

ATHLETES TO WATCH FOR IN THE ATHLETICS CANADA MARATHON TRIALS

There is much at stake for Canadian marathoners with Olympic aspirations at this year's Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon. Not only is this IAAF Gold Label race the official Athletics Canada National Championship, but the 2019 version is also the Marathon Trials selection race for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

The IAAF has set Olympic qualifying standards of 2:11:30 and 2:29:30 for men and women respectively and a quota of 80 athletes for each of the Tokyo Olympic marathon races. But athletes can also earn points by placing in their national championship/trials and at IAAF Gold Label races such as Toronto Waterfront. The 2019 Canadian champions crowned will get automatic pre-selection if they have the time standard. The importance of this event cannot be overstated.

The result is an unprecedented list of Canadian athletes.

MEN

CAMERON LEVINS 30

Black Creek, B.C.

PB 2:09:25 Toronto Waterfront 2018

Levins made his marathon debut in dramatic fashion a year ago at Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront comfortably beating Jerome Drayton's national record (2:10:08) with his 2:09:25. That record had stood for 43 years. Injury forced him out of London this spring and other results have been below his usually top-class standard. Nevertheless, when he is on form, he is a world-class talent and widely revered by fellow competitors. More than one of his Canadian competitors have admitted they are running for Canadian silver here. Though he and his wife live in Portland, Oregon he has been spending months at a time with his Southern Utah University coach Eric Houle in Cedar City, Utah. He represented Canada at the 2012 Olympics (5000m, 10,000m) and it would be a shock if he didn't become a two-time Olympian.

REID COOLSAET 40

Hamilton, Ontario

PB 2:10:28 Berlin 2015

Coolsaet has been Canada's most consistent marathoner of the 21st century representing Canada at both the 2012 London (27th) and 2016 Rio Olympics (23rd). He has run under 2:11 twice and sub 2:12 a total of five times. His personal best makes him the 3rd fastest Canadian ever. Despite his age he cracked the top ten at the 2018 Boston Marathon (9th place) a race where weather conditions were demanding. He believes he has a good chance of being among the top three Canadians in Toronto and can run fast enough to earn a place in Tokyo 2020. That would make him a three time Olympian.

DYLAN WYKES 36

Kingston, Ontario

PB: 2:10:47 Rotterdam 2012

Wykes was Canada's top finisher at the 2012 Olympics (20th in 2:15:26) having made the Olympic standard at the eleventh hour running a personal best 2:10:47 in Rotterdam. That was

six weeks after he failed to finish the Lake Biwa Marathon in Japan. Chasing the Olympic standard wore him out both physically and mentally and semi-retirement followed. But a renewed enthusiasm has seen him return to a possible 2020 Olympic berth. Though he and his wife and children moved to Ottawa recently - wife Francine is a tenure track professor at Carleton University - he is still coached by Richard Lee of the BC Endurance Project. In May he won the Canadian 10k title and three weeks later finished 4th in the Canadian Half-Marathon Championships. With solid results like that, an Olympic place is in the back of his mind.

TRISTAN WOODFINE 25

Cobden, Ontario

PB: 2:15:19 Houston 2019

In January, Woodfine took more than three and a half minutes off his personal best to finish 13th in Houston in 2:15:19. A graduate of the Ontario College of Health and Technology he has put a career as a paramedic on hold to focus on marathon running. He does some woodworking with his father to help pay the bills. Following Houston, he focused on regaining speed. He won the Race Roster Spring Run Off 8km in April and then in June won the Canadian Half-Marathon title in Winnipeg (1:04:46). Unlike many of his competitors he does most of his training alone. He is confident of being in the mix.

EVAN ESSELINK 27

Courtice, Ontario

Debut

Esselink moved to Vancouver a year ago to train with coach Richard Lee at the BC Endurance Project and since then his fortunes have improved considerably. He announced his marathon potential by running the Houston Half-Marathon in 62:17 in January 2019. That makes him the 4th fastest Canadian ever at the distance. More recently he won the Vancouver Eastside 10k in 29:50 despite being in the middle of his marathon buildup. He is coy about what time he hopes to run in Toronto but is confident he will make the Canadian Olympic team.

RORY LINKLETTER 23

Herriman, Utah

Debut

Linkletter will also be making his marathon debut at Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon. In fact, he has never run a competitive half marathon either. After graduating this year from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah where he ran 10,000m in 28:12.42 he signed on with Hoka One One Northern Arizona Elite. That required a move to Flagstaff, Arizona. He finished 6th in the 2019 Pan Am Games 10,000m. He also wore the maple leaf at the IAAF World Cross Country Championships in Kampala (2017 and in Aarhus, Denmark (2019). Linkletter was born in Calgary but moved to Utah as a child when his parents split up. Still, he returned each year to visit his father. He's a high mileage guy who trained with 2016 Olympic marathon 6th place finisher Jared Ward in Utah. Hence, the marathon distance doesn't frighten him.

