

Elite Women: Entries

Bib no.	Name	Nation	PB	Bib name
101	Mary Keitany	KEN	2:19:19	KEITANY
102	Irina Mikienko	GER	2:19:19	IRINA
103	Lucy Kabuu	KEN	2:19:34	KABUU
104	Florence Kiplagat	KEN	2:19:44	FLORENCE
105	Bezunesh Bekele	ETH	2:20:30	BEKELE
106	Aberu Kebede	ETH	2:20:33	KEBEDE
107	Edna Kiplagat	KEN	2:20:46	EDNA
108	Constantina Dita	ROU	2:21:30	DITA
109	Atsede Baysa	ETH	2:22:04	BAYSA
110	Ejegayehu Dibaba	ETH	2:22:09	DIBABA
111	Inga Abitova	RUS	2:22:19	ABITOVA
112	Koren Jejela	ETH	2:22:43	JELELA
113	Priscah Jeptoo	KEN	2:22:55	JEPTOO
114	Jelena Prokopcuka	LAT	2:22:56	PROKOPCUKA
115	Isabellah Andersson	SWE	2:23:41	ANDERSSON
116	Mariya Konovalova	RUS	2:23:50	KONVALOVA
117	Jéssica Augusto	POR	2:24:33	AUGUSTO
118	Nadia Ejjafini	ITA	2:26:15	EJJAFINI
119	Yuliya Ruban	UKR	2:27:00	RUBAN

Preview

Mary Keitany defends her women's title against many of the world's leading runners, including four fellow Kenyans, five quality Ethiopians, and double London champion Irina Mikitenko.

Keitany had a brilliant year in 2011 when she smashed the world half marathon record, broke the 2 hours 20 minutes barrier with a memorable victory in London, and ran the first half of the New York City Marathon last November inside world record schedule before fading to finish third.

But the 30-year-old faces a tough task as the women's field assembled by race director Dave Bedford contains four athletes who have broken 2:20, and no fewer than 17 who have run the distance quicker than 2:25, including the reigning World and Olympic champions.

All five Kenyans will be vying for spots on Kenya's Olympic team. Keitany's compatriots are world champion Edna Kiplagat, who was third in London last year after winning the 2010 New York title; Priscah Jeptoo, last year's Paris champion and silver medalist at the Daegu World Championships; Florence Kiplagat who was a brilliant winner of the Berlin Marathon last September, and Lucy Kabuu who ran a superb time to finish second in January's remarkable Dubai Marathon.

The Ethiopian women will also be striving for Olympic selection. They include Atsede Baysa, the double Paris marathon champion; Ejegayehu Dibaba, runner-up in Chicago this year; Aberu Kebede, the 2010 Berlin champion; Toronto champion Koren Jejela; and Bezunesh Bekele, who was fourth in Daegu and ran an impressive personal best in Dubai.

Mikitenko should provide the Africans' main challenge. The German record holder was London champion in 2008 and 2009 and finished second in the Berlin Marathon last September ahead of Paula Radcliffe.

The experienced Russian pair, Inga Abitova and Mariya Konovalova, shouldn't be discounted either. Abitova was second behind her compatriot Liliya Shobukhova in 2010, while Konovalova was third in Chicago that year.

Swedish record holder Isabellah Andersson and Portuguese star Jéssica Augusto are also in the field, while Constantina Dita, Romania's 42-year-old Olympic champion, runs her 10th London Marathon.

"This has to be one of the most talented women's fields we've ever had and with numerous Olympic places up for grabs I'm sure we'll see a fantastic race," said Bedford.

"We are delighted that our champion Mary Keitany is back following her superb victory last year but she will have to be at her very best just to win the battle of the Kenyans, while athletes from other countries have great marathon pedigrees of their own and have everything to prove ahead of the Olympic Games."

Elite Women: Biographies

Mary Keitany (Kenya)

Born: 18 January 1982 Kisok, Baringo District
Marathon best: 2:19:19 London 2011

London Marathon record: 2011- 1st 2:19:19

Other World Marathon Majors

New York: 2010- 3rd 2:29:01, 2011- 3rd 2:23:38

Other major city marathons: None

Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Mary Keitany arrived in London last year with only one marathon behind her but a fearsome reputation after she'd smashed the world half marathon record only two months before. She lived up to the billing with a brilliant victory ahead of defending champion Liliya Shobukhova in a time only Paula Radcliffe has ever beaten on the London course.

The 29-year-old strode home in 2:19:19 to move alongside Irina Mikitenko as the fourth fastest in history (now equal fifth).

In New York, she had a half months later, she announced intent on becoming the fastest ever as she swept through half way up on Radcliffe's world record schedule (67:56) only to fade over the final 10km and finish third for the second year in a row.

Keitany announced herself on the world stage when she was second to Lornah Kiplagat at the 2007 World Half Marathon Championships in Udine, running 66:48 as Kiplagat broke the world record. She had her first child in mid-2008, and returned in 2009 to win the World Half Marathon Championships in Birmingham with an African record of 66:36 improving Elana Meyer's 1999 time of 66:44.

The following May she won the Berlin 25km by almost five minutes in 79:53, a world best for the distance. She then won the Bupa 10k in London, in another PB of 31:06, and warmed up for her marathon debut by winning the Lisbon half in 68:50.

Before her marathon debut in New York, Keitany said she had no idea how her body would react in the final few miles. In the event, she found herself in sight of victory with only compatriot Edna Kiplagat and USA's Shalane Flanagan for company. In the end, Keitany was third in 2:29:01, losing out in the tussle over the ups and downs of Central Park.

In February last year Keitany broke Lornah Kiplagat's world half marathon record when she won the Ra's Al-Khaymah race in 65:50, taking 35 seconds from the previous mark. Only Paula Radcliffe and Susan Chepkemei on the downhill Great North Run and Lisbon courses have ever run quicker.



Reuters



En route to her historic first sub-66 minute time, Keitany went through 8km in 24:30 (a 'world best'), 15km in 46:40, 10 miles in 50:05 (another world best) and 20km in 62:36 (a world record, 21 seconds quicker than Kiplagat).

She returned to the RAK this year and retained her title in 66:49, despite claiming she'd only been training once a day.

She has not been defeated at half marathon since the World Championships in October 2007 and averages 66:34 for her best five races. She holds six of the 16 fastest times.

She now believes she can run the marathon in under 2:18:00.

On the track, she has a 10,000m best of 32:18.07 from 2007. She set a 5km best of 15:25 in Lisbon last year.

Personal notes

Mary Jepkosgei Keitany married Kenyan athlete Charles Koech on 31 December 2011. They have a son Jared Kipchumba, born in June 2008. She trains in Iten and is coached by Gabriele Nicola.

Her husband has run 61:27 for the half marathon.

