA	57.21
5. Wilfred Taragon	KEN	57.22
6. Deriba Ejigu Merga	ETH	57.27
7. Tadesse Woldegebrsel	ETH	57.27
8. Mubarak Hassan Shami	QAT	57.33
9. Dieudonne Disi	RWA	57.42
10. Yonas Kiffie	ERI	57.49
WOMEN		
1. Lonarh Kiplagat	NED	1:03.21 WR
2. Constantina Tomescu	ROM	1:03.23
3. Rita Jeptoo	KEN	1:03.47
4. Dure Tune Arissi	ETH	1:05.16
5. Edith Masai	KEN	1:05.21
6. Kayoko Fukushi	JPN	1:05.32
7. Yurika Nakamura	JPN	1:05.36
8. Nataliya Berkut	UKR	1:05.42
9. Souas Ait Salem	ALG	1:06.11
10. Teyba Wako	ETH	1:06.15

CHICAGO MARATHON

MEN		
1. Robert Cheruiyot	KEN	2:07.35
2. Daniel Njenga	KEN	2:07.40
3. Jimmy Muindi	KEN	2:07.51
4. Abdi Abdirahman	USA	2:08.56
5. Robert Cheboror	KEN	2:09.25
6. Brian Sell	USA	2:10.47
7. Japhet Kosgei	KEN	2:11.37
8. Ben Maiyo	KEN	2:11.53
9. Dejene Berhaun	ETH	2:12.27
10. Meshack Kosgei Kirwa	KEN	2:12.31
WOMEN		
1. Berhane Adere	ETH	2:20.42 NR
2. Galina Bogomolova	RUS	2:20.47 NR
3. Benita Johnson	AUS	2:22.36 NR
4. Madai Perez	MEX	2:22.59 NR
5. Constantina Tomescu-Dita	ROM	2:24.25
6. Nuta Olaru	ROM	2:25.37
7. Hiromi Ominami	JPN	2:26.04
8. Ludmila Petrova	RUS	2:27.08
9. Kathy Butler	GBR	2:28.39
10. Dulce Maria Rodriguez	MEX	2:28.54



Benita Johnson charged to a new Australian marathon record. Image by Viktah Sailer



// The top four finishers in the women's race all set national records on a day that was not conducive to fast times. One of these was our very own Benita Johnson, who captured the 20 year old Australian marathon record, previously held by Lisa Ondeiki. //

>> World Record breaker today, as in the last 5km the 32-year-old Kiplagat, a former Osaka, Amsterdam and Rotterdam Marathon winner, gradually got the better of Tomescu to seal the gold medal, the US\$30,000 prize for first place, and the World Record with a time of 1:03.21.

For the Kenyans, who packed well with Jeptoo (3rd), Masai (5th) and Eunice Kepporir (14th), there was team gold (3:15.55) and a US\$15,000 prize. Ethiopia were second home (3:18.50), with Dire Tune Arissi as their best runner in fourth place, and Japan were the bronze medallists (3:19.00), their trio led home by Kayoko Fukushi in 6th.

CHICAGO MARATHON
22ND OCTOBER, USA

The women certainly outshone the men in the 2006 LaSalle Bank Chicago Marathon. On a day not conducive to fast times, the top four finishers in the women's race all set national records. However, this year's event will be remembered not for the records set by the women, but for the tumble by men's champion, Robert Cheruiyot of Kenya, across the finish line.

While raising his arms in victory after outrunning countryman Daniel Njenga, Cheruiyot slipped on the sponsor logo glued in front of the chip timing mat and slid across the finish line. In a frightening scene, Cheruiyot's head hit the ground first, and he didn't move for several seconds as people rushed to his aid. More importantly for Cheruiyot, however, was the fact that his torso landed over the finish line, allowing him to be officially recorded as the winner with a time of 2:07.38.

During the last 800 metres of the race Njenga tried several times to get past Cheruiyot, but could get no closer than running almost side-by-side with his taller rival.

Coming down the final straight 400 metres from the finish, Njenga, running on Cheruiyot's shoulder, appeared to gather himself for an all-out sprint. His

>> arms were pumping, his face reflecting the effort: Njenga appeared ready to surge past Cheruiyot. But Cheruiyot looked over at Njenga, found something more in reserve, and accelerated again to leave Njenga in his wake. It was a bitter defeat for Njenga, who had finished either second or third in his four previous runs in Chicago.

In the women's event, Ethiopia's Berhane Adere won a dual with Russia's Galina Bogomolova to win the women's division by five seconds in a time of 2:20.42.

Romania's Constantina Tomescu-Dita had indicated before the race that she wanted to run a sub 2.20. She set out to execute that plan, running with a group of men. Tomescu-Dita covered the first 15km in 48.14 - 3.12 per kilometre, not far off Paula Radcliff's World Record pace. She was through half way in 1:08.07 and had a 2 min 8 sec lead over the chase pack, which included Bogomolova, Adere, third-place finisher Benita Johnson of Australia, Japan's Hiromi Ominami, Russia's Lyudmila Petrova, and fourth-place finisher Madai Perez Carrillo of Mexico.

No longer running with the men, Tomescu-Dita now found herself alone and feeling the effects of cold weather (4°C at the start) and the gusty winds. The chasing pack behind her gradually became smaller, but so did the gap between them. By 30km, Adere and Bogomolova were the only remaining competitors in the chase group, and they were 1.42 behind Tomescu-Dita. At 35km that gap had narrowed to 50 seconds, and more importantly the pair could finally see the Romanian in front of them. Just past the 23 mile mark, the duo swept past her, and Tomescu-Dita was unable to respond. Fearing Adere's finishing speed, Bogomolova did everything she could to attempt to break away, but to no avail.

The top four finishers in the women's race all set national records on a day that was not conducive to fast times. One of these was our very own Benita Johnson, who captured the 20 year old Australian marathon record, previously held by Lisa Ondeiki.

In the World Marathon Majors standings, Cheruiyot took over the top place after completing a rare Boston/Chicago double. Adere also jumped to the top of the standings in the WMM women's standings. The leader at the end of 2007 runs away with a \$500,000 first prize.



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