

TCS NYC Marathon

Sunday, November 7, 2021

New York, New York, USA

Molly Seidel

Elkanah Kibet

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Finishing fourth in the women's race, fastest time ever run by an American on this course, 2:24:42, Molly Seidel.

Also finishing in fourth on the men's side, with a time of 2:11:15, a 16-second personal best, Elkanah Kibet.

Molly, good weather, bad weather, hills, flat. It feels like you kind of got this marathon thing figured out four races in.

MOLLY SEIDEL: It comes across as that. I don't know, it's been fun. I feel like every single marathon has been so vastly different. This is really different from the previous three I've done. It feels like every time I'm learning something new.

Q. Elkanah, you're an old hat at this, but this is the best race of your career, 2:11:15, fourth place. How are you feeling after that race?

ELKANAH KIBET: I'm just so excited. I wasn't expecting this, but I just went for it. I was hanging as much as I could with the lead group, and I ended up doing good.

THE MODERATOR: I have one online. Molly's alluded to some challenges leading up to the race. You said you'd talk about it after the race. Now we're after the race.

MOLLY SEIDEL: Yeah, now I'm after the race. I sustained an acute injury about a month ago where I broke a couple of ribs, so that definitely hindered training a little bit. But it was manageable for the race. Luckily, I have great PTs who were able to help me through it. So yeah, every buildup has challenges, and this was an interesting one.

Q. Obviously, the ribs is probably something that's not the most crucial in terms of it's not your foot, but it still has got to impact your mental approach going into this race. I know you're wearing your Full Send project hat. Was that the thought when you started to see these women break away from the 11-woman pack

right as you headed into the Bronx?

MOLLY SEIDEL: Yeah, I think this build was so interesting and so many ups and downs. I have so much credit to my coach John for really kind of, I don't know, just keeping my mental state in the place where I was -- even though I was hurting, I was able to be able to be able to go out and make those moves and try and stick with the leaders as long as I could.

Yeah, I feel like that's just kind of the approach that we generally take in these races of just you've got to go see what you can do, kind of have that attitude of, if you don't try, you'll never know.

Q. Molly, question about your ribs. How many did you break, and how did you break them?

MOLLY SEIDEL: I'm not talking about how I broke them, but I broke two.

Q. Molly, can you talk about the American course record? Was that something that was on your mind, and what does it mean to get it?

MOLLY SEIDEL: No, I didn't know until I crossed the line that that was what had happened. I'm just so incredibly honored. There are so many good women who have run on this course. I think it's really a testament to the women in this race that I was able to hang on to that group.

Obviously, I fell off from the main pack but kind of just kept pushing and trying to stay on that pace and run what I could run. Really pleasantly surprised to come away from that. It's a huge honor.

Q. Elkanah, you said that you were surprised. You weren't expecting it, but you were running aggressive and right up at the front the whole way. What was your strategy going into this race?

ELKANAH KIBET: I didn't have any strategy, but the goal was to be the top American because I wanted to make the World Championship team. So I was going to hang out



with the lead guys and try to stay with them. Halfway somewhere, around my eighth, two guys break away from us, and I was trying to close the gap. I couldn't.

The other guys who were sitting behind me, and I was like, okay, let me let them go. Then they pushed, and I think I was left with Kandie and Albert. In mile 16, after the hill, they dropped me, and I was able to just maintain my pace following them.

Q. We weren't here last year, we didn't get to do this. Can you talk about the atmosphere on the streets of New York and what it felt like to be running after a year off?

MOLLY SEIDEL: That was incredible. I've never experienced anything like that. It was so cool going from neighborhood to neighborhood and just seeing it change and that energy and the number of people that were out. I think this is just really a testament to the city and being able to come back after a really, really tough year and be able to show that the New York Marathon is back. That was something that I will never forget.

Q. Elkanah, what was it like out there on the streets?

ELKANAH KIBET: This was my first time to be in New York. I've never been here before. Last night I told my coach, I said, you know what, I just want to come back here again.

So even before I ran the race, I just liked the atmosphere and everything about New York, how everything is organized. People were wonderful. They were cheering real loud, and that motivated us to go hard.

Q. Were those two broken ribs a limiter to lung capacity? Did it make it harder for you to breathe or sustain?

MOLLY SEIDEL: I was just trying to not think about it. No, I feel like I have great PTs who were able to get me to a place -- it started to hurt later in the race, like badly, but I didn't feel like it was messing up my stride or anything.

How I ran today, I went all out with what God gave me today. So, yeah, I think I made the most of the situation I was in.

Q. Elkanah, hello, congratulations. For the record, are you active duty in the Army? What is your rank, and what is your job?

ELKANAH KIBET: Yes, active duty. I'm a first lieutenant. So thank you.

Q. Running is your job, yes?

ELKANAH KIBET: Yes, but from 2020 March, after the Olympic Trials, I went to working full-time until March this year.

Q. What were you doing?

ELKANAH KIBET: I was working as a financial management technician.

Q. Elkanah, you were part of the pack halfway. Was there a discussion in the pack about we've got to go get these guys, or did it just sort of happen more naturally?

ELKANAH KIBET: I knew one of the guys from Morocco is really good because I have competed against him. So I was like these guys are letting this guy go? He's going to go away. You're not going to get him. But I wish I knew they were that strong. I would have just let them catch and maybe I would have hung longer with Albert.

Q. Elkanah, when you were working as a financial management technician last year, where were you stationed and how did it affect your training?

ELKANAH KIBET: I was working in Fort Carson at the office. I was still training full-time, but I wasn't recovering. I got injured from doing that.