Irina Mikitenko (Germany)

Born: 23 August 1972 Bakanas, Kazakhstan
Marathon best: 2:19:19 Berlin 2008
London Marathon record: 2008- 1st 2:24:14, 2009- 1st 2:22:11, 2010- dnf, 2011- 7th 2:24:24
Other World Marathon Majors
 Berlin: 2007- 2nd 2:24:51, 2008- 1st 2:19:19, 2011- 2nd 2:22:18
 Chicago: 2009- 2nd 2:26:31, 2010- 5th 2:26:40
Other major city marathons: None
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

After superb results at shorter distances, Mikitenko made a highly successful marathon debut in Berlin in September 2007 when she finished second to Gete Wami in an impressive 2:24:51. But the marathon world really took notice when she won the London Marathon in April 2008, defeating Wami, Berhane Adere, Svetlana Zakharova and Constantina Dita.

She missed the Olympic Games in Beijing but returned to Berlin at the end of September that year where, in only her third race at the distance, she became the fourth fastest woman of all time (now fifth), and the ninth to break 2:20.

Mikitenko's winning time of 2:19:19 was also a German record, the fifth national record of her career. Her victory secured the 2007/08 World Marathon Majors title and half a million dollars, the highest ever earned by a German athlete.

Mikitenko ran a half marathon PB in March 2008 of 68:51 and warmed up for Berlin with a 10km PB of 30:57 in Karlsruhe. She won the inaugural Bupa London 10k at the end of May 2008, clocking 32:02 in appalling conditions.

She defended her London Marathon title in April 2009 in wonderful style, shaking off the challenge of Britain's Mara Yamauchi in the final third of the race. All seemed set for her to win world gold on home soil in Berlin, but Mikitenko was forced to skip the 2009 championships after missing too much training due to the death of her father.

She returned to racing in Chicago 2009 but suffered her second marathon defeat when she was beaten by Liliya Shobukhova in the final mile. However, second place was good enough to retain her WMM title.

Mikitenko was overshadowed by Shobukhova in 2010 too. After dropping out of the London race at mile 11 with a sore shin, she could finish only fifth in Chicago that October as the Russian notched up her third victory and claimed the 2009/10 WMM prize.

Mikitenko returned to London last year and came close to her winning time from 2008, clocking 2:24:24 in seventh place.



She missed the Daegu World Championships but was delighted to finish second in Berlin last September, two and a half minutes behind Florence Kiplagat but ahead of Paula Radcliffe.

Mikitenko's other German records are for 3000m (8:30.39 in 2000) and 5000m (indoors and out - 14:42.03 in 1999), and 5km on the road (15:16).

On the track Mikitenko narrowly missed both Olympic and world medals at 5000m and was a 10,000m European Championships finalist in both 1998 and 2006. At the Sydney Olympics she finished fifth at 5000m and in 2004 was seventh. She was also fifth at the 2001 World Championships in Edmonton.

She won six German titles on the track: 5000m in 1999, 2000 and 2006, and 10,000m in 1998, 2006 and 2008 (the last in 31:57.71).

Personal notes

Mikitenko was born Irina Volynskaya three days before the Munich Olympic Games opened. She represented Kazakhstan over 5000m at the 1996 Olympics, acquired German nationality in October 1996 and was eligible for Germany from March 1998.

She married her trainer Alexander Mikitenko (pb 5000m 13:39.95 in 1994) and they have a son, Alexander, and daughter, Vanessa. The family live in Freigericht, close to Gelnhausen, the home town of Harald Schmid, the 400m hurdler, who helped Alexander find a job when they moved.

Her father-in-law Leonid Mikitenko is also a coach. He won the European bronze medal in 1966 and was 17th at the 1968 Olympic Games at 10,000m with bests of 13:36.4 for 5000m and 28:12.4 at 10,000m.

Lucy Kabuu (Kenya)

Born: 24 March 1984 Ichamara, Nyeri region
Marathon best: 2:19:34 Dubai 2012
London Marathon record: None
Other World Marathon Majors: None
Other major city marathons
 Dubai: 2012- 2nd 2:19:34
 Osaka: 2007- dnf
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Lucy Kabuu had only attempted the marathon once before she stepped up to the line in Dubai earlier this year, and that wasn't exactly a sensation as she failed to finish the Osaka women's race in Japan.

But she prepared properly for Dubai and it showed as she came within three seconds of a sensational victory. Edged out by Ethiopia's Aselefech Mergia she nevertheless clocked 2:19:34 making her the eighth quickest woman of all time.

She still comes to London with something to prove, however. Having not been considered for Kenya's six-woman Olympic shortlist, drawn up before Dubai, she needs to show that most of her compatriots in London to persuade the Kenyan selectors to change their minds. Only reigning champion Mary Keitany has a quicker time.

Kabuu is no stranger to major Games. Twice an Olympic finalist at 10,000m, she was seventh in Beijing 2008 in a personal best of 30:39.96, two places better than her performance in Athens four years previously.

In between those two appearances she won the 2006 Commonwealth gold over 10,000m while she also took 5000m bronze in Melbourne. Two years later, she was fourth over 10,000m at the African Games.

Her talent was spotted while she was still a teenager, and she was offered the chance to go to high school in Japan to develop her running career.

She set a Kenyan junior 10,000m record in September 2003 and won the All-Japan Corporate Half Marathon in Yamaguchi in 2004. She won her first international medal at the World Cross Country Championships in 2005 when she finished fifth helping Kenya to team silver behind Ethiopia.

She didn't return to the half marathon until last year when she won the Great North Run in 67:06. She added the Great Edinburgh 10km in October before going two seconds faster to win the New Delhi half in late November.

Personal notes

Her full name is Lucy Kabuu Wangui.



She was spotted in primary school by John Kanyi, a local runner who persuaded her to try an athletic scholarship in Japan where he was based. At 16 she won a place at the Amori Yada High School and in Japan won the high school championships at 1500m.

She took a break from competition in 2009 and 2010 due to an Achilles tendon injury and pregnancy before returning to tackle the roads.

She is managed by Ricky Simms' Pace Sports Management.

Florence Kiplagat (Kenya)

Born: 27 February 1987 Kapkitony, Keiyo District
Marathon best: 2:19:44 Berlin 2011
London Marathon record: None
Other World Marathon Majors
 Berlin: 2011- 1st 2:19:44
 Boston: 2011- dnf
Other major city marathons: None
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Florence Kiplagat led from start to finish to win the Berlin Marathon last September. She crossed the line more than two and a half minutes clear after shrugging off the elder stateswomen, Irina Mikićenko and Paula Radcliffe.

Her winning time was the third quickest in the world last year and she became the 11th woman to break 2:20.

Kiplagat made her first attempt at the marathon in Boston last April. But after going through half way in 1:11:42 and 30km in 1:42:59, she failed to finish.

Kiplagat won a 5000m silver at the 2006 World Junior Championships and was fifth in the senior race at the 2007 World Cross Country Championships. After becoming a mother in 2008, she returned to win the 2009 world cross country title in Amman.

Later that year she was 12th over 10,000m at the 2009 World Championships when she was struggling with a hamstring injury. Two months earlier she'd clocked 30:11.53 to finish second over 10,000m in Utrecht, erasing Linet Masai's Kenyan record. Her 5000m PB is 14:40.14.

Injury prevented her defending her cross country title in 2010 and in September that year she made her debut at half marathon, clocking 67:40 in Lille. A month later she won the world half marathon title in Nanning defeating Dire Tune in the final stages.

