

Kenya, Iowa rule road

African men dominate; Iowan sets women's record

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The Kenyan running machine swept into Des Moines on Sunday morning.

Runners from the African country dominated both the Des Moines Marathon and half-marathon men's races at Nollen Plaza. Jared Nyamboki beat fellow Kenyan George Towett to win the fifth running of the 26.2-mile race in 2:23:26. Towett ran 2:25:32. Moses Waweru won the men's half-marathon in 1:08.20.

Robyn Friedman of Lambs Grove, Ia., won the women's race in 2:42.19. Both marathon winners won \$1,000.

"I felt strong ... I am happy about it," said Nyamboki, who topped a field of 24,000 at the Army Ten-Miler in Washington, D.C., last Sunday. "For sure I run well in the cold."

The marathon winners were also awarded course records regardless of their time. Friedman earned hers.

The former Wartburg College standout capped a stellar 2006 season by smashing the former mark of 2:47.01 set by Christy Nielsen in 2004.

"My big goal was to qualify for the (U.S. Olympic) Trials and I got that," said Friedman, who was running her first marathon since the birth of her 15-month-old son Leo. "I've never won a marathon before. It's pretty cool."

A record 3,500 participants competed in the marathon, half-marathon, 5K, relay challenge and kids fun run.

"I don't know where the weather came from," race director Chris Burch said of the strong wind. "I'm extremely happy the way things are going. We spent a lot of energy attracting an elite field."

The race committee's work paid off.

Nyamboki and Towett, who run for Foot Solutions, train nearly every day together in Marietta, Ga. The runner who has the edge "depends on which side of the bed you wake up," Nyamboki said.

Nyamboki, whose previous marathon best was 2:25.30 at Green Bay, Wis., in May, pulled away from Towett near the end of a hilly stretch at five miles. Nyamboki said he slowed his pace in the final four miles when victory was assured.

"I tried to follow him, but he was too far away," Towett said. "It was too cold for me."

Friedman won the Drake Relays half-marathon in 1:21.09. She followed that performance by placing third at the 20-kilometer Dam to Dam in June and winning the 10-mile Capital Pursuit last month.

"It's a neat capper to my season," Friedman said.

"You are on fire," runner-up Melinda Courage-Carlberg yelled to Friedman.

Friedman never trailed after the first mile and slowly built a lead of a quarter-mile by the time she entered Drake Stadium near the 10-mile mark.

The only glitch was when her support bicyclist suffered a flat tire at mile 17.

"That was the loneliest part at Water Works Park," Friedman said.

Courage-Carlberg, who finished in 2:54:02, resumed competitive running in May 2005 after a 10-year break.



DAVID PETERSON/THE REGISTER
— Men's winner Jared Nyamboki

"I'm not real happy with my time, but I can't complain," Courage-Carlberg said.

Waweru was expected to challenge Nyamboki and Towett in the marathon. The Kenyan from Hastings, Minn., became ill and called Burch at 6:30 Sunday morning to tell him he might not run.

"He had 24-hour flu-like symptoms," Burch said. "We gave him a couple ibuprofen and he won the race."

Lisa Marshall, who suffered a stress fracture in her leg in April, won the women's half-marathon in 1:21.19.

"I was ecstatic," said the former Iowa State runner. "Injuries are getting more frequent as I get older."

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