I should have been smart. I should have changed my training. I just kept training the way I used to train when I was an athlete full-time. I think that's something I loved. So in the future, if I have to work, I am working full-time, I will make sure I change the way I train so that I won't get injured again.

Q. Molly, you spent a lot of miles running alongside Peres Jepchirchir, the Olympic gold medalist. How much confidence did you get knowing that you've hung with her before and finished well?

MOLLY SEIDEL: Obviously, I have enormous respect for Peres. She's a world record holder, extremely accomplished runner. But I think a big thing for me, like a big confidence builder for me is going up to the front and trying to just hang with it and just go as hard as I can. Having run with Peres at the games gave me in my mind, okay, you can run with her.

Obvious, they broke away, but my goal was to hang with that lead pack for as long as I could and know that I belonged there.

THE MODERATOR: Another question about your injury from online. Alison wants to know, did you ever consider not lining up because of that injury?

MOLLY SEIDEL: Yes.

Q. Molly, congratulations. When you came here years ago as a not so well-known athlete and ran the Midnight Run in the freezing cold in Central Park, did you ever imagine that you would be here for the New York City Marathon and finishing the way you did today?

MOLLY SEIDEL: I always dreamed of doing this race. New York Marathon would always fall right after the state meet in Wisconsin, and I would watch it every single year. We would come out here for the 5K champs, run the 5K champs, then you watch the Marathon the next day, do the Midnight Run. Be in the park and just kind of imagine, like, man, someday I hope I get to run the full thing.

This is just so special, being able to come in fourth place my first time doing it. Man, like this is really cool.

Q. Elkanah, is there any way in which your Army responsibilities might keep you from being able to run the World Championships?

ELKANAH KIBET: No, I think I will be able to run the World Championships. Right now I am U.S. Army World Class Athlete Program. That's part of our mission is to compete for the United States at the World Championship and the Olympics. If I make the team, if I'm selected, I think I should be able to compete with no problem.

Q. Molly, a follow-up about deciding to compete here. You mentioned that you were considering withdrawing. When did you make the final decision to run, and what went into that decision? Why did you make the decision to run?

MOLLY SEIDEL: I feel like the rib injury impacted not as much the race, but definitely the lead in. Probably two weeks ago it was extremely painful and it was hindering my ability to do anything. So just having pretty frank conversations with John, with my agent, and trying to figure out if it was going to be healthy and safe.

Yeah, I think part of it was being able to get the ribs in place where I was going to feel it wasn't going to hinder me as I was competing. Part of it too is this feeling of I have invested a lot in doing this race, like mental energy. Like it was hard coming off the Olympics and hard mentally getting back into that build.

I kind of poured everything into trying to come back. I was like, if I can get the ribs back to a place where I feel okay to run, like I've invested too much into this. I really want to do it. It means a lot to me to do it regardless of what it turns out to be.

I think that's why today is really special because frankly I didn't know if I was going to be able to come out here and do it. I just knew I wanted to go as hard as I possibly could and see where I ended up.

Q. Elkanah, when did you first come to the U.S., when did you become a citizen, and why did you want to become a citizen of the U.S.?

ELKANAH KIBET: I came to the United States in 2006 as a student-athlete. I went to a junior college for two years and I moved to Auburn University, and I graduated 2011. After that, I was in graduate school, and there was an opportunity to become a U.S. citizen if you could serve military because they needed -- through a vital program called MAVNI, they needed people who speak certain languages. I qualified to speak Swahili, and I applied, and I was accepted.

That was an opportunity to become a U.S. citizen. I was naturalized as a U.S. citizen in 2013, October.

Q. And why did you want to be an American citizen?

ELKANAH KIBET: So I think the main thing that I wanted to become a U.S. citizen was I have been in this country, and I was placed, I was given an opportunity to go to school and they paid for my school. I wanted so much to give back to the community and say thank you for the opportunity that they give me to come here and study.

So I joined military because I wanted to say thank you, and that way I became a U.S. citizen.

THE MODERATOR: Did you want a rib question or a race question?

MOLLY SEIDEL: I'll do the rib first.

THE MODERATOR: Is there anything you want to share about the rehab and the recovery for that injury?

MOLLY SEIDEL: It's really boring. Muscle work, a lot of heat, a lot of Voltaren. There's not a lot you can do with it. You kind of wait for it to heal. Luckily, it happened far enough out from the races, about a month out, so it gave me time to be able to heal.

THE MODERATOR: After you lost contact with the pack, you were kind of on your own the last couple of miles. What was going through your head?

MOLLY SEIDEL: Going through my head was, one, don't let the women behind you catch you. Two, just stay on the pace, stay on the pace. It can be really hard when you get that separation then and knowing, okay, podium is up there. You're realistically not going to catch them, but still being able to keep pushing.

I was looking at my watch trying to keep pace. Fifth Avenue is really hard. But trying to draw that energy from the crowds was really big, just being able to keep pushing, keep pushing.

THE MODERATOR: You finished almost a minute and a half ahead of fifth place. So it worked.

MOLLY SEIDEL: I was asking John. I was trying to ask him, how far back are they? He's like, they're 40 seconds ahead of you. I'm like not the question I asked.

Q. Molly, after Tokyo, you didn't have friends or family to celebrate with. What does the celebration look like after the New York City Marathon, and what role will beer play in it?

MOLLY SEIDEL: Oh, my God, I hope there's a beer waiting for me at the hotel (laughter). Part of the reason too why I really, really wanted to do New York, regardless of everything that happened in the build, this is the first time my family has gotten to see me race since Trials, and that was really important to me.

They didn't get to come to Tokyo. We didn't get to have that celebration. So getting to have them here today to celebrate with means everything to me. Yes, we will be going crazy tonight.

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