Her undefeated half marathon record continued last year when she won races in Sapporo and Klagenfurt, the latter a good sign of how well she'd run in Berlin as she clocked 68:02 in very high temperatures.

She was defeated on 8 January this year by Meseret Hailu in Egmond but then broke her PB by more than a minute when she ran a course record of 66:38 to win the Rome-Ostia half marathon on 26 February. This ranks her third on the world all-time list for approved courses.

Personal notes

Her full name is Florence Jebet Kiplagat. She is from the Keiyo sub-tribe of the Kalenjin people.



She studied at Sirgoech Secondary school in Iten and originally hoped to get a scholarship to study in the United States.

She is married to Moses Mosop who ran 2:03:06 when he was second at the 2011 Boston Marathon and set world track records for 25,000m and 30,000m last year. Their daughter Aisha was born in March 2008.

Her uncle, William Kiplagat, is a marathon runner with a best of 2:06:50 from 1999. She is coached by Renato Canova.

Bezunesh Bekele (Ethiopia)

Born: 18 September 1983 Addis Ababa
Marathon best: 2:20:30 Dubai 2012
London Marathon record: 2010- 4th 2:23:17, 2011- 4th 2:23:42
Other World Marathon Majors
 Berlin: 2010- 2nd 2:24:58
 Boston: 2009- 4th 2:33:08
 Chicago: 2008- 7th 2:32:41
Other major city marathons
 Dubai: 2008- 2nd 2:23:09, 2009- 1st 2:24:02, 2010- 4th 2:26:05, 2012- 4th 2:20:30
Marathons in major championships
 Worlds: 2009- 16th 2:30:03, 2011- 4th 2:29:21

Career notes

While Bezunesh Bekele has twice finished fourth in London and was runner-up in Berlin in 2010, it's in Dubai where the 28-year-old has made her name as a marathon runner.

After representing Ethiopia at several World Cross Country and World Half Marathon Championships between 1999 and 2007, Bekele made her marathon debut in the United Arab Emirates in January 2008. As it was a debut it was, for she clocked 2:23:09 to finish second, a performance that put her fourth on the Ethiopian all-time list behind Berhane Adere, Askale Tafa, and her mentor, Gete Wami.

Bekele went on to finish seventh in Chicago that autumn, suffering in the unexpected heat. She endured difficult weather of an altogether different kind when she returned to Dubai in January 2009. Bekele took the title in a torrential downpour in 2:24:02, pocketing a tidy \$250,000 winner's cheque for what she said was her proudest running moment.

She then finished just outside the podium places in the closely-fought Boston race before a disappointing run at the World Championships in Berlin.

She was back in Dubai in January 2010 but finished outside the medals in fourth, in 2:26:05. She was also fourth on her London debut, just a place behind compatriot Aselefech Mergia and only eight seconds shy of her PB.

She was back on the podium in Berlin where she finished second to another Ethiopian, Aberu Kebede in 2:24:58, her fourth sub-2:25 marathon.

She just missed the medals again when she returned to London last April although she was the first Ethiopian across the line and close to her best with a time of 2:23:42. It was an almost identical story in Daegu where she was again first Ethiopian and again just missed the medals, coming fourth behind the all-conquering Kenyans in 2:29:21.



She ran her fourth Dubai Marathon in January this year and despite setting a big personal best was fourth yet again. Bekele clocked 2:20:30 in the record-breaking race that saw three women go under 2:20 for the first time.

It means she is now the third quickest Ethiopian of all time behind Dubai medallists Aselefech Mergia and Mare Dibaba, and 16th on the world all-time list, the fastest woman not to have broken 2:20.

Bekele set her half marathon PB of 68:07 when she was fourth in the World Half Marathon Championships in Udine in 2007, a national record at the time.

She also set PBs at 5km (15:49), 10km (32:03) and 15km (47:36) in 2007, while her track PBs are 15:02.48 (2006) for 5000m and 31:10.68 (2005) for 10,000m. She was also fifth in the African Championships 10,000m in 2006.

Personal notes

Comparisons with Gete Wami are not unfounded; Bekele is a protégée and trains under the direction of Wami's husband, coach Getenah Tessema, in Addis Ababa.

Her full name is Bezunesh Bekele Sertsu. She is married to Ethiopian international runner Tessema Abshiro. Her hobby is reading.

She is said to have a strained relationship with Dire Tune who was selected ahead of her for the Ethiopian 2008 Olympic team although Bekele had a better PB at the time.

VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON 2012

Aberu Kebede (Ethiopia)

Born: 12 September 1989 Shewa
Marathon best: 2:20:33 Dubai 2012
London Marathon record: 2011- 9th 2:24:34
Other World Marathon Majors
 Berlin: 2010- 1st 2:23:58
Other major city marathons
 Dubai: 2010- 2nd 2:24:26, 2012- 5th 2:20:33
 Rotterdam: 2010- 1st 2:25:29
Marathons in major championships
 Worlds: 2011- 12th 2:31:22

Career notes

Aberu Kebede took three and a half minutes from her personal best when she was fifth in this year's Dubai Marathon in 2:20:33, just three seconds behind Bezunesh Bekele. It means she is now 17th on the world all-time list and the fourth fastest Ethiopian ever, ahead of Berhane Adere.

She came to London last year with just three marathons behind her and ran well to finish ninth in 2:24:34. Alongside the leaders for much of the race, she dropped away only in the closing stages. She went on to represent Ethiopia at the World Championships in Daegu but found the heat and humidity tough. She finished 12th in 2:31:22.

She ran her first marathon in January 2010 when she was second in Dubai in 2:24:26 only seven seconds behind Mamitu Daska. Three months later she moved up to the winner's spot in Rotterdam, just a minute off her best time.

She won her first World Marathon Majors race in Berlin in September 2010. Despite the steady rain, she ran the second half about a minute faster than the first and crossed the line in 2:23:58, a minute ahead of Bekele. It was a PB and she became the youngest woman ever to win the Berlin title.

Before making her marathon debut, Kebede secured a speedy third place at the 2009 World Half Marathon Championships in Birmingham, in 67:39, after leading for much of the race with Mary Keitany.

Earlier that year, she set a course record of 68:43 at the Stramilano half marathon, one of Europe's oldest road races.

She also ran a PB for 10,000m [30:48.26] on the track that year, as well as at 5km (15:13, when third in the Hyde Park race in London) and 10km (32:11) on the road.

Last year she won the Lisbon half marathon on 20 March in 68:28, beating Ana Dulce Felix to the line, and won a 10km in Jakarta last June in 32:31.

She made her first international appearance at cross country, finishing 16th at the 2007 World Junior Cross Country Championships.



Personal notes

Her full name is Aberu Kebede Shewaye.

VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON 2012

Edna Kiplagat (Kenya)

Born: 15 September 1979 Eldoret
Marathon best: 2:20:46 London 2011
London Marathon record: 2011- 3rd 2:20:46
Other World Marathon Majors
 New York: 2010- 1st 2:28:20
Other major city marathons
 Las Vegas: 2005- 10th 2:50:20
 Los Angeles: 2010- 1st 2:25:38
Marathons in major championships
 Worlds: 2011- 1st 2:28:43

Career notes

Edna Kiplagat led Kenya to a clean sweep of the medals in Daegu last summer, the first ever in a women's marathon at a World Championships or Olympics. In punishing temperatures and high humidity, Kiplagat romped home despite falling at a drinks station at 38km when Sharon Cherop inadvertently clipped her heels.

She set her PB four months earlier when she was third in London, behind Mary Keitany and Liliya Shobukhova, taking nearly five minutes from her previous best at the time, it was the best ever performance for the place.

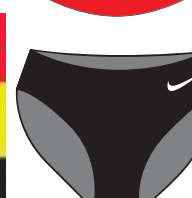
She has surprised everyone with her victory in the 2010 New York Marathon, only her second world class race at the distance. The US-based Eldoret native broke away from debutantes Keitany and Shalane Flanagan on the rolling hills of Central Park to win in 2:28:20.

Added to her Los Angeles victory eight months earlier the New York triumph made her the first athlete to win marathons on both coasts of the USA. It was an enriching achievement for as well as picking up \$135,000 for the New York win, she earned a \$100,000 bonus in LA for being the first man or woman to break the tape. The women had been given an 18 minute 47 second head start over the men's field. She was also presented with a new Honda Sedan by the race sponsors.

The New York win capped quite a year as she won the Utica Boilermaker 15km in July 2010, in a course record of 47:57, and also triumphed at the Steamboat Classic four mile race in June in 19:56.

Kiplagat's debut marathon was in December 2005 in Las Vegas when she was tenth in 2:50:20, but her first appearance on the international stage was nearly 10 years earlier when she won a silver medal over 3000m at the 1996 World Junior Championships, aged 16. Two years later she was third in the same race, while she was also fifth in the 1996 World Cross Country Championships and fourth in 1997.

She didn't win a national vest again until 2006 when she was 13th in the senior race at the World Cross.



She began running road races in the United States 10 years ago. She ran PBs for 5km (15:20), 10km (31:18) and 15km (47:57) in 2010, and was second in the New York half marathon on 20 March that year in 69:00.

She was third in the Kenyan national cross country championships this February.

Personal notes

Kiplagat's husband Gilbert Koech is also a marathon runner with a best of 2:13:45 from Las Vegas in January 2005. He also won the 2009 San Antonio Marathon.

When in the US, the pair live in Boulder, Colorado. They have a son, Carlos, and daughter, Wendy.

Her full name is Edna Ngeringwony Kiplagat. She is coached by Dieter Hogen.

Constantina Dita (Romania)

Born: 23 January 1970 Turburea
Marathon best: 2:21:30 Chicago 2005
London Marathon record: 1999- dnf, 2003- 6th 2:23:43, 2004- 3rd 2:26:52, 2005- 2nd 2:22:50, 2006- 7th 2:27:51, 2007- 3rd 2:23:55, 2008- 8th 2:27:45, 2009- dnf, 2010- 25th 2:41:12

Other World Marathon Majors

Chicago: 2003- 2nd 2:23:35, 2004- 1st 2:23:45, 2005- 2nd 2:21:30, 2006- 5th 2:24:25, 2008- 4th 2:30:57

Other major city marathons

Amsterdam: 2002 - 2nd 2:23:54
 Belgrade: 2001- 2nd 2:33:30
 Istanbul: 2000- 2nd 2:37:57
 Los Angeles: 2002- 4th 2:33:58
 Osaka: 2008- 9th 2:28:15, 2012- 11th 2:40:08
 Singapore: 2002- 1st 2:36:06
 Tokyo: 2001- 4th 2:26:39
 Yokohama: 2009- 11th 2:36:06

Marathons in major championships

Olympics: 2004- 20th 2:37:31, 2008- 1st 2:26:44
 Worlds: 1999- 19th 2:36:28, 2001- 10th 2:30:38, 2003- dnf, 2005- 3rd 2:23:19
 Europeans: 1998- 17th 2:34:35

Career notes

Constantina Dita has run 41 marathons since her first at Bucharest in 1990 and is currently the Romanian record holder for the 5km, 10km, 15km, half marathon and marathon. More importantly, she is the reigning Olympic marathon champion. Dita's victory in Beijing surprised many as she had a reputation as a bold solo runner who often got caught in the later stages. In Beijing she simply didn't get caught and at 38 became the oldest Olympic marathon champion.

Dita improved from 2:50:23 in 1991 to 2:35:32 at Lyon in 1997. She made her London debut in 1999 when she dropped out, but returned in 2003 to lower her personal best to 2:23:43. She continued her good form in Chicago that October, leading much of the race and setting a PB of 2:23:35 in second.

In 2004 she placed 20th at the Athens Olympics in 2:37:31, suffering in the hot humid conditions. She was third in the World Half Marathon Championships in 69:07, and just one week later, although sick with cold, she prevailed against a strong field to win the Chicago marathon in 2:23:45.

In 2005, she blazed through London to finish second in 2:22:50, a world best for women 35 and over. She also won bronze at the World Championships, this time staying the course having led by almost two minutes at 20km in 2001 and by 32s at 5km in 2003. She battled Deena Kastor in Chicago to finish second in 2:21:30, setting another world best for 35-year-olds, and achieved a great victory at the World Half Marathon Championships, running 69:17.



In 2006, she came to London short of training and finished seventh in 2:27:51. In August she finished 11th over 10,000m [31:49.47] at the European Championships and in October challenged Lornah Kiplagat at the World Road Running Championship over 20km. Both broke the previous world record but Kiplagat snatched the win by two seconds. Dita broke the European record in 63:23.

Weeks earlier, at the Chicago Marathon, she had seized the lead, gone through half way in 68:07 – faster than her PB – but ultimately finished fifth in 2:24:25. Chicago had official timing and certification for the 25km and 30km splits and Dita's time (1:21:31 and 1:38:30) were better than the official world records, but inadequate doping tests meant they could not be ratified.

She returned to the London podium in 2007, finishing third in 2:23:55, while in 2008 she was eighth. After her Olympic triumph, 2009 was a disappointing year. She dropped out in London for the first time in a decade, suffering with a liver complaint, and could only finish 11th in Yokohama. However, in December that year she broke her own Romanian record for 15km with 51:36 in Heerenberg.

She finished 25th in her ninth London Marathon in 2010 but did not race between 24 October that year, when she was 12th in the Great South Run, and 29 January this year when she was 11th in the Osaka Marathon in 2:40:08.

Personal notes

Born Constantina Dita in Turburea, she married her coach Valeriu Tomescu (they have a son Raphael born in 1995) and was known for years as Constantina Tomescu-Dita before reverting to her maiden name when they divorced in 2008. A former handball player, her nickname is "Pusha". She lives and trains at Boulder, Colorado.