TREVOR HOFBAUER 27

Calgary, Alberta

2:16:48 Hamburg 2019

Hofbauer won the 2017 Canadian Championship in Toronto with his 2:18:06 debut famously celebrating with the crowd as he made his way along the finish straight. After training with the

Speed River Track Club in Guelph through his buildup to that 2017 Canadian title he decided he missed home and so returned to Calgary. In April of this year he lowered his best to 2:16:48 in Hamburg. His buildup has obviously been going well - he was 2nd at the Vancouver Eastside 10k in 29:58 on September 14th despite having marathon training in his legs.

WOMEN

KINSEY MIDDLETON 26

Boise, Idaho

PB 2:32:09 Toronto 2018

Middleton was crowned 2018 Canadian Champion by virtue of her performance at last year's Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront race. That was her debut (2:32:09). She lives in Boise, Idaho but has dual US/Canadian citizenship as her mother is Canadian. Along with US marathon champion Emma Bates, she formed the Idaho Distance Project a year and a half ago. The club is coached by Kameron Ulmer, Bates's partner. She regularly approaches 200k per week in training. Her enthusiasm has seen her run a personal best 10k of 32:46 for second in the Vancouver Sun Run this year, behind Olympian Natasha Wodak, and second also in the Vancouver Eastside 10k. In her spare time, she and her husband care for their very large St Bernard puppy, Hank.

MALINDI ELMORE 39

Kelowna, B.C.

PB 2:32:17 Houston 2019

A former 1,500m runner - her 4:02.64 PB ranks her sixth fastest Canadian - she represented Canada at the 2004 Olympics in Athens. After she failed to make the 2012 Olympic team, she became somewhat disillusioned and retired from competitive athletics, though remaining active in triathlon. Then last year, just six months after giving birth to her second son, Elmore decided to run a marathon for the first time. She and husband/coach Graham Hood (1992, 1996 1500m Olympian) chose Houston where she finished 7th in 2:32:17, just 8 seconds slower than Kinsey Middleton's debut at Toronto Waterfront. Now 39, she sees a return to the Olympics as very possible in the marathon. Malindi is also Senior Middle-and-Long-Distance Coach in the Okanagan Athletics Club.

LESLIE SEXTON 32

London, Ontario

PB 2:31:51 Prague 2019

Sexton was the 2017 Canadian Marathon Champion (2:35:47). Despite suffering from allergies this spring, she still ran a cracking personal best of 2:31:51 in Prague. A sub 2:30 is on her mind and she hopes that will come at Toronto Waterfront. Known for covering over 200k per week during her marathon buildup she still managed to finish 3rd at the Vancouver Eastside 10k last month. Along with coach Steve Weiler, she plans a move to Kingston to coach at Queen's University following Toronto Waterfront. At home Leslie is a huge Star Wars fan.

DAYNA PIDHORESKY 32

Vancouver, B.C.

PB 2:36:08 Ottawa 2017

Though she is Ontario born, Pidhoresky has been living in Vancouver for six years now. Injuries, including a sacral fracture in 2016, have limited her progress but her fortunes are again on the rise. Earlier this year she ran 1:12:59 at the Houston Marathon, not far off the personal best she ran in Edmonton a year ago (1:12:38). She also won the 2019 BMO Vancouver Half-Marathon in May with 1:13:07. That was during her buildup for the Ottawa Marathon. She ran 2:37:19 for 6th place in Ottawa in less than ideal conditions. At the 2019 Canadian Half Marathon Championships (June 16th) she claimed the silver medal.

TARAH KORIR 32

St. Clement, Ontario

PB 2:35:46 Ottawa 2016

Selected to represent Canada at the 2016 IAAF World Half-Marathon Championships in Cardiff she ran a personal best of 1:12:04 for 23rd place there. Later that spring she ran her personal best marathon in Ottawa (2:35:46). In 2017 she earned a spot on the Canadian team for the IAAF World Championships in London where she finished 51st in the marathon. Tarah (nee McKay) is married to Kenyan runner Wesley Korir (2012 Boston Champion) and the couple have three children. Benjamin was born in June 2018. Wesley was also a Member of Kenya's Parliament for Cherengeny. Together they run the Kenyan Kids Foundation which seeks to provide education and sports opportunities for Kenyan children.