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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Natasha Wodak Commits to TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon By Paul Gains

Two-time Canadian Olympian Natasha Wodak has committed to racing the 2024 TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, October 20th.

The Vancouver native finished 13th in the Tokyo Olympics and also holds the Canadian marathon record of 2:23:12. Toronto Waterfront Marathon doubles as a World Athletics Elite Label Race and the 2024 Canadian Marathon Championship, still, her late decision caught many aficionados by surprise.

“I thought ‘why don’t I go run the Canadian Marathon Championships in Toronto?’ I haven’t been there in eleven years and that is where I started this marathon journey,” the Asics sponsored athlete says.

“It’s an Asics event, I am the Canadian record holder, I haven’t won the Canadian Marathon Championship’ I just really wanted to run in my country surrounded by friends and family. When I started thinking about it, it made me happy.”

Happiness with her running she insists is still a primary motivator as she continues her world-class racing at the age of 42. It has been a rough year for her. Four attempts at achieving the 2024 Olympic standards came up short due to factors beyond her control.

Her preparations for the 2023 London Marathon went perfectly but she got sick the week before and cancelled her flight the very day she was to travel. Then, another excellent training block gave her confidence that she could break her national record at the 2023 World Championships in Budapest - her fourth time representing Canada at a World Athletics Championship. Race temperatures reached 28c though, and she finished 15th. Nobody ran particularly fast.

A hamstring strain two weeks before January’s Houston Marathon impacted her result there and she struggled home 9th in 2:28:42. Then, a 12th place finish in Hamburg this past April led to her conceding that a third Olympic appearance was not possible. Gravely disappointed at first, she eventually saw the positives thanks to her friends and family.

“The Olympics is special for a reason because it is very hard to get there!” Wodak now says, “I didn’t make it this time around. I had a fun journey trying to get there and other doors are open and I got to do the CBC broadcast for the Women’s Olympic marathon which was an amazing opportunity. I loved doing that.

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"I find myself in a really good spot, leading into the fall, and with going into Toronto Waterfront - which I wouldn't have been able to do otherwise."

Originally, she contemplated going for the national half marathon record at the TCS Toronto Waterfront Half Marathon but then consulted with her coach Trent Stellingwerf. Despite her failure to achieve the Olympic standard she has maintained a high level of fitness, a fact which Stellingwerf emphasized when she wondered aloud if a shortened marathon build might indeed work.

Winning a national championship offers generous World Athletics points - useful in qualifying for next year's World Championships - which was another factor in her decision.

"What we are thinking is that if I win and run decently in Toronto it's really good points and I don't need to run the standard. I then could possibly run a marathon in Japan in early March," she reasons.

Wodak is a very sociable individual and enjoys spending time with friends and family when she is not piling on the mileage. She has also been doing some coaching and whenever possible joins her twelve or so charges for their workouts. Another passion is for her volunteer work at the Vancouver Orphan Kitten Rescue Association.

"I go on Friday mornings. The shelter has at the moment probably 30 cats, so my job is to go in with other volunteers, we feed the cats, we clean their cages, we clean the litter box, we do laundry, do dishes and take the garbage out," she reveals. "When we have time left over we get to snuggle the cats to help socialize them which, obviously, is our favourite part.

"It is very sad because there are so many cats that we have taken from not good situations and they are scared and sad and we just want to find them homes. People are getting cats from breeders instead of rescuing. I try to encourage people to 'adopt don't shop' and rescue."

Wodak practices what she preaches. Both her cats are rescues.

At the age of 42 she has become aware that her marathon success serves as inspiration to other women who might think of retiring from competition in their mid-thirties. When asked about this she offers a humble smile.

"Malindi and I have talked about this and we just run," she says, referring to 44 year old Malindi Elmore a fellow Olympian. "We don't think about our age and we are loving it. And the fact that that is inspiring to the younger generation is really cool.

"And it's not lost on me that we are setting an example of what can be done in your forties and showing women you don't need to retire from the sport in your mid-thirties as it used to be done. Sometimes I do feel like I am running out of time to do all the things I

want to do while I am still fast. I don't know when the shoe is going to drop and I am going to slow down. I want to get the most out of myself while I can still."

Wodak is due another spectacular marathon performance. Organisers of the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon join her in hoping it comes October 20th on the streets of Canada's largest city.

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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.

About Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

Tata Consultancy Services is an IT services, consulting and business solutions organization that has been partnering with many of the world's largest businesses in their transformation journeys for over 65 years. Its consulting-led, cognitive powered, portfolio of business, technology and engineering services and solutions is delivered through its unique Location Independent Agile™ delivery model, recognized as a benchmark of excellence in software development.

As part of the Tata group, India's largest multinational business group, TCS has over 601,000 of the world's best-trained consultants in 55 countries. The company generated consolidated revenues of US \$29 billion in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2024, and is listed on the BSE and NSE in India. TCS' proactive stance on climate change and award-winning work with communities across the world have earned it a place in leading sustainability indices such as the mSCI Global Sustainability Index and the FTSE4Good Emerging Index.

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