Atsede Baysa (Ethiopia)

Born: 16 April 1987
Marathon best: 2:22:04 Paris 2010
London Marathon record: 2011- 5th 2:23:50
Other World Marathon Majors
 Chicago: 2010- 2nd 2:23:40
Other major city marathons
 Dubai: 2009- 9th 2:29:13, 2011- 5th 2:25:08, 2012- 8th 2:23:13
 Frankfurt: 2009- 7th 2:32:05
 Istanbul: 2007- 1st 2:29:08
 Nagano: 2006- 5th 2:39:31
 Paris: 2009- 1st 2:24:42, 2010- 1st 2:22:04
 Rome: 2008- 5th 2:33:07
 Rotterdam: 2007- 4th 2:33:54
 Tokyo: 2006- 8th 2:37:48
 Toronto: 2008- 4th 2:35:56
 Xiamen: 2010- 1st 2:28:53

Marathons in major championships

Worlds: 2009- 27th 2:36:04, 2011- 14th 2:31:37

Career notes

Atsede Baysa broke Beres' Reuters' 2002 course record and knocked more than two minutes from her previous best when she won the 2010 Paris Marathon in 2:22:04. She defended her 2009 title with a powerful front-running performance that made her then the fourth fastest Ethiopian of all time.

She also made a strong bid to win the 2010 Chicago Marathon. Running a consistent pace in the 5:20 per mile range, she passed the half way mark on target for a sub-2:20 finish. Despite the heat and a series of slower miles in the second half, she held on to finish runner-up to Liliya Shobukhova in 2:23:40.

That completed an excellent year for the young Ethiopian. She had begun her 2010 campaign on 2 January by becoming the first foreign athlete to win the Xiamen International marathon in China.

Baysa's second appearance in London will be her 18th full marathon since she first completed 26.2 miles in Nagano on her 19th birthday in 2006.

She was fifth that day in 2:36:31 and has steadily improved since. She was fourth in Rotterdam in 2007 when she also finished second in the African Games half marathon behind Souad Ait Salem, and was 11th at the World Half Marathon Championships in 69:15 helping Ethiopia to the team silver. That year also brought her first marathon victory, in Istanbul, and her first sub-2:30 time – 2:29:08.

She ran two marathons in 2008, finishing fifth in Rome and Toronto, and was also ninth at the Ra's Al-Khaymah half marathon.



The following year she had her big breakthrough when she won in Paris in a personal best 2:24:42. That gained her selection to Ethiopia's World Championships team for Berlin but she wasn't at her best in the German capital and finished 27th. Her fourth marathon of 2009 was in Frankfurt where she was seventh.

Consistency returned in 2010 when she broke 2:30 in all three of her races, while she also won the Semi-Marathon de Paris in 1:11:05. She covered the first half of the 2010 Paris marathon in 1:10:09, and lowered her half marathon PB in New Delhi that November when she was fifth in 68:42.

Last year she finished fifth in the Dubai marathon in 2:25:08, and was fifth again on her London debut in her third quickest time. Again she was below her best at the World Championships, finishing 14th in Daegu in 2:31:37.

Baysa was one of a host of Ethiopians to run the Dubai Marathon in January and chased the record-setting leaders home in eighth, recording her second quickest time, 2:23:13.

Personal notes

Her full name is Atsede Baysa Tesema. Her surname is sometimes spelled Bayisa.

Baysa is also a singer and each year she records a new song and video dedicated to her husband (see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2qbFyEo40I>).

VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON 2012

Ejegayehu Dibaba (Ethiopia)

Born: 21 March 1982 Bekoji, Arsi region
Marathon best: 2:22:09 Chicago 2011
London Marathon record: None
Other World Marathon Majors
 Chicago: 2011– 2nd 2:22:09
Other major city marathons: None
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

After a successful career on the track, Ejegayehu Dibaba made a memorable marathon debut in Chicago last year when she was second to Liliya Shobukhova in 2:22:09, the third fastest debut ever in her first race beyond 10km.

She boldly stayed with Shobukhova's pace to 25km before dropping back to finish some four minutes behind the Russian.

On the track she was often in the shadow of her younger sister Tirunesh not least at the 2005 World Championships in Helsinki when she won bronze medals at 5000m and 10,000m as her sister became the first woman to win the distance double at a global event.

The previous year she beat her cousin Derartu Tulu to take 10,000m silver at the 2004 Olympic Games behind China's Xing Huina.

Her track success started in 2002 when she was third over 5000m at the African Championships. The following year she won the All-African Games at 10,000m and was ninth at the World Championships in Paris.

She was seventh at the same distance at the Worlds in Osaka in 2007 and won a silver at the African Championships in 2008. She was 14th in the Beijing Olympic 10,000m final when Tirunesh won the first of her two golds.

She won a silver medal at the World Cross Country Championships in 2004 as Ethiopia won the team competition, and was part of Ethiopian teams in 2003, 2005, and 2006.

She turned to road racing in 2010 when she ran a handful of shorter races. In 2011 she recorded 32:58 finishing third over 10km in Ottawa before making her marathon debut.

Personal notes

She is a member of the Oromo ethnic group from the high altitude Aris region.

She is the third of six children and older sister to Tirunesh and Genzebe. Tirunesh is a double Olympic and multi-world cross country champion, while Genzebe became world indoor 1500m champion in Istanbul this March.



Reuters



They are cousins of double Olympic 10,000m champion, and 2001 London Marathon champion, Derartu Tulu.

VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON 2012

Inga Abitova (Russia)

Born: 6 March 1982 Novokuibyshevsk
Marathon best: 2:22:19 London 2010
London Marathon record: 2007– 9th 2:34:25, 2009– 6th 2:25:55, 2010– 2nd 2:22:19, 2011– 15th 2:26:31
Other World Marathon Majors
 New York: 2010– 4th 2:29:17, 2011– dnf
Other major city marathons
 Belgrade: 2005– 1st 2:38:20
 Moscow: 2004– 6th 2:43:48
 Mumbai: 2006– 2nd 2:33:55
 Osaka: 2007– dnf
 Yokohama: 2009– 1st 2:27:18
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Better known as a 10,000m runner, Inga Abitova has steadily improved as a marathon runner since her debut in Moscow in 2004 when she ran 2:43:48 at the Russian championships.

She won her second marathon in Belgrade the following spring, improving by more than five minutes to run 2:38:20. In January 2006 she made another big improvement to 2:33:55 in Mumbai, Russia. That was good for second place, just 40 seconds behind winner Mulu Seboka.

Abitova was part of the Russian team for the Yokohama International Women's Ekiden in 2006 and ran the fastest fourth leg of 6km in 19:32. Turning to the track she won the All-Russia Meeting 3000m in 9:03.42, recorded a big 10,000m personal best of 31:32.24 at the Russian championships and won the Russian Cup 5000m in 15:15.05.

The finest moment of Abitova's career came at the 2006 European Championships. With two laps to go in the 10,000m final she was in a pack of more favoured competitors, but with 500m left she unleashed a sustained kick to win in 30:31.42.

In 2007, she finished ninth in London, her first World Marathon Majors race, but she returned to the track in 2008 when she was sixth in the Olympic 10,000m final in 30:37.33, the second European home behind her compatriot Mariya Kononova.

Her big marathon breakthrough came in London in 2009 when she lowered her PB by eight minutes to finish sixth on a great day for the Russians.

