

HONDA | LA MARATHON

PRESENTED BY K-SWISS

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Elite field looks forward to fast times at Honda LA Marathon *Unique Marathon Challenge handicap announced with \$100,000 at stake*

LOS ANGELES – March 19, 2010 – The new Stadium to the Sea course for the sold-out Honda LA Marathon presented by K-Swiss was designed to be fast. On Friday, the top professional runners confirmed that expectation.

“The course looks phenomenal,” said American marathoner Paige Higgins, who is looking to dip under the 2:30 mark for the first time. “The weather looks great. The support’s second-to-none. I’m really looking forward to a big jump; to compete with the best and see what I can do.”

Kenya’s Richard Limo, whose lifetime best of 2:06:45 makes him the fastest marathoner ever to contest this race, added, “I have prepared, I have come, I have looked at the course. I liked it. I enjoyed especially the second part of the race,” which is essentially flat and then downhill over the past several miles.

One of the favorites for the 2010 race is defending champion Wesley Korir, also of Kenya, but who lives in Louisville, Kentucky and combined professional road running with another full-time job in the university’s maintenance department. “I’ve had the best training I’ve ever had,” he said. “I feel ready. I’m excited. I’m excited about the new course; the stadium to the ocean. I’m excited about the competition. I’m excited to be here.”

Asked about his impressions of the route, which starts at Dodger Stadium and then rolls through Downtown Los Angeles, Hollywood, West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, the Veterans Administration grounds in West Los Angeles and then to the finish in Santa Monica, Korir said “When I looked at the course and studied it, I think the first six miles is the hardest part of the course. From there it’s pretty much rolling. It’s a fun course. You get to go through a lot of good places. Hopefully I’ll get to see some Hollywood people, some TV stars. I hope they’ll come out of their houses and say hi to us. Then you go to the ocean, the finish line, which is the coolest part. Hopefully I’ll run good to the beach and then cool myself down.”

Limo noted that from a technical perspective, the Stadium to the Sea course is also unique. “When I saw the course,” he explained, “the first part has some hills and the second part is a little flat. In most of the races, the hardest part is at the end when you are tired. This one is opposite. From the beginning, when you still have energy, you have to tackle the hardest part; then the rest of course – when you are little bit tired – it is a little bit down and so it will help some of the runners achieve a good time.”

The seven elite athletes who faced reporters on Friday were at full attention when the women’s handicap for the Honda LA Marathon Challenge was unveiled. Beginning in 2004, the women’s elite field has started ahead of the men by a carefully-calculated interval and the first man or woman to reach the finish line will receive a bonus of \$100,000. For the 2010 race, the women will start 18 minutes and 47 seconds ahead of the men.

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Russia's Silvia Skvortsova, third in this race last year and one of the women's favorites, told reporters that "I don't think about the Challenge right now at this point," but also noted that "looking historically, every second year it's a Russian woman [who wins the Challenge], so probably it's my year this time.

"I have been training very hard to come into this race to show my personal best and run my personal best time. The excitement about the competition between men and women has me extra excited and will help me show a good result."

Ethiopia's Ashu Kasim, who has the fastest lifetime best among the women, added "I am going to be trying to push the men, so they can't come from behind."

If it comes down to a final sprint, Limo – who had a brilliant track career before turning to road running – has to be the favorite . . . and he knows it. "When I changed from track to the marathon, you're going to lose some speed and gain some endurance," he said, adding "I've been training for a sprint, and I hope I still have some speed for the finishing kick."

But win or lose, no one is having a better time than Korir. "I just got married. My beautiful wife Tara is here. We just got married last week. This is my honeymoon. This race means more to me now. I love L.A. There's no where else I would love to go for my honeymoon than L.A. We met in school; she is from Canada. She came to University of Louisville to run there and she ran for four years. We met on the team.

"I'm going out to give a 100%. I'm going to leave everything on the course and see where it gets me. If it gets me a win, I'm going to be happy. Whatever it gets me, I'm going to be happy for it."

That thought also shared by the 25,000 participants readying for a historic run on Sunday, with Korir and his fellow likely enjoying themselves on the beach in Santa Monica as the thousands finish behind them.

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