

Oyugi, Kiptoo claim CIM victories

Perfect day for running leads to fast times across the board

Dec. 4, 2016

For immediate release

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Kenya's Nelson Oyugi surged past fellow countryman and defending champion Elisha Barno just after the 26-mile mark to win the 34th annual California International Marathon in 2 hours, 11 minutes and 40 seconds on Sunday.

Sarah Kiptoo of Kenya pushed the pace early in the women's race and managed to hold off the field for a 2:31:19 first-place finish.

The cool, dry weather provided the perfect setting for a fast race as temperatures were in the low- to mid-40s throughout the day under clear skies. Many runners in both the elite and open fields turned in top times, personal bests and Boston qualifying marks.

The large crowd at the finish line didn't have to wait long for some excitement as the lead men provided just that as they approached the tape.

When Oyugi reached the 26-mile marker, Barno was in front of him with less than a minute to go. After the two men made the turn onto 8th Street and reappeared in front of the crowd on Capitol Mall, their positions had changed as Oyugi outkicked Barno to claim the \$10,000 first prize, recording the fifth-fastest time in the race's 34-year history.

"It feels amazing," said Oyugi.

"I decided to run my own pace after mile 19 and I caught him (Barno) right after 26," he added, pointing to the corner of L and 8th Streets.

"I love the people of California.

"They made me feel so strong."

Barno finished second in 2:11:51, the eighth-fastest time in CIM history. 2012 champion Daniel Tapia of Mammoth Lakes, Calif. finished third in 2:12:27, a more than 2-minute personal best for the former SRA Elite athlete.

“I feel amazing and have such great support,” said Tapia.

“That was the easiest marathon I’ve ever run.

“I felt really comfortable.”

A field of approximately 6,300 marathoners and 750 relay teams started the race near the Folsom Dam with over 6,100 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.

Kiptoo, who finished sixth at last year’s CIM, was on course-record pace through the halfway mark. Her pace slowed after 20 miles but she was able to hold off the chase pack on her way to the podium. Her 2:31:19 performance is the fourth-fastest time in CIM history.

“I wanted under 2:30 and I ran 2:31, but I’m happy because I won the race,” said Kiptoo.

“I just followed the other guys and needed them to pull me up.”

American Stephanie Bruce (Flagstaff, Ariz.) finished second in 2:32:36 with El Dorado Hills’ Lauren Jimison third in 2:33:20.

Bruce, running in her first marathon in three years since having two children, was able to narrow the one-time large gap on Kiptoo but eventually ran out of real estate.

“I wish I had a little more in me,” said Bruce.

“The hills were a little more than I anticipated.

“I would have liked to bring a win to the crowd, but second place isn’t too bad.”

Jimison, like former teammate Tapia, set a personal best of more than two minutes. The El Dorado Hills native lives and trains five miles from the start.

“It’s really special to finally experience CIM,” said Jimison.

“It was painful the last bit, but the marathon always is.

“There were men (around me) offering help and telling me their pace.

“To have company is always nice.”

All told, seven of the top 10 women set personal bests on the day with another two PRs set in the men’s top 10.

Prior to the race, the Sacramento Running Association, organizers of the CIM, announced that an American Performance List bonus would be added to its \$50,000 prize purse.

American athletes in the CIM field are eligible for a \$5,000 bonus if their 2016 California International Marathon time places them in the top 10 of U.S. marathon performers for 2016 at the end of the year. A \$2,000 bonus will also be awarded to U.S. athletes whose time places the athlete in the top 25 at the end of the year.

The final U.S. Annual Performers List on All-Athletics.com available on Dec. 31 will be used to determine bonuses and includes drop and point-to-point courses.

After their CIM performances, Tapia and fourth-place finisher Eric Fernandez (2:14:08) currently sit in seventh and ninth place, respectively. Scott MacPherson, who finished fifth, has the 11th fastest U.S. time in 2016.

On the women’s side, Bruce’s 2:32:36 performance places her in 10th place with Jimison holding 12th place and Samantha Bluske (2:36:25) tied for 21st.

These top American performances and corresponding bonuses are a prelude to big news for the city of Sacramento and the California International Marathon as USA Track & Field recently announced that CIM will serve as the US Marathon Championships in 2017 and 2018.

U.S. Paralympian Charles Davis of Grafton, Mass. won the U.S. Association of Blind Athletes National Championships with an impressive course-record 2:31:48 performance, more than 15 minutes faster than the previous top time set in 2011 by Aaron Scheidies.

Lisa Thompson (Houston, Tex.) won the USABA women’s title, clocking in at 3:27:12 to capture her second visually impaired national championship.

Carmichael’s Chris Houde won the push rim wheelchair race, his 10th title at CIM, in 2:13:57. Houde’s first win came in 1992.

Dalila Rodriguez of Los Banos, Calif. won the women’s push rim wheelchair race in 4:14:19.

The Scotiabank relay team recorded the fastest time in the CIM Relay Challenge, finishing in 2:32:45. The Rocklin High School boy’s cross country team captured the high school relay division with their 2:36:34 performance.

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.