

# Where there is a will

BAA Boston Marathon, USA. 19 April 2004

Just as in London and New York, the venerable Boston Marathon, in its 108th edition, incorporated a separate elite women's race which set off (and finished) before the elite men and mass runners.

The increased prominence of the women's race was immediately rewarded with a show of brilliance and courage that will not soon be forgotten writes *Barbara Huebner*. Catherine Ndereba found something deep inside to keep clear of Elfenes Alemu for a 16-second victory margin.

Ndereba grimaced and laboured her way down Boylston Street with Alemu closing behind her. "The pain was tough (from cramping calf muscles), and I could only just stand it" Ndereba said later, after having wilted to the ground when safely across the finish line.

At 11.31, 29 minutes before the mass start, 34 women had set off from Hopkinton, west of Boston. The temperature was already at 25°C, and would rise to 29°C by the finish. Malgorzata Szobanska led off, respectful of the conditions, with a 5:51 first mile. Alemu soon took control and upped the pace. She had won the Tokyo Women's marathon last November, and looked coolly confident in the heat.

She passed five miles in 28:33 with Olivera Jevtic in second and Ndereba an unhurried third. By eight miles the two leaders were eight seconds ahead of Ndereba. "I went with my own pace" the highly experienced World Champion later observed. By 15km (51:56) the pace was around 2:26, and Ndereba had passed Jevtic but still trailed Alemu by eight seconds, and seemed content to play a waiting game. "I knew she was there", said Alemu. The second pack of five trailed by



Catherine Ndereba needing help to lift the trophy

a minute, with Jevtic slipping into an isolated third. She passed halfway 30 seconds behind Ndereba as Alemu continued to lead (1:12:19). The women of Wellesley College roared their encouragement.

To no one's surprise Ndereba caught Alemu at around 24km, and the two would endure the heat side-by-side up until 40km. By 32km the heat was beginning to tell on both of them, but they held to the pace. At the 1 mile (1600m) to go sign, Ndereba struck, to quickly forge a 20m lead. Alemu was suffering back problems which prevented her giving chase, and the gap grew to 60m before Alemu regrouped. But time ran out, and Ndereba had her third win in Boston: "It was special today. You need to have the will."

For the men's race, pre-race speculation revolved around the first three from last year, writes *Jim O'Brien*. But Timothy Cherigat overcame all to break the tape first. Cherigat came to the race battle-hardened from his 2003 experience, and was prepared for whatever the elements could throw at him.

Through the opening downhill miles the pace was pedestrian, averaging over 5 minutes for the first five and a little under that for the second five. The mercury soared and the pace meandered. The pack remained cumbersome, sometimes occupying the entire road width. By halfway (1:05:30) a knot of race favourites had drifted towards the front of the group: New York winner and World half marathon champion Martin Lel, last year's winner and twice winner in New York, Rogers Rop, Benjamin Kimutai and Robert Cheruiyot.

Cherigat only captured attention at 26km, when, with Rop

alongside Rop. Rop responded and the group immediately reduced to four remaining contenders: Rop, Cherigat, Lel, and the novice Robert Cheboror. Only 3km after Cherigat's fall it looked like his only rival would be defending champion Rop. Cherigat challenged Rop with a surge up Heartbreak Hill, and Rop fell back. Cherigat's pace did not relent. He appeared magnificent, unpressed, buoyed by the hoards that lined the streets into downtown. He sneaked backward glances now and then, but he did not have to worry. Rop, Cheboror and Lel struggled towards their own finishes, although Rop failed to finish, along with another past champion, Cheruiyot. Swinging into Boylston Street with the tape in sight, Cherigat had time to savour his impending win.

He claimed: "I trained for this move [on Heartbreak Hill]. I knew that if I made it, it would drive me to the finish line". Behind him the unheralded Cheboror came through to take second, with Lel a further two minutes behind. A total of 16,793 runners completed the race, more than any except the 1996 centenary celebration, which was not subject to a qualification time.



The start at Hopkinton

## Result

### MEN:

1	Timothy CHERIGAT	KEN	2:10:37
2	Robert CHEBOROR	KEN	2:11:49
3	Martin LEL	KEN	2:13:38
4	Stephen KIOGORA	KEN	2:14:34
5	Hailu NEGUSSIE	ETH	2:17:30
6	Benjamin KIMUTAI	KEN	2:17:45
7	Joshua KIPKEMBOI	KEN	2:18:23
8	Andrew LETHERBY	AUS	2:19:31
9	Fedor RYZHOV	RUS	2:21:45
10	Ellij RONO	KEN	2:22:45

### WOMEN:

1	Catherine NDEREBA	KEN	2:24:27
2	Elfenes ALEMU	ETH	2:24:43
3	Olivera JEV TIC	YUG	2:27:34
4	Jelena PROCOPCUKA	LAT	2:30:16
5	Nuta OLARU	ROM	2:30:44
6	Lyubov DENISOVA	RUS	2:31:17
7	Malgorzata SZOBANSKA	POL	2:32:23
8	Victoria KLIMINA	RUS	2:33:20
9	Ramila BURANGILOVA	RUS	2:34:08
10	Ai YAMAMOTO	JPN	2:34:32

