

An autumn marathon in summer

ING Edmonton Centennial Marathon, Canada. 22 August 2004



celebrating everything from theatre to heritage, dance to film, blues to bluegrass.

Among them are the Edmonton International Street Performers Festival, the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, the Fringe Theatre Festival and the Canadian Finals Rodeo. Twenty minutes east of Edmonton, next to Elk Island National Park where elk and bison roam freely, there is the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village. The buildings, furnishings and inhabitants of the village have been taken from life in east central Alberta in early 1930s.

By Sergey Porada and Yelena Kurdyumova

Tucked close up to the Canadian Rocky Mountains, Edmonton enjoys changeable weather: visitors must be ready for surprises. Over race weekend the rain lasted two days, letting up only for short intervals, and the temperature was 9°C.

The 10th ING Edmonton Centennial Marathon celebrated the centenary of the city, the capital of Alberta province. Edmonton was incorporated as a city 100 years ago, on 8 October 1904. Its history as a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company dates back to 1795.

At the end of the nineteenth century the gold rush doubled the population in just two years. Two thousand prospectors headed to Yukon via the back door, or all-Canadian route. The discovery of oil in 1947 turned Edmonton into the oil capital of Canada.

At 6:30, two thousand runners, undeterred by the autumnal weather, prospectored for their own self-transcendence. The Mayor of Edmonton, Bill Smith, encouraged the runners and signaled the start. The day before he had led the Mayor's 4.2km Fun Run/Walk. On marathon day he came back for the post-race hot buffet brunch and took part in the

awards ceremony. "Through increased sponsorship we are going to build the marathon up into the biggest in Canada in five years."

"One of the things I started 2 years ago is called Active Edmonton. We are trying to make our City one of the most sport active cities in Canada." No wonder that next year Edmonton will host two world class events: the World Masters Games, from 22-31 July, and the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships on 1 October.

Tracking through the rain and wind 530 runners finished the marathon and 1470 the half marathon. Watching runners at different stages of the race we saw many happy and joyful faces. At times it seemed that the smiles of runners and the Running Room "pace bunnies" would disperse the heavy clouds, and stop the rain. Title sponsor ING not only sponsors marathons and running events, but also encourages its own employees to run – 170 of them participated during marathon weekend.

From the start 40-year old Russell Gottschalk took the lead. He was sure that he was running all alone, until 38-year old Dennis Colburn caught up with him. "I knew from the start that I would win" Colburn said later. "The weather was good for the marathon but I did not think that I

would have to run so fast. Russell set a 2:30 pace from the start. I kept behind till 26km and it was all tactics." Both athletes met several times before in the Calgary Marathon, which Dennis won four times in a row. Last month Dennis came up a little short in Calgary and ended up fourth. "The course is nice but not fast because of all the hills", said Colburn.

This year the marathon was run over a new course, starting and finishing in downtown Edmonton. The high bank of the North Saskatchewan River overlooks the river valley, and the largest stretch of urban parkland in Canada. Runners can admire the impressive view as they follow the course along the bank of the river and across the high-level bridge.

Part of the course circles around beautiful Hawrelak Park, running into quiet residential neighborhoods before coming back to the high river bank and crossing the bridge again. Then it follows paved park trails and finally returns to the city streets which bring the runners back to the downtown finish.

Edmonton is widely known not only for its sporting championships, but for superb museums and 35 annual festivals,



The top crowd-pleaser continues to be West Edmonton Mall, the world's largest. It covers 48 city blocks (the size of 115 football fields).

Other than its 800 stores, the main attractions are the world's largest indoor amusement park and indoor wave pool, real submarine voyages in the world's largest indoor lake, an exact replica of the Santa Maria, and an 18-hole miniature golf course.

New to the Mall since 2003, you can now don a specialized helmet

and take a stroll around the bottom of the lake.

Outdoors in the real world, it wasn't quite so waterlogged. Dennis Colburn pulled away from his rivals to win. The surprise came from the 23-year old Kelsey Kelemen, who came through to finish second, little over 200m behind Colburn.

Kelemen, of the University of Alberta track and cross-country teams, focuses on 5000m and ran the Edmonton Marathon just to see how he would do.

Last year's defending champion Philip Meagher

came in fourth. The women's winner, Misty Cech, fulfilled her target of qualifying for the Boston Marathon. Marathon weekend visitors were ready for their surprises. The biggest came the day before the marathon in the 10km race. Astor Demissie, a 22-year old originally from Ethiopia, won outright in 34:38, leaving all men behind her.

Her personal best is 31:53 and according to her coach Gles Playfair she did not run faster this time because there was no competition. "When I am older, maybe I will run the marathon," said Astor. But maybe next year she could try the half marathon, when the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships come to her adopted hometown.

MEN

1	Dennis COLBURN	CAN	2:37:58
2	Kelsey KELEMEN	CAN	2:38:46
3	Russell GOTTSCHALK	CAN	2:41:03
4	Philip MEAGHER	CAN	2:44:18
5	Adrian BECKLUMB	CAN	2:48:41
6	Rick PRESTON	CAN	2:56:37
7	Sergio CANO	CAN	2:58:11
8	A J RANKEL	CAN	2:59:45
9	Brian WEIGELT	CAN	3:00:31
10	Brendan LUNTY	CAN	3:02:20

WOMEN

1	Misty CECCH	USA	3:12:50
2	Cindy UNUWIW-ADSIT	CAN	3:21:26
3	Michelle JOLLY	CAN	3:28:30
4	Avery SAUNDERS	CAN	3:30:02
5	Lynne HODGSON	CAN	3:34:24
6	Carley GERING	CAN	3:36:18
7	Heather DOLMAN	CAN	3:42:39
8	Colleen MCDAVID	CAN	3:43:05
9	Tricia ORZECK	CAN	3:44:29
10	Anne CARTWRIGHT	CAN	3:44:37

Despite the cold rainy weather at the end of August, the marathon organizers expect cool and dry weather for IAAF World Half Marathon Championships on 1 October 2005: An autumn half marathon in autumn. Coach Gles Playfair describes the course as very fast.

