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Ritzenhein runs his race, is top U.S. finisher in Chicago Marathon

Chooses not to chase leaders, betters his personal best by more than 2 minutes with 9th-place effort

By Philip Hersh and Shannon Ryan, Tribune reporters

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Dathan Ritzenhein refused to get carried away.

Nine miles into Sunday's Bank of America Chicago Marathon, Ritzenhein found himself running faster than he planned and only some 10 seconds behind the lead pack, much closer than he expected at that point.

Jason Hartmann, a Twin Cities Marathon winner who acted as Ritzenhein's pace-setter Sunday, asked his former high school teammate if he wanted to chase the leaders.

"I thought about it for a second, and I said, 'No, let's just keep it right here,' " Ritzenhein said.

Right here was a pace that allowed Ritzenhein to survive a struggle into the wind over the final 3 miles and finish ninth in 2 hours, 7 minutes, 47 seconds. That bettered his personal best by more than 2 minutes.

"It was a huge step for me to think of going 2:09:55 to 2:04," said Ritzenhein, the top U.S. men's finisher. "Now I've cut that in half. The next step for me is to just go with them."

Ritzenhein, 29, a three-time Olympian and onetime high school phenom in Rockford, Mich., had run the previous personal best while finishing fourth at the 2012 Olympic trials, missing the U.S. marathon team by one place. He wound up making the team in the 10,000 meters and finished 13th.

"If I can stay healthy, I still have a lot of room for improvement," said Ritzenhein, who had two Achilles tendon surgeries in 2011.

Inspiring day: Tatyana McFadden said her race was all about inspiring. Along the way, she said she was inspired as well.

McFadden, a University of Illinois student, won the women's wheelchair division in 1:49:52. She was

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spurred on by the appearance of a little girl named Addison with spina bifida she has been communicating with.

"I dedicated the win to her and her family," McFadden said. "It's about inspiring, so that was my theme for the weekend."

Winning her first race here since 2009, McFadden edged Champaign native **Susannah Scaroni**.

McFadden won three gold medals and a bronze at the Paralympics in London, although none in the marathon.

After battling a headwind in the stretch, McFadden said: "You just have to remember ... keep low and keep aerodynamic."

Josh Cassidy, from Toronto, won the men's wheelchair division in 1:32:58. **Adam Bleakney** from Savoy, Ill., finished second in 1:34:23, and **Joshua George** took third in 1:36:06.

Happy to return: As long as she is invited, Russian **Liliya Shobukhova** said she will return to Chicago in 2013, when she could still tie **Khalid Khannouchi**'s record of four victories.

She lost her bid to win four straight on Sunday, when she finished fourth in 2:22:59.

She dropped out of the Olympics marathon with a hamstring injury, but said the leg did not bother her Sunday.

"The beginning of the race, I felt good and I felt comfortable," she said through an interpreter. "There wasn't enough time (to train properly) after the Olympics."

Record turnout: Sunday's race started with a record 38,535. There was a cardiac arrest of a 47-year-old male at Mile 21 and EMTs started CPR. Medical director **George Chiampas** said the man was shocked twice on site, became alert and was transported to Mercy Hospital, where he was in stable condition. There were 10 hospital transports total. The others were for skeletal and respiratory issues, and none were serious, according to Chiampas. He said the number of transports was 50 percent below normal.

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Duluth's Goucher Second in USA 10-Mile Championship

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St. Paul, MN (Northland's NewsCenter) --- Duluth, Minn. native Kara Goucher finished as the runner-up on Sunday in the USA 10-Mile Championship, finishing just 13 seconds behind the winner in a time of 53:56.

Defending champion Janet Cherebon-Bawcom successfully repeated as the women's champion, coming across the line in a time of 53:43. The 2011 men's champion, Mo Trafeh, also repeated his title run with a time of 46:56.

The race was the first for the 34-year-old Goucher since the 2012 London Summer Olympics, when she placed 11th in the women's marathon. She does still own the course record at the TC 10-Mile, running a time of 53:16 in 2008.

The former Greyhound won the USA Half Marathon Championship this past summer, running a new course record in the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon in Duluth, Minn.

Posted by Zach Schneider

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