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# Female pioneers return to place where they started

By John Powers

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Forty years after they competed in the first official women's race at the Boston Marathon, most of the eight finishers returned this weekend to commemorate their competitive breakthrough.

"We knew stepping across that line we were making history just as our suffragette mothers did," said Kathrine Switzer, who'd been shouldered aside in 1967 by race gatekeeper Jock Semple after she'd obtained a number as K.V. Switzer.

Though women had run unofficially since 1966, when Roberta Gibb was the first recognized finisher, it took years of their lobbying to achieve equal status at the starting line.

"The men accepted us," said Nina Kuscsik, who won that day in 1972 after running unofficially the previous three years. "There was no problem with that."

How much gender equity has been achieved since? Of the 1,219 entrants in 1972 only nine were women. Last year a record 11,462 of 26,907 were.

Their special bond

To celebrate both that 40th anniversary and four decades of Title IX, Joan Benoit Samuelson, who won the inaugural Olympic women's marathon in 1984, will run alongside 24-year-old daughter Abby Monday.

"My marathoning now is all about storytelling," says the two-time Boston champion, who set a world record here in 1983. "This is about mother-daughter bonding - until I can't keep up."

Samuelson, who competed in the 2008 Olympic trials here and set a national age-group record, was considering running next weekend in London since it's the site of the Games.

"But this story trumped that story," she said.

Another weather warning

The BAA Sunday continued to advise runners about the warm temperatures expected Monday.

At 4:50 p.m. Sunday all 26,701 official entrants received another weather advisory via e-mail. The advisory reiterated the risks involved in running Monday and emphasized that "only the fittest runners should consider participating." It recommended that non-qualifiers "strongly consider not running, and that they strongly consider deferring until next year."

With high temperatures expected in the upper 80s, the race will take place in what is known as the "red zone." A marathon in the red zone presents increased risk and is unsafe for unfit and novice runners but, as the e-mail indicated, is "acceptable for high-level elite runners."

In addition, for runners who decide to participate, the advisory suggested they "strongly consider running significantly more slowly than they normally would plan to run a marathon." And the e-mail emphasized the importance of personal responsibility.

"For the overwhelming majority of those who have entered to participate in the 2012 Boston Marathon, you should adopt the attitude that THIS IS NOT A RACE. It is an experience."

## Rotterdam upset

The Ethiopians sprung a major upset at the Rotterdam Marathon Sunday with both Yemane Adhane (2 hours, 4 minutes and 48 seconds) and Getu Feleke finishing ahead of Moses Mosop, who'd hoped to break Patrick Makau's world mark of 2:03:38 but ran 2:05:03, nearly two minutes slower than he did in finishing second here last year. It was the first time since 1998 that the Kenyans didn't win the event . . . Unless Athletics Kenya changes its mind, Caroline Kilel won't be on its Olympic marathon team even if she retains her Boston title since she's not one of the six women under consideration for the three spots. The federation already has named the three medalists at last year's world championships - Edna Kiplagat, Priscah Jeptoo, and Sharon Cherop, who is running here- plus London victor Mary Keitany, Berlin winner Florence Kiplagat, and Lydia Cheromei. Kilel, who's bidding to become the first titlist to repeat here since countrywoman Catherine Ndereba in 2005, will have her hands full. She's up against Ethiopia's Firehiwot Dado, the New York champion, as well as Cherop, 2006 Boston champion Rita Jeptoo, and 2008 Boston runnerup Alevtina Biktimirova, who was two seconds shy of catching Dire Tune. New York runnerup Buzunesh Deba withdrew on Sunday with a foot injury . . . What does Gebre Gebremariam have to do to make the Ethiopian men's marathon team for the Olympics? He has no idea. The federation has held out of the major spring races several of its top candidates including Tadesse Tola, who was supposed to run here. Not that Gebremariam doesn't have credentials - he won the 2010 New York marathon in his debut at the distance and was third here last year in 2:04:53.

## Recalling his day

The last Finn to win in Boston - Olavi Suomalainen - is back in town to observe the 40th anniversary of his 1972 triumph over Colombia's Victor Manuel Mora. Suomalainen, then a 25-year-old student, never had run a race longer than 25 kilometers and never won another marathon. "It just happened to be my day," said Suomalainen, who finished third in 1973 and now is a retired mining engineer. Even though he was the first man from his country to win here since Eino Oksanen in 1962, his homeland didn't make a fuss over him when he returned home. "There were lots of runners who did it before," he said. Indeed, between 1954 and 1962 his countrymen won Boston six times . . . With Neil Weygandt ending his streak of 45 consecutive Boston finishes at age 65 after arthritis and sciatica slowed him significantly, the heir apparent to the mantle of "streaker-in-chief" is Ben Beach, who's at 44 straight. "Neil still has got one more than I do," acknowledges the 62-year-old Beach, who made his debut in 1968 when he was a Harvard freshman. "At this stage it's never a slam-dunk." Beach, who lives in Bethesda, Md., has been dealing for years with dystonia, a neuromuscular movement disorder that affects his stride. "I feel bad for Neil because I know how it would feel if I were in his place," Beach says. "These streaks end for everybody. It's just a matter of time." . . . This year marks the 115th anniversary of John McDermott's victory in the inaugural BAA marathon; the 105th of a freight train cutting off the leaders from the rest of the field in Framingham; the 85th of the lengthening of the course to the present 26 miles, 385 yards; the 70th of Medford milkman Joe Smith setting an American record; the 65th of Yun Bok Suh's world record (the first here); the 55th of the late John "The Younger" Kelley's sole victory, still the only one by a BAA runner; the 45th of Semple body-blocking Switzer; the 30th of the "Duel in the Sun" between Alberto Salazar and Dick Beardsley; and the 10th of Margaret Okayo's still-standing women's course mark.

Shira Springer of the Globe staff contributed to this report.

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