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COOPERATIVE CONDITIONS AND A RECORD-SHATTERING RUN HIGHLIGHT THE 2009 LOS ANGELES MARATHON

LOS ANGELES, California, May 25, 2009 – Even in marathon circles, Wesley Korir’s name was not well known before Monday’s Los Angeles Marathon, presented by Honda. It is now.

Korir, a recent graduate of the University of Louisville, combined favorable weather conditions and a patient attitude to shatter the Los Angeles Marathon record with a time of 2:08:24 and earn a startling \$188,705 in cash and prizes.

The 26-year-old Kenyan slashed five minutes and 27 seconds off his previous personal best and clubbed the Marathon’s existing race record of 2:08:40 set by countryman Benson Cheronu in 2006. Korir won \$20,000 in cash and a new Honda EX-L sedan (MSRP of \$28,705) for winning the men’s race, finishing more than a minute ahead of Ethiopia’s Tariku Jufar (2:09:32). He added \$100,000 for winning the unique Los Angeles Marathon Challenge for finishing first overall, passing women’s winner Tatiana Petrova of Russia in the 24th mile. Finally, his record-setting time was also good for a time bonus of \$40,000.

Petrova, running for a spot on the Russian national team in the IAAF World Championships marathon to be held in Berlin, Germany in August, surged in the final six miles to break Ethiopia’s Amane Gobena and win the women’s division in 2:25:59. She won the \$20,000 first prize for the women’s race and a Honda Accord EX-L sedan, plus a time bonus of \$20,000 for a one-day total of \$68,705.

The fast loop course, run in helpful Memorial Day conditions under a morning cloud cover and temperatures that ranged from 59 to 63 degrees Fahrenheit during the elite race, saw two of the four fastest men’s times in race history and two of the top seven times in women’s history. And both the Kenyan men and Russian women extended their winning streaks in the race to 11 years and five years, respectively.

In total, nine elite runners qualified for time bonuses totaling \$138,000, bringing the overall prize purse for the 2009 event to \$395,410.

The elite fields, of course, were not the only ones running. Other winners included Aaron Gordian of Mexico in the men’s wheelchair division (1:31:19, winning \$2,500) and Amanda McGrory of Savoy, Illinois in the women’s wheelchair race (1:48:13, also winning \$2,500). The top Masters (40 and older)

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finishers were Sergio Fausto (51) of South Gate, California (2:38:37) and Carista Strickland (47) of Aliso Viejo, California (3:14:07).

Los Angeles Marathon XXIV attracted 17,307 participants, with the accompanying ACURA LA Bike Tour drawing 7,192 and the LA 5K Run/Walk registering 2,306 entrants for an all-race total of 26,805. Entrants came from 38 different counties.

“This is a tremendous example of the transformative power of sport,” said Marathon president Russ Pillar, who greeted runners on their final steps to the finish line for more than five hours on Monday. “We plan to have even greater events in the future.”

While thousands of runners were running, jogging and walking the 26.2-mile course in Los Angeles, “shadow” Los Angeles Marathons were taking place among military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At Camp Taji in Iraq, located about 20 miles north of Baghdad, more than 500 soldiers from the 56th Stryker Brigade participated in a marathon of their own, supported by the Los Angeles Marathon. Conceived as a Memorial Day fund-raiser for the family of a fallen comrade, the event started at 5 a.m. to beat the heat and finished about 10 a.m. with the final runners making their way to the finish line in 99-degree temperatures.

In Afghanistan, two soldiers who had heard about the Iraq race, participated in a marathon as well and were sent T-shirts and finisher medals by the Los Angeles Marathon to salute their effort.

On the streets of Los Angeles, of course, there were thousands of individual stories along the route; some of the highlights:

- ▶ Marathon organizers were informed about two marriage proposals that were made at the finish line.
- ▶ Chris Del Valle of Twenty Nine Palms, California, ran the race dressed as Uncle Fester from “The Addams Family.” He and “Thing” – perched atop Del Valle’s head – finished in 5:21:54.
- ▶ Ultra-marathoner Dean Karnazes ran the course in 4:04:39, one day after finishing a 100-mile run from Santa Barbara to the Los Angeles Marathon exposition at the Los Angeles Convention Center.
- ▶ A total of 208 Legacy Runners – who each completed all 23 previous Los Angeles Marathons – entered the race, with many already planning their participation in the Silver Anniversary edition of the Marathon in 2010.
- ▶ On the sidewalks, a cheerleading competition was judged with 11 middle school and high school squads spread out along the course and vying for a \$2,500 prize purse. The winner was Jefferson High School, which won \$1,250, followed by Dorsey High School (\$750) and Glendale High School (\$500).

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In the end, Korir's running and attitude summed up the race and its impact far beyond the individual activity of running. He bought his usual pair of tuna sandwiches on Sunday and planned to eat one that night and then one after the race on Monday. But on exiting the shop, he saw a homeless woman asking for help. He gave her one of the sandwiches, ate the other, and ran to a career-making victory on the streets of Los Angeles on a Memorial Day he and many others will never forget.

For additional information, please contact:

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~ *Russ Pillar*, President, LOS ANGELES MARATHON

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