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TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon
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Tristan Woodfine Chasing Canadian Title at TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon By Paul Gains

The past two years have been mostly good to Tristan Woodfine as he has recorded personal bests over several distances most significantly with his 2:10:39 finish at the 2024 Houston Marathon in January.

That makes him the sixth fastest Canadian marathoner of all time.

This uplift in fortune coincides with his seeking coaching advice from none other than two-time Canadian Olympic marathoner Reid Coolsaet.

Now the 31-year-old Woodfine has confirmed he will race the 2024 TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon, October 20th, with the objective of running both a fast time and earning the Canadian Marathon Championship title. The event doubles as a World Athletics Elite Label race as well as the Athletics Canada National Marathon Championships.

“It’s local, close, the support is good,” he says of his choice for an autumn marathon. “The Canada Running Series (team) always does a great job. I have run the course before.

“Getting under 2:10 would be nice, finally. We will see how the rest of the build goes. Ten weeks is still a long time and things can change for better or worse - hopefully for better - and by the time Toronto comes around I’d definitely love to get a PB and make another step forward there.”

Woodfine, who is currently living just outside of Eganville, Ontario with his wife Madeline, ran the Toronto Waterfront Marathon once before. That was in 2019 when he finished 13th in a time of 2:13:16. But he has twice won the Toronto Waterfront Half Marathon (2022 and 2017) - run concurrently with the full marathon - and has also had success at the Toronto Waterfront 10K. That race includes a long section of the marathon course too.

Credit for his upward trajectory goes to Coolsaet.

“Reid has had so much experience in the sport,” Woodfine says of his coach. “He has got a lot of valuable insights on the training front and beyond. He has done a lot of races and he knows the deal with which races might work well for your goals, that kind of thing.

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“He has got so much experience on any aspect of training, racing, nutrition, injuries, he has seen so much he can really help out.”

One of the differences in Woodfine’s program since his association with Coolsaet comes as a surprise but might well be a valuable lesson for all runners.

“Some of the workouts in the base training period are almost a bit easier than what I was doing (before),” he explains. “I think maybe before I was pushing a bit too hard too early in the training base. So backing off a little bit when coming into the marathon block was probably one of the bigger things.”

Like most runners he has had his share of hiccups, most notably a nagging case of plantar fasciitis that saw him drop out of the Boston Marathon back in April. He blames a mechanical deficiency in his running form. But that is behind him now and as he enters his marathon specific buildup phase he is full of optimism.

Recently he raced the Falmouth Road Race in Massachusetts finishing 11th in 33:33 over the 7-mile course. A successful result at the shorter distance has added to his confidence.

“The last few weeks leading into Falmouth I did get my longer mileage in,” he reveals. “I got a 37km long run in there just to get things ready. The week before Falmouth was 220km. In this (Toronto) buildup block I would like to get up to a maximum of 250 or 260km.”

Besides a personal best, Woodfine is fully aware that a national championship offers the chance for maximum World Athletics points that would count heavily in 2025 World Championships qualifying. Those Championships are set for Tokyo.

“I talked to Reid about trying to qualify for Tokyo,” he admits. “I have had a few sit-downs (with him). I’d get a fair amount of points with another good performance with a strong time. A solid finish in Toronto would put me in a good position.”

Unlike many elite runners Woodfine doesn’t have a shoe sponsor. After completing his paramedic studies at the Ontario Health and Technology College he has put on hold a career in that field to focus on his running. To make ends meet he has been doing some online coaching, a sideline that continues to grow.

“I definitely love helping other runners achieve their goals,” he adds. “I also do some remote work for a pharmacy in the area. It’s best described as inventory and purchasing. It’s very flexible and works great with running.”

Like many elite runners the Olympic Games has been a target for Woodfine. In 2020 he beat the Tokyo Olympics qualifying standard running 2:10:51 at the London Marathon and thought he’d achieved his dream of being an Olympian. But when Cam Levins ran 2:10:14 in Austria six months later it was Levins who was chosen for the team and not

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Woodfine. This, despite the fact Woodfine had beaten Levins in London by well over a minute.

Despite falling short of the Paris Olympic standard with his Houston Marathon personal best he still harbours an Olympic dream.

“Yes it is still a goal. I try not to put as much emphasis on the Olympics being an ‘all or nothing’, a defining factor of success for my career,” he declares. “I think that can kind of end up making you miserable. Whether you are going to the Olympics or not. For sure, it’s a goal.

“I am in this for another Olympic cycle and hopefully I can be on the start line in LA - the third time is a charm. But I am really focused on each year and trying to enjoy each race for what it is.”

The TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon is an obvious step forward in his career path.

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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)

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