



IAAF Worlds preview: Women's marathon

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★★★★★ (1 rating)

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With injury sidelining the two fastest marathoners of the year, the women's race to the World Marathon crown will be even more wide open than earlier anticipated.

Just a few days ago the German team was dealt a huge blow when Irina Mikitenko, the two-time winner in London and the current world leader at 2:22:11, withdrew from the race following the death of her father. Earlier this summer, Briton Mara Yamauchi, who finished second to Mikitenko in London, clocking 2:23:12, also withdrew due to injury.

Their departure puts the focus on World record holder and 2005 champion Paula Radcliffe, whose start is still uncertain. The Briton hasn't race since her 2:23:56 victory in New York last November, but if she decides to race, she'll certainly be a factor.

A veteran who has displayed strong form this season is Japan's Yoko Shibui, who already has fond memories of the streets of Berlin. In 2004 the 30-year-old dipped under the magical 2:20 barrier with her 2:19:41 victory in the city's fall Marathon. The run firmly places her in the No. 7 spot all time. In January she ran 2:23:42 to take the victory in Osaka, the year's third fastest performance.

She'll lead a traditionally strong Japanese team which includes Yoshimi Ozaki (2:23:30 PB, '08), Yuri Kano (2:24:27 PB, '08), and Tomo Morimoto (2:26:29 '09).

Ethiopia also brings a solid team, lead by Bezunesh Bekele, this year's Dubai Marathon winner in 2:24:02. As a follow-up, she finished fourth in Boston and has a career best of 2:23:09 from Dubai last year. Atsede Bayisa, this year's Paris winner with a PB 2:24:42, will make her big meet debut over the distance. The most experienced is Dire Tune, the 2008 winner in Boston who returned to finish second this year. Her 2:24:40 personal best came with her victory in Houston in 2008. Aselefech Mergia. Notably, no Ethiopian woman has ever won a medal at the World Championships.

Kenyan hopes rest primarily with Helen Kirop, a 2:25 runner who was third in Doha and fifth in Boston this year, and third in Berlin last fall. Martha Komu, the 2008 Paris winner in 2:25:33 is the Kenyan No. 2.

Unlike the men's contest, the pool of potential medallists truly does span the globe. American Kara Goucher, the 10,000m bronze medallist in Osaka, has finished second in each of her two marathons, in New York last fall in 2:25:53, and last April in Boston. She tuned up with a strong 1:08:05 Half Marathon in Chicago earlier this month and looks to be on target to collect the first US medal since 1983.

Osaka Silver medallist Zhou Chunxiu, who followed up with Olympic bronze at home last year, is threat based upon big race credentials, but in her one marathon this year, she was a distant 12th in London clocking 2:29:02.

Svetlana Zakharova has been Russia's most consistent marathoner over the past decade. Her 2:21:31 PB dates back to 2002, but she's clocked 2:25:06 this year, and could be a medal threat as well in this, her third World championships appearance.



By: Getty Images

Expect to see Paula Radcliffe and Kara Goucher battling for supremacy in the women's marathon.





8/10/09

Young DBs turning the corner; Mon. afternoon notes

By Erik Scalavino

TEXT SIZE  

New England's group of young and new defensive backs is making progress. Plus, news and notes from the second Monday practice.

It didn't take long for **Darius Butler** to learn he couldn't take plays off in the pros.

"Ah, not too long. I think, my first day out here," he said after a recent practice.

Butler, a rookie cornerback from UConn, is currently undergoing a trial-by-fire initiation to the NFL. When the Patriots team defense faces off against their counterparts on offense, Butler is often matched up against future Hall-of-Fame wide receiver **Randy Moss**.

But Butler insists he can't allow himself to be star-struck on the field, though it is in the back of his mind.

"I really don't have time to do that when I line up against that dude. I'm just focused on my assignment," he said. "But it's always been a dream."

Butler is one of many young players who's changing the face of the New England secondary. One thing he's learned already is that the veterans at his position are always there to help out when he needs advice.

"We've got a good group of veterans. **Leigh Bodden's** been around for a while. **Shawn Springs** has definitely been around a while. **Brandon [Meriweather]** and **James [Sanders]** pretty much know the system. Everybody's been helping me out. It's been good so far."

Butler is fighting for a very limited number of starting jobs in the Pats secondary. And one of his competitors is a guy who knows what it's like to be a rookie corner facing Moss. **Terrence Wheatley** had that assignment last summer.

What a difference a year makes. Wheatley says he's now "more relaxed" out on the field.

"I don't really feel a whole ton of pressure on me," he explained. "Obviously, there's pressure to perform, but pressure is what you make it. So, I'm just trying to go out there and perform everyday. Whatever happens, happens.

Coming off a season-ending injury, Wheatley is welcoming the added competition in the defensive backfield.

"Everything is open," he said. "You've got to go out there and do what you need to do and not worry about the competition itself. Worry about the competition within yourself, and the rest will take care of itself."

One of the new Patriots DBs who's constantly competing against himself, it seems, is rookie safety **Pat Chung**. When the team runs sprints before stretching at the start of practice, Chung is usually leading the entire team.

"Gotta get warm, man. Gotta get warm. It's conditioning," he answered when asked why he's so gung-ho about sprints. And no, he added, the veterans don't feel like he's showing them up. In fact, he said they've been encouraging him to continue running full-speed.

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Chung has also become known for spontaneously dropping to the ground on the sidelines and doing pushups during practice. That's something he brought with him from Oregon, where he played his college ball.

"It's a habit," Chung said. "When you're just sitting around watching plays, getting mental reps, just knock out, like, 20. It's just to get better while you're not out on the field. You're always getting better."

