

The battle of Chesapeake Bay



By Sergey Porada and Yelena Kurdyumova

Baltimore is the twelfth largest city in the United States and is known as "Charm City" for its quality of life. One of the oldest cities in the country, it was founded in 1729 by Lord Baltimore, the first Proprietary Governor of the Province of Maryland. The city grew swiftly as a food trading port due to its location on the upper Chesapeake Bay. It still ranks fifth among US ports, and its famous Inner Harbor, iconic landmark of the city, provides 16km of the marathon course. In its six-year history the Under Armour Baltimore Running Festival has been steadily growing. This year participation surpassed 11000 among all events, and its prize purse of \$100,000 is among the ten largest in the country.

There are five airports within 100 miles of the city, Amtrak train links and a dense freeway network,

which makes it easy for runners to get here, not only from the North American continent, but from all around the world. The organizers conduct a regular runners' survey and have continuously improved every aspect of the Festival. Over 2500 runners participated in the survey this year, and two weeks later race director Lee Corrigan came up with his analysis for further improvements to the 2007 edition on the marathon website.

This year two route changes had made the course flatter and faster; the Outback Steakhouse Celebration Village hosted all day event coverage; and a great variety of food and drinks were offered at the finish line and along the course. The first 500 runners to pick up their marathon packets were treated to a free pair of Under Armour running socks.

A cool sunny morning (3C) greeted almost 3000 marathoners and 530



four-person relay teams from 24 countries and 49 US states. The start line was within walking distance of the Inner Harbor near Oriole Park at Cadmen Yards, a famous baseball stadium.

Over the first 4km runners contended with a 66m climb, which warmed everybody up and brought them to Druid Lake within a large scenic park. From here the relieving descent started back to Inner Harbor past Federal Hill Park. From 11km the course runs flat for the next 14.5 km, along the thriving and vibrant coastline of Inner Harbor, from the restaurants and bars of Greektown and Little Italy to the cultural mecca of Mount Vernon neighborhood, renowned for its museums. Baltimore Maritime Museum at 23km is notable for its three-ship exhibit of the lightship Chesapeake, the World War II submarine USS Torsk, and the USS Taney - the only ship still afloat after the bombing at Pearl Harbor.

Over the first 16km the defending champion, Ukrainian Mykola Antonenko, and David Cheruiyot from Kenya led by turns. A pack of 13 runners behind them did not accept their challenge, and after 16km the leaders slowed down and allowed the baker's dozen to join them. All together, they ran the lap of honor around Fort McHenry, a historical landmark constructed in 1803 to defend Baltimore Harbor. At that time the British and French were trying to intervene in the city's prospering foreign trade and limit America's growing trading role on the high seas.

During the war of 1812 the British declared Baltimore "a nest of pirates," and attacked it from land and sea. Thanks to the heroism of the defenders of Fort McHenry and North Point, Baltimore repulsed the

attack. It inspired Washington lawyer Francis Scott Key, who witnessed the bombardment from a nearby truce ship, to write the poem "The Defense of Fort McHenry" which would be renamed "The Star Spangled Banner" and become America's national anthem. The Battle of Baltimore was commemorated by the Battle Monument, which appears on the city's seal.

Almost 5000 half marathon runners were assembling at their start line near the 21km point to greet the marathon pack, who passed by at 2:20 pace. From 25km in charming Paterson Park, through Clifton Park, and up to the 32km point past scenic Lake Montebelo, runners battled with the 70m elevation and the rolling hills which followed it. The lead pack thinned down to eight runners. The final descent to the finish begins from here and the pace livened up to around 5:30 miles (3:25/km). Yirefu Birhanu from Ethiopia, an accomplished half-marathoner running his first marathon, broke away at 37km. The 20-year old went on to wrap up the title, while Antonenko passed Wilson Komen 4km from the finish line and closed down to lag Birefu by 29 seconds.

Traumas had kept Rima Dubovik from running marathons for almost two years. The 42-year old Ukrainian did not appear on the start list until the eve of the race. Dubovik started slowly, falling behind the leader, Peru's Maria Portilla, by more than a minute at the halfway point. She then gradually pulled back the deficit, passing her compatriot Ilona Baranova at 28km and sighting Portilla only 100m ahead. After 35km Dubovik took full control of the race to win from Portilla by 39 seconds in a new course record. Three more women broke the



previous record of 2:40. The benefits of the course changes were also evidenced by another event record, as seven men broke 2:20.

Spectators lined the course several deep at viewing points. They saw an impressive performance from 35-year-old Russian, Lyubov Denisova, who won the Half Marathon by 4.5 minutes and was only one second outside the 1:15:12 record set last year by Ukrainian Natalya Berkut. In the men's Half Marathon Valentin Orare from Kenya broke away from Ethiopian Worku Beyi to win, beating the course record by one second.

All events finished at Raven Stadium, and participants and fans streamed into the Outback Steakhouse Celebration Village to enjoy Gatorade, food, games and live music played by a succession of bands as the back markers came in. After the battle had been won, whether for prize money or for personal achievement, runners and supporters alike could enjoy several hours of entertainment from a succession of bands and free admission into museums and exhibitions on Inner Harbor under the "Free fall Baltimore" program.

RESULT

MEN:

1	Yirefu BIRHANU	ETH	2:16:26
2	Mykola ANTONENKO	UKR	2:16:55
3	Wilson KOMEN	KEN	2:17:05
4	Jynocel BASWETI	KEN	2:17:26
5	Joseph MUTINDA	KEN	2:17:59
6	David CHERUIYOT	KEN	2:18:26
7	Joseph KAHUGU	KEN	2:19:07
8	John CHEPOCHOK	KEN	2:20:03
9	Demese TEFERA	ETH	2:20:06
10	Christopher RAABE	USA	2:20:56

WOMEN:

1	Rima DUBOVIK	UKR	2:35:44
2	Maria PORTILLA	PER	2:36:23
3	Ilona BARVANNOVA	RUS	2:36:25
4	Jennifer CHESINON	KEN	2:38:53
5	Margaret KARIE	KEN	2:41:10
6	Tatiana TITOVA	RUS	2:42:22
7	Maria BYCHKOVA	RUS	2:44:42
8	Phebe KO	USA	2:49:22
9	Christine RAMSEY	USA	3:00:26
10	Tatiana MASLOVA	RUS	3:04:08

HALF MARATHON

MEN:

1	Valentine ORARE	KEN	1:03:44
2	Worku BEYI	ETH	1:03:49
3	Nelson KIPLAGAT	KEN	1:04:07

WOMEN:

1	Lyubov DENISOVA	RUS	1:15:13
2	Kathleen JOBES	USA	1:17:35
3	Shannon SAUNDERS	USA	1:19:46

RACE CONTACT DETAILS

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Full race contact listings start on page 74