

Altitude with attitude

Salt Lake City Marathon, USA. 23 April 2005

Result

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A passion for running and an appreciation of the stunning beauty of spring blossoms against snow-capped mountain peaks brought 9000 runners to the start line of the second Salt Lake City Marathon and 5km fun run. Themed as "Run, Bump & Boogie," this event has become a spectacular new addition to the marathon calendar, drawing people from 45 states and 15 countries, and 30% more of them than in the inaugural year.

"Bumps" are the impressive moguls or ledges that cascade down some of the most breathtaking ski runs in Utah. Organizers invite all runners to go for it on the bumps, or simply glide down the wide, groomed runs. They put two-for-one lift coupons in each goody bag.

Salt Lake City is named for a salty inland lake that lies just north west of the city. The Lake is 150km long and 80km wide, and something of a scientific mystery, but its jade and azure expanse attracts tourists, artists and water enthusiasts. The lake supports little more marine life than brine shrimp but Antelope Island National Park to the south west boasts bison, bighorn sheep and plenty of waterfowl. For those who prefer sun to safari, the Great Salt Lake also

has several beaches for sunbathing.

Founded by members of the Mormon faith, Salt Lake City still promotes its founders' beliefs, offering many family-oriented activities, such as hiking, rafting and horseback riding. Located at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Salt Lake City is a good destination for visitors who wish to explore the splendor of the mountains. Pioneer Trail State Park, is where Mormon pioneers entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, while Old Dessert village is a living museum that depicts early settler life in the Valley.

As the first rays of sun touched upon the Wasatch Range of the Rocky Mountains 1984 Olympic gold medalist Joan Benoit-Samuelson flagged off the marathon from under the Olympic Legacy Bridge on the campus of the University of Utah. The weather treated the runners with crisp mountain air, a partly cloudy sky, and an excellent running temperature of 9C.

Nearly 4000 marathoners labored on the course skirting through the city's suburbs at the foot of Wasatch Mountains to the spectacular finish at the Olympic Legacy Plaza in downtown Salt Lake City.

After half an hour, when the marathon lead pack passed through Sugarhouse Park, 5000 runners got underway in the 5km from Liberty Park. Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson was among them, as they headed to a common finish line with the

marathon. Liberty Park is famous for its Tracy Aviary, America's oldest and largest bird park, which currently maintains a population of about 500 birds of 150 species, 21 of which are listed as endangered.

Until 30km the lead pack consisted of 8 runners from Ethiopia and Kenya. For the next six kilometres the runners tested one another with brief surges from time to time, and gradually the pack fell apart. After 37km Ethiopia's Araya Haregot and Kenya's Elly Rono headed the race. "We were shoulder to shoulder, reading each other, seeing how each feels, his breathing, his strategy," explained Haregot. "I tried three times to break, but it did not work." Only in the last 1.5 km did Haregot get away from Rono to finish with a new course record. Training at similar altitude in Albuquerque, New Mexico, may have handed Haregot the advantage over Rono, who was running his first marathon at this altitude and finished 100m behind. Utah runner Joe Wilson was the best American finisher in 11th place with 2:28:31.

Poland's Dorota Gruca also trains in New Mexico, and this helped her to cope with the altitude and hilly first half of the course. Despite the slow pace over the first half, covered in 1:16, she had no rivals after 11km. Gruca ran the second, flatter part of the course faster and finished in

2:30:08 with the new course record. "A few miles before the end, I knew I could break the record,"- she said. "If I had had someone with me, I could have run faster."

The communities of Salt Lake Valley were excited to welcome the participants. There were nine celebration locations set up on the course featuring live radio station remote broadcasts and music stages. Volunteers, supporters and spectators lined the whole marathon course, cheering the runners. Athletes and fans could enjoy a free outdoor concert by "The Romantics" group on Friday evening during the Pasta Party. The Romantics also performed Saturday at the finish line and another group, "Third Eye Blind", gave a concert in the evening, after the awards ceremony. After the Bump and the Run it only remained to Boogie.

MEN:			
1	Araya HAREGOT	ETH	2:15:14
2	Elly RONO	KEN	2:15:36
3	Michael KIMUTAI	KEN	2:16:14
4	Sisay BEZABEH	AUS	2:16:34
5	David KEMBOI	KEN	2:16:56
6	Sergey FEDOTOV	RUS	2:19:32
7	Gilbert KOECH	KEN	2:20:56
8	Zintu SIMA	ETH	2:21:42
9	Driss DACHA	MAR	2:22:20
10	Fred GETAGNE	KEN	2:23:32
WOMEN:			
1	Dorota GRUCA	POL	2:30:07
2	Anna PITCHROTOVA	CZE	2:34:46
3	Irina BOGACHEVA	KGZ	2:37:48
4	Becky SONDAY	USA	2:54:01
5	Virginia SANCHEZ-ROMAN	MEX	2:56:55
6	Jenny GILLARD	AUS	2:57:27
7	Jordan VAUGHN	USA	3:00:53
8	Carol CABANILLAS	USA	3:07:46
9	Rachel BEST	USA	3:09:24
10	Kerilyn HATCH	USA	3:12:26

