

Barno, Abrha surge to CIM victories

*CIM eclipses Olympic
Trials Qualifiers mark*

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Kenya's Elisha Barno made his move after the 20-mile mark, surging ahead of the lead pack at "The Wall" to win the 33rd annual California International Marathon in 2 hours, 11 minutes and 51 seconds on Sunday.

Serkalem Abrha of Ethiopia used a similar strategy, pushing ahead of the lead group and running alone for the last six miles to win the women's race in 2:31:29.

Much of the drama happened behind the leaders, however, as the chase for the U.S. Olympic Trials qualifying mark played out in the women's race.

Barno dropped fellow Kenyan Macdonard Ondara and Ethiopian Dereje Abera Ali in the final six miles to claim the \$10,000 first prize, recording the seventh-fastest time in the race's 33-year history and second-fastest since 1993.

"I felt the pain, but I tried to push it," said Barno.

"I was very happy. This is the first time I'm able to carry the flag of my country."

Third-place finisher Ali edged Kenyan Julius Keter by three tenths of a second to break up a Kenyan sweep in a dramatic moment at the finish line outside the State capitol.

A field of approximately 5,800 marathoners and 900 relay teams started the race near the Folsom Dam with over 5,600 marathoners finishing. Another 2,000 participated in the morning's UC Davis Children's Hospital maraFUNrun. An estimated crowd of 50,000 lined the course, which runs through Folsom, Orangevale, Citrus Heights, Fair Oaks, Carmichael and Sacramento.

Abrha, who claimed the top prize at CIM in 2011, set a personal best on her way to the podium. Her 2:31:29 performance is the fourth-fastest time in CIM history.

"I am very happy, very happy," said Abrha, who speaks very little English.

Mexico's Gisela Olalde finished second in 2:33:50 with Jane Kibii, formerly of Auburn, third in 2:36:39.

Thirteen American women ran faster than the 2:43 'B' qualifying standard for the 2016 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials.

With 32 first-time Olympic Trials qualifiers already under its belt in the first two years of the qualifying window, CIM became the first and only U.S. marathon with over 40 first-time qualifiers setting the mark with 45.

Jeanna Composti, 34, of New York, N.Y. was the top American female finisher with her fourth-place finish and punched her ticket to the Trials with a 2:39:16 performance.

"If someone said 10 years ago that I'd be running the Trials in the marathon, I would have laughed," said Composti. "I took an eight-year break from running and put it on the back burner.

"I started running again when studying for the bar. Six years later, I'm qualifying for the Trials -- it's been an interesting road."

Matthew Oliver of Santee, Calif. won the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes National Championships with a 2:50:41 performance to edge three-time winner Aaron Scheidies (2:53:01). Amelia Dickerson (Boulder, Co.) won the USABA women's title, clocking in at 3:20:28.

Carmichael's Chris Houde won the push rim wheelchair race in 2:24:25.

Sacramento's Jenny Hitchings, 52, set a 50-54 age-group record, running 2:49:49 to eclipse the old mark set by Sister Marion Irvin in the inaugural CIM in 1983.

The Granite Bay Distance Squad team recorded the fastest time in the Bank of the West CIM Relay Challenge, finishing in 2:32:55. The USABA Blind Elite team of Chaz Davis and Michael Kinoshita, both legally blind runners, clocked in at 2:36:51, good for second overall in the Bank of the West CIM Relay Challenge.

The CIM is organized by the Sacramento Running Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to finding ways to encourage people of all ages and abilities to run. The SRA is committed to developing new, quality running events that appeal to a broad variety of runners.