

# MARATHONERS

## Plough through Inclement Weather

by David Block

**R**ain and wind can discourage people from exercising outside; however it would take a lot more to scare off dedicated long distance runners. This past November 18th, it was cold, wet, windy and raining, yet nearly 16,000 runners displayed a 'NO PROBLEM' attitude as they competed in one of three events, the Philadelphia Marathon (26.2 miles), the half marathon and the 8K race.

**The inclement weather also failed to scare off the former World Heavy Weight Boxing Champion, Smokin' Joe Frazier, as he and his son, former boxer Marvis Frazier, greeted many of the finishers. When asked what he did to stay in shape, Joe Frazier answered: "What do you mean 'stay in shape'? I've never been out of shape."**

**Joe Frazier credits his conditioning to working out in the gym. "I hit the speed bag, I run, I jump rope and I can still box," said the former champion as he posed for a picture with the 2007 Philadelphia Marathon winner, Kenyan native Timothy Psitet who clocked 2 hours, 25 minutes and 1 second.**

**Finishing second was fellow Kenyan countryman, Solomon Too who posted a 2:26:03 finish. During the spring, summer and fall, both Psitet and Too live in High Falls, N.Y. and they run for the West Chester (NY) Track Club.**

**Ten miles into the marathon, Psitet and Too broke away from the rest of the pack.**

For the next fourteen miles, it looked as if either runner could win; but circumstances changed after the two Kenyans blew by the 24-mile mark in 2:12:21. "We were going to stay together until the end," said Psitet in broken English, "but he (Solomon Too) told me to go ahead." As they approached twenty five miles, Psitet pulled away. "I was getting a bad headache," said Too. "I started feeling sick, so I said, 'go!'" Psitet was uncertain if he was going to win, because except for Too, he was unfamiliar with the other competitors. "It's my first time in Philadelphia," said Psitet.

**In the women's field, Kristin Price won with a 2:42:05 clocking. "The rain didn't slow me down, but the wind did," said Price. Yet, it didn't slow her down too much; in fact Price's finishing time qualified her to compete this April in the Women's U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials. She met the women's standard of running under 2 hours and 47 minutes. When asked if being a full time graduate student at North Carolina State University (specializing in chemical engineering) would affect her preparation for the trials, she explained that it would not. "I have a flexible schedule, so I can train when I need to," said Price who runs seventy to eighty miles a week.**

**Price was unsure if she was going to win the Philadelphia Marathon. Unlike Psitet, she knew about some of the other runners, such as the second woman finisher, Paige Miller who clocked 2:43:59. When Price ran cross country and track for NC State, she sometimes ran against Miller who competed for Duke University. Like Price, Miller is currently a graduate student; she attends Penn State and majors in nutritional science. "I had a feeling that Kristen was ahead of me the whole race," said Miller. "I didn't see her after the race started."**

**Contrary to Price, graduate school has had a slight effect on Miller's training. "I've been running fifty to sixty miles a week," said Miller. "Graduate School is my first priority. Now that I qualified for the Olympic Trials, I'll force myself to get out of bed every morning and train harder. I mostly train on the roads. I do more distance running than when I ran for Duke. I did more speed workouts. Now, I wouldn't even think of getting on the track and running a speed mile."**

**Unlike the top two women finishers, the fifth woman finisher, Abby Dean, who posted 2:45:21, never competed in college. In addition, Dean is 36. Price and Miller, on the other hand, are in their mid twenties.**



The Philadelphia Marathon was the first time that Dean ever qualified for the Olympic Trials. "It's all new to me," said Dean of Philadelphia. "I trained a lot differently for this marathon. When I trained for other marathons, I'd run between sixty to seventy miles a week. For this one, I dropped my weekly mileage down to sixty. What helped me was I started doing tempo runs. When I'd do a twenty mile training run, I'd make sure that I ran eight of them at a faster pace. The tempos increased my level of fitness." Dean began running after college to keep the extra weight off her. She never imagined that she would qualify for the Olympic Trials.

The sixth woman finisher, Kathleen Castles, 2:45:30 of New Providence, N.J. has a similar background to Dean. The thirty six-year-old Castle never ran competitively in college. "This was the first time that I ever ran a marathon," said Castles who was not expecting to qualify for the Olympic Trials.

In preparing for the Philadelphia Marathon, Castles ran about one hundred miles a week. "Every week, I made sure that I did a long training run, ranging from fourteen to twenty five miles," said Castles. "I then I made sure that I did a tempo run."

*Note: Because of my limited vision and because there were not too many people offering assistance to the media, my friend Chris Lesnewski sacrificed his Sunday morning so I could cover the marathon. He stayed with me as I covered the race in the rain.*



David is passionate about educating the public and raising awareness about the challenges, abilities and accomplishments of blind and other disabled athletes. He promotes this in part by teaching Goalball, the international team sport for blind athletes, to sighted people. He is an inspiration to disabled youth in sharing ways he and others have overcome adversity. He has produced several documentaries, which illuminate the talents, strengths, and challenges of the blind athlete, the injured hero, and the forgotten veteran.

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