

An unseasonal surprise

Maratón Ciudad de Sevilla, Spain. 27 February 2005

Seville has a reputation for the finer things in life. The city's name is synonymous with sunshine, dance and good living. Flamenco bars and cafés are dotted all around the old town, serving up the local ham and sherry and the finest tapas in Spain. Indoors or out, life is lived under a sunny blue sky.

The marathon usually takes place under those typically blue Andalusian skies, but for once the city shivered under unseasonably low temperatures. It never rose above 5°C during the race.

That did not deter more than 2,500 runners who took part. They proved their capacity for resisting discomfort, but suffered for the surprise conditions: the medical services were called upon for assistance in as many as 300 cases.

It was completely different to the previous 20 editions, in which good weather attracted great numbers of spectators to come out and encourage runners along the whole route through the city.

There were still those who braved the conditions to offer their support to the runners, showing the great commitment in Seville not only to the Marathon but to sport in general.

The race starts in the Avenida Carlos III on the west side of the Guadalquivir River. Seville's history is intimately linked to this River because from its distant past the city has been both a river harbour and a bridge between the Atlantic Ocean, 100km further downstream, and the hinterland of Spain. Seville was a port from which voyages of exploration were made, culminating with that of Columbus and his discovery of America.

After an out-and-back section on the broad avenue the course approaches the River bank and goes over the Puente del Alamillo just past the 5km point.

This is the first of four crossings of the River made by runners in their intricate tour of the city. The Bridge is a feat of modernist engineering designed by the Valencian architect Santiago Calatrava.

By this point in the race a lead group had emerged, headed by the African athletes. Noah Kiplagat had immediately gone into the lead and throughout the race he held a significant margin of superiority over the rest of the field.

Runners crossed to the east

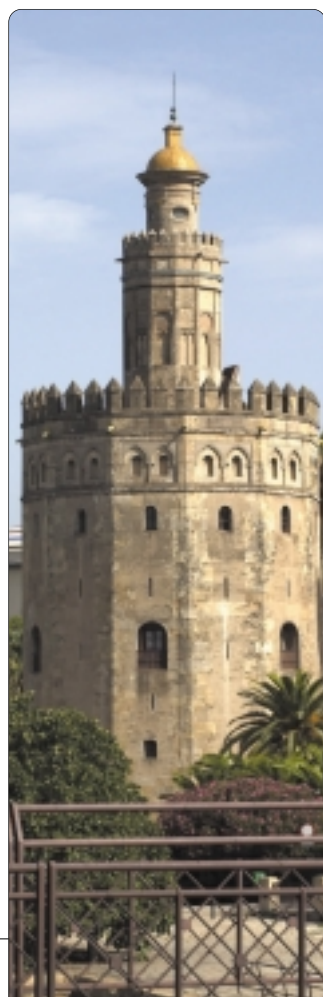
bank of the River, where the main centre lies, and navigated a zigzag course through the outer districts of this city of 700,000 citizens. Runners progressed around the city in a broad arc gradually moving from the north side to the south-east side and moving sometimes towards the city centre – but never quite reaching it – and then away from it again.

After 28km runners got to the south east side of the city, at the furthest point from the start and finish lines which lie to the north west. At this point the course rejoins the River, and progresses upstream for two kilometres before crossing to the west bank by the Puente de los Remedios.

Just before crossing the bridge the older parts of the city come into view. Seville was born as a Roman city named Hispalis and as a popular verse has it:

*"Raised by Hercules,
Julius Caesar fortified me
with high walls and towers..."*

Fragments of the walls, and one tower, lie close to the 30km point. The Torre del Oro was a



watchtower built in the 13th century towards the end of the five-century long Moorish settlement.

The Tower was topped by a dome covered in golden tiles, from which it takes its name. The golden connection continued long after the Christian reconquest in 1248: the Torre del Oro was where ships coming back from the Americas unloaded their gold.

The course bends away from the river but by 33km runners approached the Puente del Cachorro and crossed back towards the city centre. Seville is a monumental city, and its most important monuments are the Alcazar and the Cathedral of Santa Maria, which runners reached at 35km, after they turned into the broad Avenida de la Constitucion.

The Alcazar served the Moors through their long residency and after 1248 Cristian Fernando I moved in. The Cathedral is just a few metres further down the road. At 126m long and 83m wide it is one of the biggest anywhere.

Christopher Columbus was supposed to have been buried inside, but recent analysis shows it may actually be the body of his son, Diego that was sent back from the Dominican Republic in 1899.

The Cathedral's Giralda tower is an ancient Arab minaret described as Spain's most perfect Islamic building. It is topped by 'El Geraldillo', a bronze weather vane representing 'Faith', which has become a symbol of the city. On this day organisers and runners had kept faith, to deliver a sparkling event despite the bad weather.

Runners crossed the river one final time, over another of Santiago Calatrava's modernist structures, built for the 1992 Universal Expo held in Seville in parallel with the Olympic Games in Barcelona. In the men's race, from this point, a small drama developed as they raced towards the finish in the Olympic Stadium.

Result

MEN:

1	Noah Kiplagat	SEREM	KEN	2:22:15
2	Belayneh Bimer	WORKNEH	ETH	2:26:38
3	Mikhail	ROMANOV	RUS	2:26:39
4	Wolye Jarra	ALIM	ETH	2:30:05
5	Mohamed M.	HASSAM	SWE	2:32:00
6	Francisco M.	CISNEROS	ESP	2:32:00
7	Lino	BARRUNCHO	POR	2:32:41
8	Jose Calderon	GONZALEZ	ESP	2:33:35
9	Andres Hernando	ALZAGA	ESP	2:34:56
10	Manuel Suarez	PENA	ESP	2:34:22

WOMEN:

1	Liliya YADZHAK	RUS	2:45:18
2	Julia Ann MYATT	GBR	2:48:53
3	Christina KARLSSON	SWE	2:51:28
4	Helena OLOFSSON ELIN	SWE	2:55:27
5	Maxine MCKINNON	GBR	3:00:07
6	Noelia Mansilla ARRIBA	ESP	3:04:32
7	Susana Ruiz PEREZ	ESP	3:09:00
8	Dominique Lozano GUESDE	ESP	3:10:01
9	Pilar Rubio De LEMUS	ESP	3:17:14
10	Juana Maria RINCON DIAZ	ESP	3:18:05



Kiplagat had long disappeared off the front, but in the last two kilometres Belayneh Bimer and Mikhail Romanov tracked down two runners who were ahead of them. They ran onto the track, scene of the 1999 World Championships, at the same time. In a sprint to the line the Ethiopian just prevailed.

The women's race was won by the Russia's Liliya Yadzha, who dominated just as Kiplagat had in the men's race. The previous year's winner, the British runner Julie Myatt, was never able to challenge Yadzha and finished three minutes behind her.

Spanish athletes filled four of the top 10 positions in both the men's and women's races. The first local runners were Manuel Suárez Peña and Pilar Rubio de Lemus in tenth and ninth places respectively.

