

A Big Day on the Rock

BY JACK GRAVES

Having reportedly gone without sleep over the course of a daylong roundabout trip here from Flagstaff, Ariz., by way of Boston and Newark, Yonas Mebrahtu, 26, a native of Eritrea, won Saturday's Shelter Island 10K in 29 minutes and 6 seconds, outkicking Kenya's Isaac Kitur, 29, in the final yards on Fiske Field.

Later, he said, tongue in cheek, that he might incorporate sleep deprivation into his training.

It was a bit of a disappointment for Kitur, who led the leading quartet (which included the third-place finisher, Diriba Yigezu, 26, and the fourth-place finisher, Meb Keflezighi, 39, the Boston Marathon winner) pretty much the whole way only to finish four seconds behind Mebrahtu.

The Kenyan is sponsored and trained by Travis Tate and Kat Hatkinson of East Northport, who would like through their taterunning.com website to raise enough money to cover his travel and fitness expenses. Kitur, whom they brought to this country, hopes to make a name for himself in running and to go to college here.

Asked what Kitur needs to do, Tate and later Cliff Clark, who founded this popular race 35 years ago, agreed that he needed to build up his lactic acid tolerance through tempo, long-distance, and threshold training at slightly less than race pace in order to avoid muscle fatigue at the end of races.

It also should be said that Shelter Island was Kitur's first 10K road race. Until now, he's been a miler and half-miler.

Hatkinson added that Tate has been training Kitur gratis. "His winnings today are his, but we'd like to raise enough money [through taterunning.com] to cover his travel and fitness expenses, and so that we can bring over his training partner too."

Keflezighi, the very personable American, who was brought to California as a youth from war-torn Eritrea, was in it to win it, but while he was running his customary 4:53 marathon pace, he didn't have the speed to prevail at the end. He

finished in 30:24. Kitur, Mebrahtu, and Yigezu began to pull away from him, he said, "between mile 3 and 4."

"It was a very fast pace," he continued. "We were under 14 minutes for the first 3 miles. . . . You know, people think that for marathon runners a 10K is easy, but that's not so — a 10K hurts!"

"The backstory here is really more important than the running story," said Clark, who had spent much of the weekend with Keflezighi and his Eritrean-born wife, Yordanos, whose family had taken her as a child to Florida. "They're both refugees — an amazing American couple."

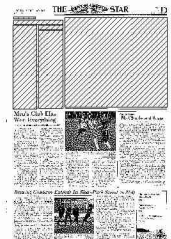
Keflezighi, who shared the podium with Joan Benoit Samuelson (it was this long-distance running legend's fourth time here), told an audience of high school runners the day before the race that in this country dreams, with hard work, could indeed become reality.

He had been a soccer player, he said, and hadn't given competitive running much thought until his junior year at U.C.L.A., even though, as a seventh grader, in order to get a good grade, he'd run a 5:20 mile, and even though he was a 4:05 miler in high school.

Both Benoit Samuelson, who beat Grete Waitz to win a gold medal in the 1984 Olympics, and Keflezighi, who was an Olympic silver medalist in the marathon in 2004, as well as the winner at New York, in 2009, and at Boston this year, told the young runners to develop their speed and to make haste slowly.

"They told us not to run more than 50 miles a week," said Jackson Rafferty, who ran Shelter Island along with his cross-country and track teammates Erik Engstrom and Eric Perez. "We're all doing 25 miles a week now, and may get up to 35 or 40 by the end of the summer."

Saturday was Rafferty's first 10K and Perez's second. "It was a lot harder than I thought — at the 5K mark I realized we'd only gone halfway," said Rafferty, who added that he had gone out "too fast. My first mile, most of which was downhill, was 6:18 rather than the 6:50



I was supposed to run.”

Asked where Mr. Barry (their coach) was, Rafferty, after looking back at the crowds coming through the chute, said, “I don’t know — I’ve got to find him before I leave.”

The top 10 that day was rounded out by Jerry Faulkner, 32, of Sunnyside, Queens, in 31:31; Cameron Marantz, 26, in 31:42; Ben Tuttle, 21, of Eastport, in 32:58; Thomas Rammelkamp, 24, of Miller Place, in 33:24; Joseph Ekuom, 44, in 33:44, and Frances Koons, 28, the women’s winner, in 34:26.

Katie Dicamillo, 27, was the second woman, and 19th over all, in 35:32.

John Honerkamp, whose uncle is Peter Honerkamp of the Stephen Talkhouse nightclub in Amagansett, and who has won races here in the past, was 27th, in 36:47; Jason Hancock, 40, an Amagansett School sixth-grade teacher from Southampton, was 42nd, in 38:09; Engstrom, 16, was 44th, in 38:22; Jessica van Binsbergen, a 2002 East Hampton High School graduate who is a veterinarian and is spending the summer here, was 52nd (and the seventh woman), in 39:08; Joan Benoit Samuelson, 57, of Freeport, Me., was 57th, in 39:27.

Tara Farrell, of East Quogue, who won the Long Island half-marathon this year, was 79th, in 40:48; Laura Brown, 46, a former Old Montauk Athletic Club athlete of the year who lives in Westhampton, was 89th, in 41:17; Rafferty, 16, was 92nd, in 41:47; Perez, 16, of Montauk, was 101st, in 41:58; Dermot Quinn, 45, of East Hampton, was 131st, in 43:30, and Barry, 51, of Shelter Island, who coaches East Hampton High’s boys cross-country team, was 219th, in 46:12.

Clark, who handed over the race-directing reins to Mary Ellen and Dr. Frank Adipietro 14 years ago (who met at this race), said they had been very worthy successors.

“We broke 2,000 registrants this year,” he said. “In our 10th year, I remember, we had 2,400. That was the most. Last year we had 1,400. . . . Certainly Meb was a part of the reason we had so many this year, but the Adipietros have been working very hard on building the field. There’s no better race in America, which has 10,000 races a year. After winning Boston, Meb was one of the hottest tick-

ets around, but he kept his promise [made to the Adipietros, fellow New York Athletic Club members, in February].”

Thousands of American flags bordered the last mile, named in honor of a young Shelter Islander, First Lt. Joe Theinert, who was killed in Afghanistan four years ago.

Keflezighi, who lives in San Diego, waved an American flag as he sped into Fiske Field’s home stretch.



Meb Keflezighi, who won the Boston Marathon in April, posed at the 10K finish line with a young Bonac trio — Erik Engstrom, Jackson Rafferty, and Eric Perez — who had heard him and Joan Benoit Samuelson tell their stories at the Shelter Island School's auditorium the day before. *Jack Graves*



Meb Keflezighi, an American citizen who with his family emigrated from Eritrea to California in 1987, told young runners the day before the race that in this country their dreams could become reality.
Jack Graves