She seems to enjoy running in the UK for she returned to London that September to set a PB of 15:23 over 5km when fourth at the adidas women's run in Hyde Park. She then ran 69:53 for half marathon at the World Championships in Birmingham in October 2009, and in April 2010 completed her third London Marathon, finishing second behind Liliya Shobukhova in 2:22:19, a PB by more than three and a half minutes.



Reuters



She put her track speed to good use again that summer, claiming a silver medal for 10,000m at the European Championships. In November, she ran another intelligent race to finish fourth on her New York marathon debut.

Last year was less successful for Abitova, however, as she was 15th in London and dropped out in New York.

Personal notes

Abitova is married to a former Russian steeplechaser and has a son, Yegor, born in 2003. She comes from Novokuibyshevsk in the Samara region of Siberia, a town of just 150 inhabitants.

She has a tattoo in Japanese lettering embossed on her shoulder, referring to an inspirational motto calling for high achievement.

Koren Jelela (Ethiopia)

Born: 18 January 1987 Shewa
Marathon best: 2:22:43 Toronto 2011
London Marathon record: None
Other World Marathon Majors
 Boston: 2010- 12th 2:33:48
Other major city marathons
 Mumbai: 2011- 1st 2:26:56
 Paris: 2011- 3rd 2:26:55
 Toronto: 2010- 4th 2:24:33, 2011- 1st 2:22:43
 Venice: 2009- 2nd 2:28:41
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Koren Jelela broke her personal best by nearly two minutes to win the Toronto Marathon last October ahead of her compatriot Mare Dibaba. Jelela ran an ambitious first half of 68:39 before a pain in her leg forced her to slow in the second half to finish in 2:22:43.

Jelela decided to switch to road running after three non-scoring appearances for Ethiopia at the World Cross Country Championships of 2007, 2008 and 2009. Each year she failed to be one of her nation's four scoring athletes and so missed out on team medals.

She made her marathon debut in Venice in 2009 and finished runner-up to Kenyan veteran Anne Kosgei. That November she broke the course record to win the Great Ethiopian 10km Run in Addis Ababa in 33:03.

The following February she made the top 10 of the Ra's Al-Khaymah half marathon with a PB of 1:10:52 and was entered into the elite field for the Boston Marathon. But she failed to match her debut, finishing 12th in 2:33:48.

She travelled to Toronto for the Waterfront Marathon that September and came fourth, breaking her PB by four minutes in 2:24:33. She ended 2010 placing fifth at the African Mountain Running Championships in Obudo, Nigeria.

She started 2011 with another course record, this time in Mumbai where she won the January marathon in 2:26:56. Three months later she ran just a second quicker to finish third in Paris behind Kenyans Priscah Jeptoo and Agnes Kiprop.

She returned to India for the World 10k in Bangalore and finished fourth behind three compatriots as Ethiopia swept the board. She travelled to Daegu as a reserve for her country at the World Championships but did not compete.

Personal notes

Her full name is Koren Jelela Yal.



She is coached by Ethiopians Gemedu Dedefo and Gebeyehu Berihun following the technical advice and programmes of Italian Gabriele Nicola. She trains with a group including Aberu Kebede, Aselefech Mergia, Tirfe Tsegaye and Atsedo Habtamu.

She grew up with her farming parents, two brothers and three sisters in the Shewa area of Ethiopia. As a young girl she admired Derartu Tulu, the double Olympic 10,000m champion and 2001 London Marathon winner.

She is engaged to 2:09:03 marathoner Shumane Gurbaba who won the 2011 Stockholm marathon.

Priscah Jeptoo (Kenya)

Born: 26 June 1984
Marathon best: 2:22:55 Paris 2011
London Marathon record: None
Other World Marathon Majors: None
Other major city marathons
 Padua: 2010- 2nd 2:30:53
 Paris: 2011- 1st 2:22:55
 Porto: 2009- 1st 2:30:40
 Turin: 2010- 1st 2:27:02
Marathons in major championships
 Worlds: 2011- 2nd 2:29:00

Career notes

Priscah Jeptoo snatched the silver medal from teammate Sharon Cherop in the closing stages of the World Championships marathon in Daegu last summer, helping Kenya to a clean sweep of the medals. It was her first appearance in a Kenyan vest.

Jeptoo had won her place in the Kenyan team with victory in the Paris Marathon last April in 2:22:55, more than four minutes inside her previous personal best.

It was the second fastest time in the race's 35-year history as she finished nearly two minutes ahead of her compatriot Agnes Kiprop.

Jeptoo made a winning start to her marathon career, taking the 2009 Porto marathon in a course record of 2:30:40 and she improved her best the following year when she out ran Fate Tola to win in Turin in 2:27:02.

She set a half marathon best last March, running 70:26 to win the Goyang Joongang race in Korea.

She ran a course record at the New Year's Eve Saint Silvester 15km Road Race in Sao Paulo, beating Ethiopia's Wude Ayalew in 48:48, another personal best.

Her 10km PB is 34:05 from Lisbon in 2009.

She was second to Joyce Chepkurui in the Kenyan cross country fixture at Eldoret on 22 January this year.

In her five career marathons she has finished first three times, and second twice.



Jelena Prokopcuka (Latvia)

Born: 21 September 1976 Riga
Marathon best: 2:22:56 Osaka 2005
London Marathon record: 2003- 7th 2:24:01
Other World Marathon Majors
 Boston: 2004- 4th 2:30:16, 2006- 2nd 2:23:48,
 2007- 2nd 2:29:58, 2008- 4th 2:28:12
 Chicago: 2003- 3rd 2:24:53
 New York: 2004- 5th 2:26:51, 2005- 1st 2:24:41,
 2006- 1st 2:25:05, 2007- 3rd 2:26:13
Other major city marathons
 Nagoya: 2004- dnf
 Osaka: 2005- 1st 2:22:56
 Paris: 2002- 5th 2:28:36
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Now 35, the two-times New York champion from 2005 and 2006 returns to marathon racing after a four-year absence, her last outing over the full distance being the 2008 Boston Marathon when she was fourth.

That was Jelena Prokopcuka's 13th career marathon since her first in Paris in 2002. She was seventh on her only previous London appearance the following year and she went on to finish third in Chicago, the first of six top three finishes in World Marathon Majors races.

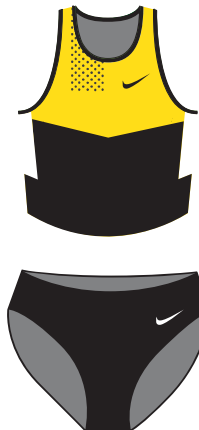
She also won the Osaka International Ladies Marathon in 2005 when she set her personal best of 2:22:56, still a Latvian record. In fact, it is one of eight national records on track and road, indoor and out, broken by Prokopcuka at distances from 3000m to the marathon.

She also competed in three Olympic Games on the track (twice each at 5000m and 10,000m) in Atlanta, Sydney and Athens, her highest finish being seventh in the 2004 10,000m final.

At the marathon she garnered a reputation for being a successful closer in big races often showing tremendous composure and determination. She came from behind to win both Osaka and New York in 2005.

