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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Afera Godfay Confident of Success At TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

by Paul Gains

TORONTO, ON (*September 26, 2023*) - Afera Godfay won the 2019 Dongying Marathon in China with a superb personal best 2:22:41 then almost completely vanished from the world scene for a few years.

There was a third-place finish in the Xiamen Marathon, also in China, a year later but that performance largely went under the radar.

On October 15th the 31-year-old Ethiopian will target the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon with high expectations. Indeed, in April this year she ran 1:10:25 at the Rabat International Half Marathon in Morocco which encouraged her to chase a new marathon personal best in Toronto. This will mark her first ever visit to Canada.

“Training is going great,” she reports. “I do my training six days a week - every day except Sunday. I cover a long distance with speed. Three days a week I run with (coach Gemedu Dedefo’s) group.

“My goal is to win (Toronto Waterfront) with a good time. I hope to run 2:24.”

The group is currently celebrating the great success of one of their members, Tigist Assefa, who smashed the world marathon record with her astonishing 2:11:53 in Berlin on Sunday. No doubt the result will provide inspiration to Afera.

The buildup is creating excitement as she is eager to return to her past level. Five times she has run under 1:10 for the half marathon distance over the years and she can now sense she is coming into form. Afera has a good reason for her absence those few years.

“It was because I gave birth to my child,” she explains. “And it was a bit hard to get back to my previous condition. I have one child and her name is Maranata.”

Afera comes from a small town in the war torn northern Ethiopian province of Tigray called Alaje. Although she moved to Addis in 2010 her parents still live in Tigray. She is thankful that they were not affected by the two-year-old war that lasted until November 2022 and which led to widespread famine.

Once a year, when her training program allows, she will visit her parents and friends in Alaje. She comes from a long line of farmers. Growing up under hardship likely fuelled her desire for success in road racing. But she also had mentors.

“My inspiration is Meseret Defar,” she declares. Defar is a two time Olympic 5,000m champion and a national hero in Ethiopia.

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As a young athlete Afera had success at shorter distances and represented Ethiopia at the 2010 World Cross Country Championships. She finished a solid 8th in the Under 20 race in Bydgoszcz, Poland helping the Ethiopian team to a silver medal finish behind Kenya.

Two years later she again represented her country at the African Championships over 10,000m. She placed 7th in that meet which was held in Porto Novo, the capital of Benin. Asked why she turned to marathon racing her answer is simple: ““It’s because I have a good endurance and, money-wise, I find it better.”

Although she has not been to Toronto before coach Gemedu Dedefo made the journey a few years ago and will undoubtedly have some excellent insight into how best to race the course. And, travelling with her from Addis will be previously announced Ethiopian stars Derara Hurisa, Adugna Takele, and Yohans Mekasha who will feature strongly in the men’s race while Waganesh Mekasha will battle with Afera for the \$20,000 first place prize money.

Once again, the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon promises a memorable contest and the Ethiopian flag will surely be waved in celebration at the finish.

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About the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon

The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is Canada’s premier running event and the grand finale of the Canada Running Series (CRS). Since 2017, the race has served as the Athletics Canada national marathon championship race and has doubled as the Olympic trials. Using innovation and organization as guiding principles, Canada Running Series stages great experiences for runners of all levels, from Canadian Olympians to recreational and charity runners. With a mission of “building community through the sport of running,” CRS is committed to making sport part of sustainable communities and the city-building process.

To learn more about the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, visit www.torontowaterfrontmarathon.com

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