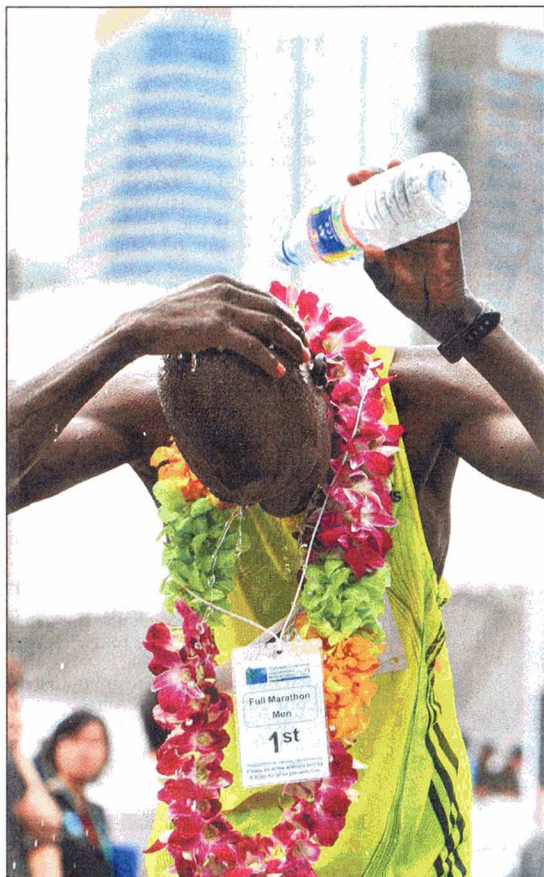


STANDARD CHARTERED SINGAPORE MARATHON

# KIBET WINS IN STYLE

Kenyan breaks his own race record in cool conditions



Kenyan Luke Kibet cooling down after winning the Singapore Marathon yesterday. He clocked 2hr 11min 25sec, breaking his own record of 2:13:01 which he had set last year. ST PHOTOS: NG SOR LUAN

BY WANG MENG MENG

THESE days, it is not good enough to have five gears. As Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon Men's Open winner Luke Kibet showed, one needs an extra sixth gear to help one accelerate past challengers and set new records.

The Kenyan breached the tape yesterday in a new record of 2hr 11min 25sec, breaking his own record of 2:13:01 which he had set last year.

But with cool and cloudy conditions yesterday morning, the rest of the pack kept pace with the 36-year-old until the very end. In fact, the top four men's runners (Kibet, Johnstone Chepkwony, Vincent Krop and John Kelai) all broke last year's record. All are Kenyans.

At the halfway mark, Kibet's time of 1:05:25 would have won him the half-marathon, which was clinched by compatriot Richard Mutua Mutisy (1:11:24).

When he made it past the 32km mark, there were still five other challengers stalking him.

Still, Kibet, who had struggled since March with an Achilles tendon injury, never waved the white flag.

By the time he was at Anderson Bridge and with last year's runner-up Chepkwony lurking over his shoulder, the defending champion made his move, upping his pace. He eventually beat his compatriot by eight seconds to take home the US\$35,000 (S\$48,600) cash booty.

Sporting a wide smile after the race, the soft-spoken Kibet said: "I was feeling the injury in my Achilles. And Johnstone's a strong guy."

"But I've come to Singapore to win. And I'm good at finishing. Towards the end, I have the extra energy to sprint to the finishing line. Also, it is less humid this year, making it possible to run faster. "Now that I've won it two years in a row, I want to return next year to complete my hat-trick."

In the women's category, the Russians dominated the rostrum with Albina Mayorova Ivanova striking gold in 2:32:49, almost a minute slower than the record set in 2007 by Kenya's Salina Kosgei. Lyubov Murgonova (2:34:49) was second.

Ivanova, 32, credited her win to motherhood. She gave birth to her first daughter, Olga, two years ago.

The petite 1.53m runner, who also earned US\$35,000, said through a translator: "Russian women are very strong mentally. Furthermore, I am a professional athlete."

"As a provider for my baby, I have to protect her financially. That is why I am even more motivated to win and take home the money."

"I'm very happy as this is one of my best races. The competition was strong but I showed my pace. And I always believed I could catch up and overtake the rest."

Ivanova's win was an upset as she had beaten pre-race favourite Murgonova, a 38-year-old veteran of more than 40 marathons.

Also, she believes her home town of Chuvashia in central Russia is a hotbed for marathon talents.

Ivanova, who completed her 25th marathon yesterday, said: "My city is also known as 'Little Kenya' because of our strong tradition in producing top long-distance athletes."

"We have at least 50 world-class runners. And the local government put in a lot of money to train them and for their overseas competitions. They are made into examples for the people to follow. These top runners give hope to the people in the city that they don't have to be a miner or a factory worker."

In the Singapore men's marathon category, South-east Asia Games triathlete champion Mok Ying Ren stormed to the gold medal on his marathon debut.

The 21-year-old clocked 2:43:46, almost eight minutes faster than runner-up Ashley Liew.

Chow Chin Ngan was Singapore's fastest woman marathoner when she came in at 3:14:55.

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"I've come to Singapore to win. And I'm good at finishing. Now that I've won it two years in a row, I want to return next year to complete my hat-trick."

LUKE KIBET, this year's Men's Open winner

## Spider-Man takes to streets

Maswar Sahlan (in black), 69, donned a Spider-Man suit for his 10km run at the Standard Chartered Singapore

Marathon yesterday morning. He was among 50,000 runners who participated in the event. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

## No Boston for Cai yet

ALAS, Thomas Cai, the plucky Singaporean featured in The Straits Times on Friday, did not achieve his goal of qualifying for the Boston Marathon, which carries a 3hr 10min requirement.

The 27-year-old IT professional, who credited his National Service stint for helping him shed 25kg as he went from an obese 84kg recruit to today's sleek 59kg marathoner, finished yesterday's Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon in 3:40.

His personal best is 3:26 set in October's Beijing Marathon. But Cai remains undeterred in his quest to run in Boston. He said: "The race didn't go as well as planned. I started to get hydrated only after 25km and by the 32km mark, I hit the wall."

He is planning marathons in Berlin and Norway next year, where he hopes the cooler climate will help him cut his time.

WANG MENG MENG

## Results

### Men's Open

- 1 Luke Kibet (Ken) 2hr 11min 25sec
- 2 Johnstone Chepkwony (Ken) 2:11:33
- 3 Vincent Krop (Ken) 2:11:51

### Women's Open

- 1 Albina Mayorova Ivanova (right, Rus) 2:32:49
- 2 Lyubov Murgonova (Rus) 2:34:49
- 3 Mary Akor Beasley (USA) 2:36:44

### Singapore Men's

- 1 Mok Ying Ren 2:43:46

### Singapore Women's

- 1 Chow Chin Ngan 3:14:55

