

January 29, 2023



Pair of Kenyans take Home Life Time Miami Marathon Titles

18,000 runners representing all 50 states and 69 countries competed in iconic event

MIAMI, Jan. 29, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- They were nearly 8,000 miles from home in the urban center of Kisii, Kenya, but their individual pursuits for Life Time Miami Marathon titles brought them together in South Florida on Sunday. Originating from farming families in southwest Kenya, George Onyancha and Damaris Areba both secured easy victories in their inaugural appearances in Miami's signature running event.



Twenty-nine-year-old Onyancha (2:18:25) finished nearly six minutes ahead of Siraj Amda (2:24:16) of New York in the men's Marathon. Twenty-seven-year-old Areba turned in the second fastest time in Miami Marathon history (2:33:49) bettered only by fellow Kenyan Martha Akeno's course record (2:29:00) last year. Isgah Cheruto (2:36:19) of Minneapolis was second behind Areba.

Onyancha and Areba were winners of few words. "I was leading and had another runner behind me until the 25K mark," Onyancha said. "Since I didn't know what his strategy was, I thought: 'Let me take off.'"

Areba was more focused on the uniqueness of the course route. The U.S.TAF-certified and Boston Marathon-qualifying circuit showcased the best views of Miami's cityscape and waterways during the 26.2-mile and 13.1-mile races. "The lights on the big ships, they're so beautiful," Areba said.

It was the 21st edition of the Life Time Miami Marathon and Half, which wound through downtown Miami, Miami Beach and Coconut Grove. The event's sold-out field of 18,000 runners came from all 50 states and 69 countries – generating upwards of \$50 million in economic impact to the Miami community. Colombia (1,300) and Mexico (1,100) led a wave of Latino runners, while nearly 1,000 U.S.-based runners represented the state of New York.

The Marathon began in front of the downtown Miami-Dade Arena before heading to South Beach via the MacArthur Causeway and then back downtown along the Venetian Causeway. Runners then headed south through the lush Coconut Grove community before turning north through the Brickell Avenue financial district and across the finish line at Bayfront Park.

The temperature at race start was 72 degrees and eventually settled into the mid-70s. Runners were able to experience the South Florida sunrise nearly an hour into their run, and the sparkling cruise ships docked at the Port of Miami put an exclamation point on the Event's iconic views.

Onyancha races mostly in Europe and China, and Sunday's marathon was his first in the United States. Areba has been on a tear, winning four marathons in eight months. Prior to her Miami victory Sunday, Areba won titles at the Green Bay Marathon (May), the Quad Cities Marathon (September) and the Des Moines Marathon (October). In November, she was fourth at the Philadelphia Marathon.

When Nacho Hernando-Angulo (1:08:36) arrived first to the finish line of the Half Marathon, he was almost home. The 29-year-old broke the tape just 800 meters from the hi-rise where he lives in downtown Miami. "To be home with the (2023) title is awesome," said Hernando-Angulo. "This title has to stay home, in Miami."

Veteran French triathlete, Brice Daubord (1:10:11), and 24-year-old, Alberto Mena (1:10:21) of Ecuador, were nearly two minutes off Angulo's pace to secure second and third place while event-defending-champion, Cesar Lizano, was sixth (1:14:01). The 40-year-old Costa Rican was fourth in 2012, third in 2014 and fifth in 2015 before winning last year's Miami title.

A native of Madrid, Spain, Hernando-Angulo settled in Miami in 2018 following running careers at New Hampshire Technical Institute and Southern New Hampshire University. He works as a sales director for a European importer. "I moved to Miami for work, definitely not for training," he said. "It's very tough to be an elite runner here. So we do what we can."

Ethiopia's Weynshet Ansa Weldestadisk (1:14:55) won her second career half-marathon Sunday, ahead of Ukraine's Valentyna Veretska (1:18:41) and defending champion, Lisa Brooking (1:18:50) of Canada. "It was a good course, but very windy and hot," said Weldestaisk. "The city is so beautiful. I wish I could live here. Everybody was telling me 'good job.' It gave me power."

The tall and slender Weldestadisk has been based in Washington DC for the last four months while competing in a series of U.S. races. The 26-year-old smashed the course record at the Extra Long Bronx (NY) 10-Mile Race last September and won both the Philadelphia Marathon and the Virginia 10 Miler in November.

Veretska, the women's half-marathon runner-up, continued her good results since fleeing Ukraine last year and winning the Jerusalem Marathon a month later in borrowed shoes and gear. The 32-year-old ran her first race in the U.S. in November, finishing third at the Princeton Marathon.

Onyancha and Areba each received \$4,500 for their first-place finishes. Onyancha will use

the funds to pay for two of his brothers' tuition payments while Areba will donate a portion to Kenyan youth developmental running programs and use the remainder to buy land to build a house. She and her husband are currently living in a rental unit. "I loved the city and the palm trees," Onyancha said about his first experience in Miami. "They look like umbrellas."

More information about the Life Time Miami Marathon may be found at www.themiamimarathon.com and on social media at Facebook.com/RunMiami, Instagram.com/TheMiamiMarathon, and Twitter.com/RunMiami. The Life Time Miami Marathon And Half operates with the tremendous support of the Miami Beach Visitor and Convention Authority.

The Miami Marathon And Half is owned and produced by Life Time, the premier healthy lifestyle brand. It is among more than 30 premier athletic events owned by the Company, including the Chicago Spring Half Marathon, Garmin UNBOUND Gravel, and Leadville Race Series. For more information about Life Time (NYSE: LTH), visit www.lifetime.life. More information about Life Time athletic events is available at lifetime.life/athletic-events.

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