

Former Buff Kara Goucher settles for PR in Boston

She finishes fifth in marathon

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BOSTON -- Kara Goucher was practically prophetic in describing the one outcome she'd like to achieve at the Boston Marathon.

"I just want to win," the former University of Colorado standout said days before the race. "Sure, I would love to get a (personal record), but I would rather be the 2011 Boston Marathon champion than have some PR. Hopefully, I would break the PR someday. But no one else can ever be the 2011 Boston Marathon champion."

Unfortunately for Goucher, she got the PR and not the victory on Monday. She finished the 26.2-mile race in 2 hours, 24 minutes, 52 seconds to add a fifth-place finish to her third in 2009.

Goucher missed last year's marathon because she was pregnant. But, just six months after giving birth to her son, Colt, she was back in the field and hoped to make a run at becoming the first American winner since Lisa Larsen-Weidenbach in 1985.

Instead Kenya's Caroline Kilel claimed the title in a back-and-forth battle with American Desiree Davila.

Davila held the lead in the closing miles, lost it and then pushed back to the front several times before she ran out of surges just before the finish line.

"My legs were just shot," Davila said. "That was all I had, and she was just better today."

Although she failed to become the first American to win the event since 1985, Davila did run the fastest time by a U.S. woman through the historic streets of Boston and some of its surrounding communities. Davila finished in 2:22:38 -- five seconds faster than Joan Benoit finished when she won the race in 1983.

Now Joan Samuelson, the two-time Boston winner wasn't able to witness Davila's accomplishment because Samuelson was still on the course, which she finished in 2:51:29.

"She's put America back on the boards bigtime," Samuelson said. "That was a great front race -- from what I gather up front. I'm sort of sorry I wasn't in the stands watching the race unfold."

Samuelson said she decided to join the race because her daughter, Abby, was running in her first Boston Marathon.

Davila, who was still a few months shy of being born when Samuelson won it 28 years ago, wasn't even considered an American favorite entering the race.

The headlines went to Goucher, who got some encouragement from Davila as she took off with the lead pack and stayed there the rest of the race.

"Desi went by me and encouraged me to keep my eyes up, and it was like I was standing still," Goucher said.

It resembled a derby more than a marathon at the end, when Davila, Kilel and Sharon Cherop of Kenya jockeyed for the lead. Fans urged on Davila with chants of "U-S-A!" and she responded with a wave, barely breaking her rhythm to urge more noise from the Boston crowd on Patriot's Day.

"It was the most excitement I've had in a race ever and just really carried me the last six miles," Davila said. "I felt that energy, and I felt comfortable at the front and pushing the pace because of that. It really just carried me through to the finish line."

And what a finish. Each time the favored Kenyans pulled ahead, Davila kept them within a few strides and always made up the distance. She answered every surge with one that was equal to or stronger than Kilel and Cherop.

The pack of three continued all the way to Boylston Street, where Cherop fell off the pace and Kilel pulled ahead of Davila after the final turn. But Davila wasn't done. She thrilled the fans with one more push that put her a yard or two in front with the finish line in sight.

But that was all she had. Kilel ate up the short distance in two strides and held on to the finish line, where she collapsed and was quickly supported by medical officials. Davila stayed on her feet with her hands on her head, knowing she had pushed as much as she could.

"The last 800 meters my legs were fried," Davila said.

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