

Record time boosts city race's bid for g

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Ethiopian Negewo's track speed decisive in duel for line in Green

Stephen Granger

CAPE TOWN took a giant leap into the world of mega-marathons yesterday, as 28 year old Ethiopian, Asefa Negewo ran the fastest ever marathon in Sub-Saharan Africa, winning the Cape Town Marathon in record time.

Ideal spring weather, tip-top organisation, fast-running elite marathoners and almost 8 000 others on the start line focused on their own personal goals, provided the perfect recipe for a great city marathon.

Given the all-round success of the weekend's racing, the dream of an IAAF Gold Label Marathon in Cape Town could be realised next year.

David Tsebe's 2hr 09min 50sec win at the 1990 South African Marathon Championships in Port Elizabeth stood for 26 years as the fastest marathon run in South Africa on a certified course. Until yesterday.

Negewo broke the tape at the Green Point Track 2hr 08min 41sec after the start gun had sounded, to establish a new open national marathon record and put Cape Town on the map as a favoured destination for fast marathon times.

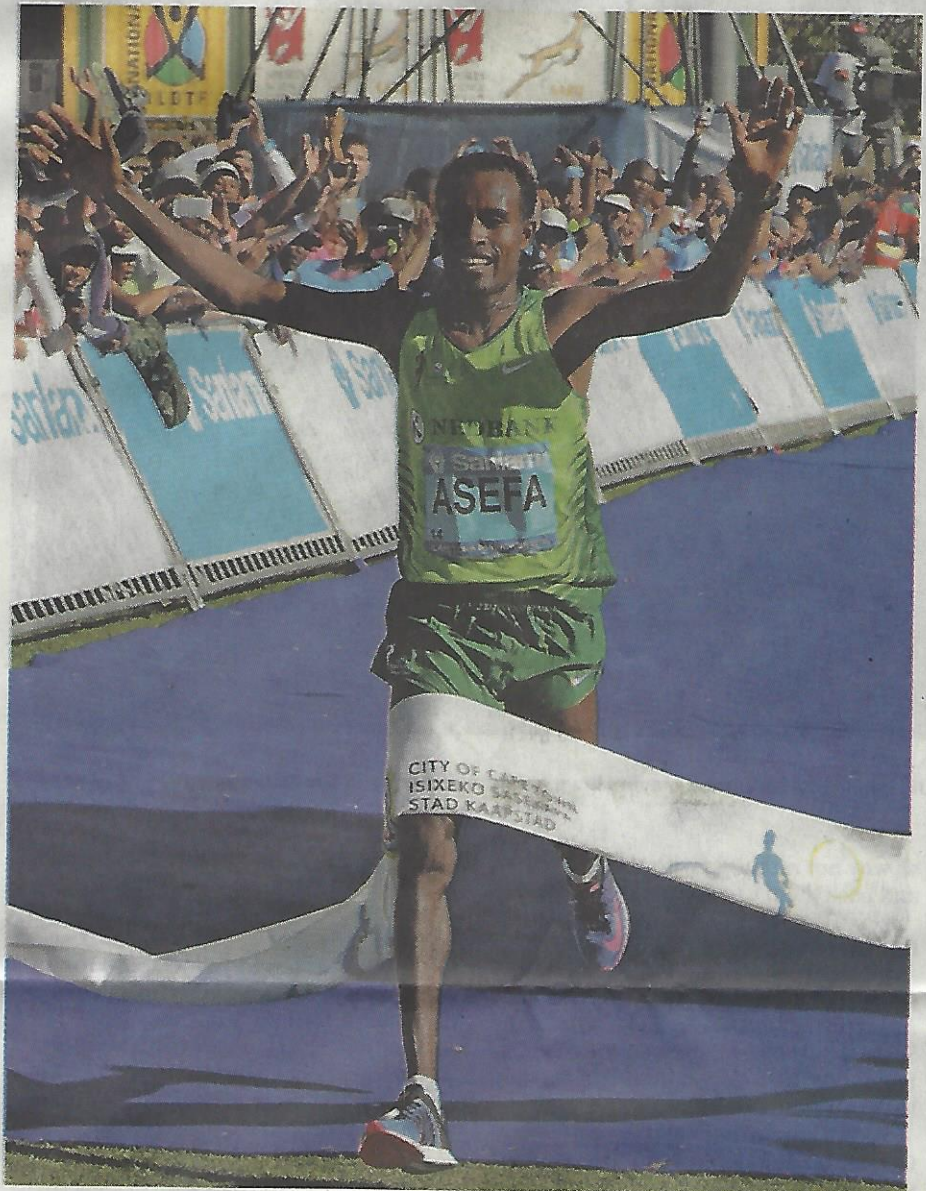
Negewo's time was 2 min 04 sec faster than Kenyan Willy Koitile's winning time of 2:10:45 in 2014 – the previous race record – and three minutes inside Shadrack Kemboi's time last year.

Emphasising the quality of the race and the favourable conditions, the top three marathoners all finished under Tsebe's 1990 time, with Kenyans Emmanuel Tirop (2:08:47) and Barnabas Kiptum (2:09:21) crossing the line in close formation, ensuring that less than a minute separated the podium athletes.

The Cape Town Marathon title has become one of the most sought-after on the continent and underlining the competitive nature of the race was that not one of last year's top 10 (in either the men's or women's fields) was able to grab a top-10 position yesterday.

Desmond Mokgobu was the first South African home in fifth place, his time of 2:11:23 a massive four-minute improvement on his previous best time, set in Chile last year, and five minutes inside his 2014 Cape Town Marathon time, when he placed seventh.

"Everything was as good as it could have



BIG CHEQUE: Ethiopian Asefa Negewo pocketed R265 000 for winning the men's race in record time in the Cape Town Marathon yesterday. Top right, Tish Jones. BACKPAGEPIX

been today," Negewo commented. "The course was fast and the weather perfect. The pacers did a good job and helped us through the first half and set the race for a fast time.

"When the Kenyan (Tirop) caught me about 3km from the finish, I welcomed the chance to run head to head. I had confidence I would win and knew my track speed would be decisive."

A delighted Tish Jones achieved the biggest win of her career with a superb

victory in the women's competition, outrunning the favoured Ethiopian, Megertu Geletu, in the latter stages to cross the line in 2:36:13.

The British athlete has made Cape Town her home in the past year and wore a massive grin as she crossed the line – a huge 17 minutes inside her previous best. She ran her debut marathon earlier this year in the Peninsula Marathon, winning in 2:53 and has subsequently won a number of road and trail titles.

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