

2019 SCOTIABANK TORONTO WATERFRONT MARATHON TEN INTERNATIONAL RUNNERS TO WATCH

MEN

PHILEMON RONO 28 KENYA

PB 2:06:52 Toronto Waterfront 2017

A two-time winner of the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon 'Baby Police' as he is nicknamed, also set the Canadian All-Comers' record of 2:06:52 here in 2017. He struggled in his attempt to become three-time champion last year. A calf injury resurfaced during the race. But he has rebounded this year finishing 6th at the Boston Marathon this past April with a time of 2:08:57, a minute behind the winner. Training with a group headed by coach Patrick Sang and world marathon record holder Eliud Kipchoge, preparations have gone well for Toronto Waterfront. Earning that third victory remains his focus.

BENSON KIPRUTO 28 KENYA

PB 2:07:11 Seoul 2018

Kipruto is the defending Toronto Waterfront champion (2:07:24) and one of the more consistent marathoners on the circuit. Three times he has run in the 2:07 to 2:08 range with a 2:07:11 remaining his personal best from Seoul last year. He also ran 2:07:21 at the 2017 Gongju Dong-A Marathon in Korea. With his earnings he has been building rental accommodation in Kenya as a business investment for when he retires from running. This Barcelona FC fan has set a target of beating his personal best and defending his Toronto title.

LEMI BERHANU HAYLE 25 ETHIOPIA

PB 2:04:33 Dubai 2016

One of the most talented runners to grace Toronto Waterfront he is the 2016 Boston Marathon champion. He won the 2015 Dubai Marathon in 2:05:28, then a year later finished second in Dubai in a personal best 2:04:33. The Ethiopian Federation chose him for their 2016 Rio Olympic team where, despite an injury, he finished 13th. This is his first time in Canada, but he has familiarized himself with Toronto Waterfront. He says he watches the live streaming of the race every year. His most recent victory was the Henghsui Lake Marathon in China in September 2018. He ran 2:08:51 there.

ABERA KUMA 28 ETHIOPIA

PB 2:05:50 Rotterdam 2018

Abera Kuma travels to Toronto with his sister Dibaba Kuma knowing that in its 30 years history Toronto Waterfront has never had a brother sister combination reach the podium. He is certainly up to the task with a personal best of 2:05:50 from last year's Rotterdam Marathon where he was second. On May 26 he was second at the Scotiabank Ottawa Marathon. A third-place finish at the 2014 Berlin Marathon in 2:05:56 also bears noting. Kuma comes from a strong track background having twice represented Ethiopia at the IAAF World Championships (5th in the 5,000m at Daegu 2011 and 5th in the 10,000m at Moscow 2013). In 2013 he ran 26:52.85 for 10000m which was the second fastest time in the world that year.

FELIX CHEMONGES 23 UGANDA

PB 2:09:19 Linz (Austria) 2019

Part of the new wave of talented Ugandan distance runners, Chemonges made his debut at the 2018 Beirut Marathon where he achieved 2:11:57 on what is not considered a fast course. Since then he finished second at the Linz marathon in 2:09:19. That was in April, By June he had improved his half marathon personal best racing to a 61:03 clocking in Zwolle (Netherlands) again finishing second. Toronto Waterfront marks his first time in North America. He has represented his country overseas previously. He was selected by the Ugandan Athletics Federation for the 2018 IAAF World Half Marathon Championships where he finished 26th four places ahead of Canada's Cam Levins. Among his training partners in Kapchorwa, Uganda (elevation 2,000m) is Joshua Cheptegei the recently crowned world 10000m champion.

WOMEN**BEKELECH GUDETA 22 ETHIOPIA**

PB 1:07:03 Copenhagen Half Marathon 2018

Toronto Waterfront will mark this young Ethiopian's marathon debut though she is hardly frightened at the prospect. Twice she has run the half marathon distance well under 1:08 at Copenhagen - an IAAF Gold Label race - and was 8th in the 2018 IAAF World Half Marathon Championships in Valencia. She and her coach Dawit Hiluf believe she can run very fast in her debut and have boldly set Mimi Belete's course record of 2:22:29 as a target. Her most recent Copenhagen appearance netted her a time of 1:07:21 just 18 seconds off her best. This was accomplished despite the fact she has been piling on the miles in preparation for Toronto. She points to Kenya's Mary Keitany and her fellow Ethiopian Tirunesh Dibaba as role models for her career.

DIBABE KUMA 23 ETHIOPIA

PB 2:23:34 Ljubljana (Slovakia)

Dibabe set her personal best of 2:23:34 last October when she finished third at the Ljubljana (Slovakia) Marathon. More recently her victory at Hamburg April 28th (2:24:42) has given her reason for optimism. Earlier this year she ran a personal best half marathon time of 1:06:45 to finish second at the Barcelona Half Marathon. She is delighted to be travelling to Toronto with her elder brother, Abera Kuma whose experience in travel and competition is invaluable. She expects to run a new personal best in Toronto Waterfront.

MAGDALYNE MASAI-ROBERTSON 25 KENYA

PB 2:26:02 Hamburg 2019

Her second-place finish at the 2019 Hamburg Marathon earned her a personal best of 2:26:02 but she is confident she can run much faster. Most recently and in her build-up for Toronto Waterfront she finished 2nd at the Great North Run Half Marathon in South Shields, UK in a time of 1:07:36 a good indication training has been going well. And she didn't have to go far for information on Toronto Waterfront: her husband Jake Robertson was 5th in last year's race in 2:09:52. Magdalyne or "Magz" as she likes to be called, is the younger sister of Linet Masai (2008 Olympic 10000m bronze medalist), Moses Masai (2009 World Championship 10000m bronze medalist) and Dennis Masai (2010 World Junior 10000m Champion).

RUTH CHEBITOK 28 KENYA

PB 2:23:29 Toronto Waterfront 2018

Chebitok finished third in Toronto Waterfront last year with a personal best of 2:23:29. Her performance capped off a brilliant 2018 as she won the Gold Coast Marathon in Australia - the first Kenyan woman to win that acclaimed race - in a course record 2:24:49 as well as the Barcelona Marathon in 2:25:49. This year she recorded a personal best half marathon time of 1:09:06 finishing 3rd in the Goteborg (Sweden) Half Marathon. In her only marathon of 2019, she claimed 10th in the Tokyo Marathon, March 3rd

BIRUKTAYIT DEGEFA ESHETU 29 ETHIOPIA

PB 2:23:28 Houston 2019

Biruktayit is a three-time winner of the Houston Marathon recording her personal best (2:23:28) this past January. From there she earned a 9th place finish at the 2019 Boston Marathon. She spends much time in Albuquerque, New Mexico with her husband an Ethiopian-American, whom she met at the 2015 Houston Marathon. He was a volunteer at a community dinner held on race weekend. Among her training partners is Shure Demise who won Toronto Waterfront in 2015 and 2016. Winning Toronto is her main goal.