Pushing Rita Jeptoo to the finish line in Boston in 2006, Prokopcuka lost by just 10 seconds, then the closest women's finish in the race's history. A month later she set a national 10km record of 31:33 at the Great Manchester Run and she came within one second of that time placing second to Lornah Kiplagat at the Circle of Friends Mini 10km in New York City.

After finishing second at the 2007 Boston Marathon Prokopcuka moved into first place on the 2006/07 World Marathon Majors leaderboard. The following year, she stayed with the lead pack through the first half of the Boston Marathon and eventually placed fourth.



Her half marathon highlights include a bronze medal at the World Half Marathon Championships in 2002 (69:15), first at the 2002 and 2003 Paris half marathon, and first at the 2005 Vilamoura half marathon. Her win in the 2008 Latvian half marathon championships was her 47th national title.

She won the Paris half marathon for the third time in 2009 and set a national 5km record in Vienna that year.

She returned to racing on 25 March this year when she was fifth in the Lisbon half marathon in 1:10:39.

Personal notes

Prokopcuka was named Latvia's Best Sports Person in 2005 and received an award for the year's most outstanding contribution to Latvian sport and the Spectators' Award as the most popular athlete.

She is coached by her husband, Aleksandrs Prokopcuks, who holds the Latvian men's marathon record with 2:15:56 from 1995. The couple competed together at Boston in 2004 when Aleksandrs finished 11th.

They live in the Gulf of Riga resort town of Jurmala but often train in the Algarve region of Portugal. She likes to watch films, read books and sew.

Isabellah Andersson (Sweden)

Born: 12 November 1980 Manga, Kenya
Marathon best: 2:23:41 Dubai 2011
London Marathon record: None
Other World Marathon Majors
 New York: 2011- 8th 2:28:19
Other major city marathons
 Dubai: 2010- 5th 2:26:52, 2011- 3rd 2:23:41, 2012- 10th 2:25:41
 Frankfurt: 2010- 4th 2:25:10
 Stockholm: 2008- 1st 2:34:14, 2009- 1st 2:33:52, 2010- 1st 2:31:35, 2011- 1st 2:37:28
Marathons in major championships
 Worlds: 2011- 7th 2:30:13
 Europeans: 2010- 5th 2:34:43

Career notes

Kenyan-born Isabellah Andersson has won the Stockholm Marathon four-times in a row and broken the Swedish record three times in the last two years, most recently when she was third in Dubai in January 2011 in 2:23:41.

She made her marathon debut with 2:51:40 in 2006 and set her first national record when she was fifth in Dubai in 2010 in 2:26:52. After winning in Stockholm for a third time that June she finished fifth at the European Championships in Barcelona less than two months later, elevated to fourth when the winner, Zivile Balciunaite, was disqualified.

She ran her fourth marathon of 2010 in Frankfurt and lowered her best again to 2:25:10 finishing fourth.

Her first podium finish outside of Stockholm came in Dubai last January when she was third with another PB. Following her fourth Stockholm win last May, she distinguished herself again at the World Championships in Daegu where she was seventh in 2:30:13.

After finishing eighth in New York last November, she maintained her record of top 10 finishes when she was 10th in Dubai this January breaking 2:30 for the fifth time with 2:25:41.

On the track Andersson has won Swedish titles at 3000m, 5000m, and 10,000m, as well as at half marathon. Her half marathon PB is 70:02 from 2010.

She has a 10km PB of 32:24 from 2009.

Personal notes

Born Isabellah Moraa Amoro in Kenya, she visited Sweden for the first time in 2004, having become fascinated by the sport of orienteering after a Swedish school party visited her country.



She travelled to Sweden and met Lars Andersson at an orienteering school. They married in October 2006 and their daughter Beyoncé (named after the American singer) was born in 2009.

She was granted Swedish citizenship on 10 May 2009, 20 days before winning her second Stockholm Marathon title.

She lives in Vålsjö and competes for Hasselby SK.

VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON 2012

Mariya Konovalova (Russia)

Born: 14 August 1974 Angarsk, née Pantyukhova
Marathon best: 2:23:50 Chicago 2010
London Marathon record: 2010– 3rd 2:35:21, 2011– 10th 2:25:18
Other World Marathon Majors
 Chicago: 2010– 3rd 2:23:50
Other major city marathons: None
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Mariya Konovalova made a somewhat uninspiring marathon debut in London in 2010 after a successful international track career that goes back to 1995. But she soon made up for it in Chicago where she broke through to world class.

She arrived in London that year in good form after setting a Russian record for 2000m indoors (5:38.98) which was also a world record for over 35s. But she found the going tough on her maiden marathon and finished 16th.

She returned to the track in summer 2010, winning the Russian 5000m title and placing fifth at the European Championships in Barcelona.

She won a half marathon in Novosibirsk in 71:02 that September, and in October ran 2:23:50 to finish third in the Chicago Marathon, joining her compatriot Liliya Shobukhova on the podium.

She returned to London last April and finished 10th in 2:25:18, a 10-minute improvement on 12 months earlier.

She broke her half marathon PB at Novosibirsk in September, winning the race in 70:30.

On the track, she was 12th in the 1995 World Indoors 3000m and sixth in the World Championships 5000m in Gothenburg. She was seventh over 5000m at the World Championships in 1999 and 11th in 2007, while at 10,000m she was fifth at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and 11th at the 2009 Worlds in Berlin.

She has also done well at cross country, finishing second and fourth at European Cross Country Championships in 2006 and 2007 respectively.

She made her half marathon debut in October 2008 when she was fourth at the Great North Run in 70:48.

In 2009, she set PBs at 5000m indoors (15:42.37) and 10,000m outdoors (30:32.53) and was Russian 5000m champion. Her outdoor 5000m PB is from 2008 – 14:38.09.

She was third over 5000m at the Russian indoor championships this year, just over a second outside her PB.



Personal notes

She was born Mariya Pantyukhova. She runs for the Moscow Army Club and is trained by Yuri Kukanov.

VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON 2012

Jéssica Augusto (Portugal)

Born: 8 November 1981 France
Marathon best: 2:24:33 London 2011
London Marathon record: 2011– 8th 2:24:33
Other World Marathon Majors
 New York: 2011– dnf
Other major city marathons: None
Marathons in major championships: None

Career notes

Jéssica Augusto ran an impressive race for her marathon debut in London last April when she finished eighth in 2:24:33. It was an encouraging start to her marathon career although she couldn't follow it up in New York last November when she was forced to drop out.

Augusto has been a Portuguese international since 1998. In 1999 she was sixth at 3000m and 12th over 1500m at the European Junior Championships. The following year she won the European Junior Cross Country title and Great cross country where she's enjoyed most success as a junior.

Her victory in the 2010 European Cross Country Championships was no better than her runner-up place in 2008, while she was 21st at the 2010 World Cross Country Championships following 12th place in 2009. At the Europeans in Albufeira she led virtuously from start to finish and celebrated to her home crowd before crossing the line. She not only led Portugal to the team gold but became the first former junior champion to win the senior title.

