



Ethiopian double again at the TSK25K as Birhanu Legese and Dibaba Kuma take the titles in Kolkata

16 December 2018: The Tata Steel Kolkata 25K saw Ethiopian runners dominate again in the City of Joy with Birhanu Legese and Dibaba Kuma taking the titles on Sunday 16 December, the second year running that athletes from the East African country had done the double.

In contrast to 2017, the first year the race incorporated an international elite field, both the men's and women's races quickly turned into enthralling tactical affairs

Without pacemakers, a large group that included several of the Indian elite runner went through 5km in a relatively sedate 15:37 with Uganda's Robert Chemonges and Tanzania's Augustino Sulle doing most of the work at the front in the early stages of the race.

The pace increased slightly over the next five kilometres but a group of nine were still together as 10km was reached in 30:35; and then slowed again as 15km was passed 45:57, allowing the leading group to increase to 11.

The next five kilometres saw just three men shaken off with the 20km split reading 1:01:04. However, if the winning time was now never going to match Kenenisa Bekele's course record of 1:13:48 from 12 months ago, it did ensure a thrilling finish and that's what the thousands lining the route of the world's only IAAF Label Road Race over 25km were able to witness.

With two kilometres remaining, the two-time Airtel Delhi Half Marathon winner Legese put in a surge which splintered the leading group. His teenage compatriot Bayelign Yegsaw was the only man to follow closely as the rest struggled to stay with the leading pair.

One-by-one the remaining runners dropped away before Legese found another gear over the final 400 metres to fend off Yegsaw, who doesn't turn 19 until next February and will possibly start as the favourite for the IAAF World Cross Country Championships U20 title next March.

Legese clocked 1:15:48 – exactly two minutes slower than Bekele clocked in 2017 – with Yegsaw one second in arrears in 1:15:49 and Amos Kipruto winning an all-Kenyan battle for the remaining place on the podium as he just edged out Eric Kiptanui, both men given the same time of 1:15:52.

"Indian races seem to be good for me," said Legese. "I haven't always won but I have nearly always run well. Today wasn't a fast race because nobody wanted to take the pace in the first half of the race but that suited me."

The women's race unfolded in very similar fashion with a large group going through 5km in 18:27 before ten runners remained at the front together, going through 10km in 36:09 as no one had been prepared to push the pace particularly hard.

The same 10 were still together as 15km was reached in 54:29 with the pre-race favourite and defending champion Degitu Azimeraw content to sit back in the middle of pack and let others keep the pace ticking over at the front.

Eight runners were still in contention at 20km, which was passed in 1:11:21 before Kuma and her little-known Ethiopian compatriot Ftaw Zeray started to push hard with two kilometres to go.

Immediately the pack broke up before Azimeraw and Tanzania's Failuna Matanga briefly re-joined them. However, the quartet became a duo once again as the last kilometre approached and then Kuma – who clearly had recovered quickly from clocking 2:23:34 on her marathon debut when finishing third in the Ljubljana Marathon just seven weeks ago – eased away to win over the final few hundred metres.

Kuma passed the line in 1:27:34 with Zeray four seconds behind in 1:27:38 and Matanga third again, like in 2017, in 1:27:45. Azimeraw had her first below-par outing of the year and had to settle for fourth place in 1:27:54 but it should be remembered that the talented teenager is still only 19.

"I just rested for a week after my marathon and then started preparing for this race. I didn't really change my training from what I was doing for the marathon," said Kuma nonchalantly after taking the US\$7500 first prize.

Leading results

Men

1. Birhanu Legese (ETH)	1:15:48
2. Bayelign Yegsaw (ETH)	1:15:49
4. Amos Kipruto (TAN)	1:15:52
3. Eric Kiptanui (KEN)	1:15:52
5. Robert Chemonges (UGA)	1:16:01
6. Augustino Sulle (TAN)	1:16:08
7. Fentahun Hunegnaw (ETH)	1:16:21
8. Samson Gebreyohannes (ERI)	1:16:36
9. Avinesh Sable (IND)	1:17:11
10 Nathan Ayeko (UGA)	1:17:13

Women

1. Dibaba Kuma (ETH)	1:27:34
2. Ftaw Zeray (ETH)	1:27:38
3. Failuna Matanga (TAN)	1:27:45
4. Degitu Azimeraw (ETH)	1:27:54
5. Florence Kiplagat (KEN)	1:27:57
6. Linet Toroitich (UGA)	1:28:11
7 Loganathan Suriya (IND)	1:28:29
8. Sudha Singh (IND)	1:29:11
9. Hawi Megersa (ETH)	1:29:18
10. Parul Chaudry (IND)	1:30:18

For more information about the Tata Steel Kolkata 25K, the event website is: <http://tsk25.procamlrunning.in>

Other links:

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/TSKolkata25/>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/TSK25K>

Instagram: <http://www.instagram.com/tskolkata25>

Media contact: Neha Kandalgaonkar (Head – Media & Public Relations, Procam International) neha@procaml.in

Tel: +91 22 2202 0284 / **Fax:** +91 22 2202 5112 / **Mob:** +91 9892194965

The attached images are free-to-use for editorial purposes and have unrestricted media rights but please credit Procam International.