Practice Notes

Who's Hot: *Shawn Crable*

After missing the morning workout, Crable came back this afternoon and had what would have been a sack of QB Tom Brady during team offense vs. team defense.

Who's Not: *Russ Hochstein*

He committed not one, but two false start penalties during the team period and was forced to run laps around the field.

Play of Practice: *Brady to Galloway TD*

These end-of-game scenarios at the end of practice have become appointment viewing for training camp aficionados. With a lap around the field at stake for the loser, Brady led his offense against the New England defense in a goal-line, winner-takes-all play. At the snap, he immediately looked left for WR Joey Galloway, who ran a perfect corner route against Leigh Bodden. Brady placed the ball precisely in Galloway's hands for the score in the left corner of the end zone.

* WR **Joey Galloway**, OL **Stephen Neal**, DL **Jarvis Green**, and LB **Shawn Crable**, all of whom missed the morning session, were back in full pads for the afternoon practice.

* Several other players who took part in the morning were absent in the afternoon, including OL **Dan Connolly**, NT **Vince Wilfork**, WR **Randy Moss**, WR **Wes Welker**, TE **Benjamin Watson**, DL **Richard Seymour**, and DL **Ty Warren**. In addition, Springs, LB **Paris Lenon**, LB **Tedy Bruschi**, OL **George Bussey**, and DL **Mike Wright** were not on the field. The remaining list players, WR **Brandon Tate** (NFI) and OL **Mark LeVoi** (PUP), remained there.

* In a passing drill, with linebackers covering tight ends and running backs, **Adalius Thomas** thoroughly harassed **Tyson DeVree** at the line of scrimmage. So much so, that DeVree couldn't get into his route and the play was blown dead before it even had a chance to begin. The offense had its moments, too, like when RB **BenJarvus Green-Ellis** attacked LB **Eric Alexander** head-on. The smaller Green-Ellis sprinted to Alexander at the snap and shoved him back a yard, creating just enough space for the back to scoot out to his right in the flat and make the reception.

* In 7-on-7, CB **Jonathan Wilhite** had an easy interception bounced straight off his chest. The ball was thrown directly to him, in what looked like a misread route by the wide receiver. Mad at himself, Wilhite promptly dropped to the ground and pumped out 10 pushups. From the sideline, QB **Tom Brady** playfully ridiculed Wilhite for the drop.

* Brady was more pumped up than usual today, it seemed. Several times, he was overheard trash-talking with members of the defense. In particular, he took exception to a pass interference penalty by Butler, who tripped WR **Ray Ventrone** on an out pattern.

* Wheatley picked off Brady during team work. On a 50-yard bomb intended for WR **Greg Lewis**, Wheatley blanketed Lewis and positioned himself in just the right spot to turn and grab the slightly underthrown pass. Wheatley caught the ball and fell backwards into the endzone for what would have been a touchback.

* Overall, this wasn't one of the more spirited sessions – Brady's passion notwithstanding. It's understandable, however, as today's temps were in the 90s and the air in Foxborough was uncomfortably humid.



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Purify enjoys purity of semipro football

[JUAN LOPEZ](#)

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Bobby Purify doesn't miss the days of scoring touchdowns for the University of Colorado. He's OK with not hearing his name on ESPN and not reading his name in the newspaper.

"It's in my past," said Purify who works in real estate as a contractor for Colorado Springs Utilities. "I've lived my dream. I've done what I've wanted to do in my life. I have a blessed life in my eyes. My two girls (ages 4 and 2) are healthy, and I'm still able to play the sport I grew up playing."

From 2000 to 2004, Purify trotted out to games in a black and gold uniform for the Buffaloes. Now, he takes the field donning red and black for the Colorado Springs Flames, a semipro team in the Colorado Football Conference.

The Flames own a league-best 8-0 record.

For Purify, a wide receiver for the Flames, the game is more fun than work. After leaving Colorado, where he played running back, Purify had brief stints with the San Francisco 49ers and Green Bay Packers before returning to Colorado Springs. He joined the Flames at the start of last season and was hooked because of the camaraderie among his teammates.

"Every practice, it's like a family reunion," the Palmer High School graduate said. "Always cracking jokes and messing with each other.

"Plus, it keeps me sane. I have two little girls, and it gets me out of the house. It helps me stay in shape as well, and it's just a couple hours a week where I get to bond with some guys that have common interests."

The common interest is a love for football, said Nic Olney, the team's defensive coordinator and assistant general manager.

"All these guys have jobs, have families — they're grown men," said Olney, a teacher at Panorama Middle School and coach at Harrison High School. "They make priorities to be here because they love the game."

That love has yielded almost immaculate results. The Flames have outscored opponents 413-29.

"That reflects the amount of talent we have," said Fred Reese, who has coached the team since 1998 and was a running back for the Dallas Cowboys and 49ers in the early 1970s. "We have a lot of guys who have played college ball, whether it be Division I, II or III.

"A lot of people that hear about semipro football don't think there's talent out on the field. They think it's just another sandlot brawl. This league, in the years that I've been here, I've seen them clean it up. No fights. It's just a good brand of football, and it's great entertainment for the local community, especially Colorado Springs."

ABOUT THE FLAMES

- Part of the nine-team Colorado Football Conference
- Established in 1987, inaugural year of CFC
- 8-0 this year, outscored opponents 413 to 29
- CFC divisional playoffs are this weekend. Flames have a bye and will play in CFC semifinals Aug. 15
- Notable players on the team: WR Bobby Purify (University of Colorado), RB Ian Oldham (Colorado State University), DL Daniel Garcia (Western State), DL Al Everett (Adams State), LB Hansel Bjork (Adams State)