On the track she came close to claiming two medals at the 2010 European Championships in Barcelona, finishing third in the 10,000m followed by fourth in the 5000m. She then represented Europe at the IAAF Continental Cup over 5000m, finishing seventh.

Indeed, 2010 was a good year for Augusto as she set national records for two miles indoors (9:19.39 in Birmingham, also a European best) and 3000m steeplechase outdoors (9:18.54), as well as PBs at 1500m (indoors and out), 3000m (8:46.59), 5000m (14:37.07), 10,000m (31:19.15) and 10km (31:47 when second at the Great Manchester Run).

Now 30, she has been Ibero-American 3000m champion three times, and was World Universities 5000m champion in 2007. As a 5000m runner she represented Portugal at the 2005 and 2007 World Championships, while she was 11th in the 3000m steeplechase in 2009. She also competed in both the 5000m and the steeplechase at the 2008 Olympics, but failed to make the final in either.

She has some decent form on the roads too with a half marathon PB of 69:08 from her victory at the Great North Run in 2009. She was second at the Great North Run last September and was seventh in the New York half marathon last March.



A prolific racer, she competed 30 times in 2010 alone, finishing the year with three victories in a week, concluding with the New Year's Eve 10km in Madrid.

She also has impressive range – last year she won the Portuguese 1500m title, ran 5000m at the London Grand Prix, and was 10th over 10,000m at the World Championships in Daegu. She also set a 5km PB of 15:53.

She won the Funchal half marathon on 4 March this year in 76:38.

Personal notes

Her boyfriend is Eduardo Carvalho, the Portuguese football team's first choice goalkeeper since 2008. They met at school. In those days Augusto was also a goalkeeper.

Nadia Ejjaflini (Italy)

Born: 8 November 1977 Rabat, Morocco

Marathon best: 2:26:15 Frankfurt 2011

London Marathon record: None

Other World Marathon Majors: None

Other major city marathons

Frankfurt: 2011- 6th 2:26:15

Milan: 2007- 4th 2:37:25

Naples: 2004- 2nd 2:39:26

Marathons in major championships

Olympics: 2004- dnf

Worlds: 2003- 44th 2:38:39, 2005- 41st 2:41:51

Career notes

Nadia Ejjaflini knocked more than 11 minutes from her personal best when she was sixth in Frankfurt at the end of October last year. It was her first marathon for almost four years and her first as an Italian citizen after she previously competed for Morocco and Bahrain.

Ejjaflini's international career goes back to 1998 when she was fourth over 5000m at the World Junior Championships (although she was disqualified retrospectively for being over-age). She also competed at the 1998 and 1999 World Junior Cross Country Championships when she was entered by Morocco with a birth date of 1980.

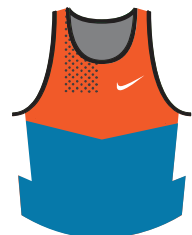
In 1999 she won the half marathon title at the Arab Games (she also took bronze at that distance in 2004).

She won the Giro di Castelbuono race in 2002 and made her marathon debut at the Paris World Championships in 2003. By then she was competing for Bahrain (she transferred in 2002) and although she finished 44th her time, 2:38:39, was a national record.

The following year she was second in Naples but failed to finish the punishing Olympic Games marathon in Athens 2004. She was 41st at the 2005 World Championships in Helsinki and she lowered her Bahraini record to 2:37:25 finishing fourth in Milan in 2007, her last marathon before Frankfurt.

Away from the marathon, Ejjaflini has had a varied and colourful career. On the track she was fourth over 5000m at the 2006 Asian Games, and won the Arab Games 10,000m title in 2007. She won 5000m silver and 10,000m bronze at the 2007 Military Games.

She became an Italian citizen in 2009 and that year had some success on the road circuit. She won the Singelloop Utrecht 10km race, was second in the New York half marathon and set a 15km PB at the Boilermaker race in USA.



After missing the whole of 2010 she raced prolifically in 2011. In the course of 27 races from 5km to cross country to the marathon, she won the Italian 10,000m title, set a 5000m PB at the European Cup in Oslo, won the Den Haag 10km race, and slashed her half marathon PB to 68:27 winning the Italian in Cremona.

After her marathon breakthrough in Frankfurt, she went on to finish fourth behind Britain's Gemma Steel at the European Cross Country Championships in Velenje.

She was 10th in the Lisbon half marathon on 25 March in 72:41.

Personal notes

Ejjaflini was born in Morocco, switched nationality to Bahrain in 2002 and later became an Italian citizen when she married in 2009.

Yuliya Ruban (Ukraine)

Born: 6 October 1983 Belaya Tzerkov

Marathon best: 2:27:00 Boston 2011

London Marathon record: None

Other World Marathon Majors

Boston: 2011- 10th 2:27:00

Other major city marathons

Casablanca: 2008- 5th 2:40:21

Egna: 2006- 1st 2:43:41

Frankfurt: 2010- 7th 2:27:44

Karlsruhe: 2007- 2nd 2:40:26

Ljubljana: 2009- 7th 2:39:07

Prague: 2010- 4th 2:31:13

Siófok: 2008- 3rd 2:49:35

Turin: 2011- 1st 2:27:10

Marathons in major championships

Worlds: 2011- dnf

Career notes

The Ukrainian cross country champion from 2005 to 2007, Yuliya Ruban moved to the marathon in October 2006 and over the next two years ran four races in the 2:40-2:50 range, winning her debut in Egna, finishing second in Karlsruhe and fifth in Casablanca.

She was only when she hitched up with Igor Osmak, former coach to two-times World Marathon Majors champion Irina Mikiyenko, that her times began to come down.

In 2010 she took eight minutes from her PB when she was fourth in Prague in 2:31:13 and in Frankfurt later that year she broke 2:30 for the first time, clocking 2:27:44 in seventh place.

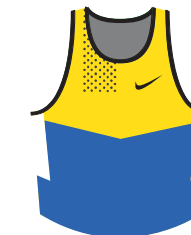
She entered the Boston marathon last year full of confidence, saying: "After Frankfurt I realised I have a lot of strength and potential to go faster."

She was true to her word, finishing 10th in 2:27:00 and was selected to represent Ukraine at the World Championships in Daegu. Things didn't go so well in Korea and Ruban was forced to drop out. She bounced back last November to win the Turin Marathon, finishing just 10 seconds outside her PB.

Ruban followed up her Boston Marathon performance by running a 10,000m PB of 33:23.66 at the end of May. She has a half marathon PB of 74:31 and has run 33:36 for 10km on the roads.

Personal notes

Both of Ruban's parents, Irina and Igor, were elite runners and they coached Ruban as a youth. "My parents are my biggest fans," she says. "My mother, a former professional marathon runner, still runs for her own pleasure, but of course she can't catch up with me nowadays."



Ruban trains in her native town of Belaya Tzerkov (White Church), Kiev and Kislovodsk. She graduated from Kievskiy State University of Physical Culture and Sports and is working on an advanced degree.

She is a lieutenant in the Ukrainian military forces and competes in some of the armed forces races.

Her hobbies include learning English and collecting photographs and mementos from her trips around the world.