

TCS NYC Marathon

Sunday, November 5, 2023

New York, New York, USA

Hellen Obiri

Letesenbet Gidey

Sharon Lokedi

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll bring up the top three women finishers. Last year's TCS New York City Marathon Champion with a time of 2:27:33, Sharon Lokedi. In second place with a time of 2:27:29, Letesenbet Gidey. And your winner with a time of 2:27:23, from Kenya, Hellen Obiri.

Hellen, I want to start with you, congratulations. A very different year this year than last year. What did you learn in your debut that you put into play today?

HELLEN OBIRI: Thank you so much. First, it's my honor to be here for the second time. My first debut here was terrible for me, and I say like I don't want to come back here next year.

After that, I said, wow, I'm here again. So you know sometimes you learn from your mistakes, so I did a lot of mistakes last year, so I said I want to try to do my best.

I was ready. I worked with my coaches, my family, so finally I made it.

THE MODERATOR: We were looking through the record books, and we don't think anybody who's run a 3:57 1,500 meters has ever won the New York City Marathon. Did that speed come into play in the final mile of Central Park?

HELLEN OBIRI: Sometimes when you're from track, you must have that speed. Even if you're a marathoner, that speed of like sprinting -- like I want to sprint like 400 meters. Still you have to have speed in your legs.

Sometimes it comes from your mind, I'm a marathoner and from track, so I can do well with 400 meters to go.

THE MODERATOR: Letesenbet, you've raced each other so many times on the track. As you came into Central Park, a very familiar scene for you, what did it feel like to be racing side by side with Hellen on the roads for the final



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mile of this race?

HELLEN OBIRI: It was exciting for me to see Gidey was there. I said, this is like track again, like World Championships in 2022, and we are with Gidey. So I feel like I'm so happy.

So I say I'm not good on hills, so I said, can I try to go -- you know sometimes when you try to go in front of your opponent so you can just go. For me, I knew she is very strong, so I say can I go 400 meters, so if she can catch up with me and it's towards the end of the race.

THE MODERATOR: Same question for you. A familiar scene, how did it feel to be racing Hellen here on the roads?

LETESENBET GIDEY: Hellen Obiri is a very strong athlete. I enjoy racing against her very much, and I was very happy to have had this race with her.

THE MODERATOR: Sharon, when you won here last year, you were seconds away from the course record. Today a very different race. Kellyn Taylor was up here talking about how strange it felt going so slow in those early miles. What was going through your head as you're clicking off 6-minute pace in the first 23 miles?

SHARON LOKEDI: First of all, I want to congratulate Hellen and Letesenbet.

At the beginning of the race, it was like let's just sit and relax and follow the lead, and whatever happens, we just go with it. But it was very slow to start with all the way until the last few kilometers. Then I think it kind of picked it up. I was like, oh, I remember this from last year.

But it just felt good to be out there competing and back racing in New York.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open the floor up for questions for the top three female finishers in the Open Division.

Q. Question for all three. With how slow the pace was throughout the race, did any of you consider making a



break earlier than the final few miles? And why did you choose not to?

HELLEN OBIRI: For me, there's a certain point, like 25K to go, 25K, I say, can I try and make a move? I said, no, in a marathon, it's about patience. In New York we don't see about the time, it's all about winning the race.

So for me, I said let me be patient up until the last few miles. So when I went into Central Park, I said, can I make the move? That's where we started to get the faster pace to get the move.

Sometimes when it is so slow, so you prepare your mind about a few miles, how you can do it faster than from the start of the race.

SHARON LOKEDI: I think it was just more like -- we felt so excited, we knew towards the end it was going to get fast. So you just prepare your mind on how fast I would get towards the end. It's just like, once that move is made, just be ready to go with everyone.

LETESENBET GIDEY: Yes, it's true, the race was very slow at the start. But a lot of times, marathons do sometimes end up being a bit slow. Then in particular, I was thinking, let me just learn the New York course and then tackle the race again at the end.

So I was just focusing on mastering the course.

Q. Hellen, congratulations. You're already a history making athlete, first one to win a world indoor title, world cross country, and a world outdoor title. Now you're the first woman to win Boston and New York in the same year in 34 years. The last woman was Ingrid Kristiansen. What does it mean to you to set these kinds of records in your career?

HELLEN OBIRI: Thank you so much for your question. You know, sometimes when you come in this race, you say like anything can happen. But for me, I train so well, that last year so well, when I came to this race, I say I'm strong, I believe for what I've done in my training, because in my training we do sometimes easy, long runs and towards the end you can just increase the pace.

So for me, I said I will try to be the fastest woman to win indoors, outdoors, and in Boston and New York. I think still I have something to do, to win like Olympics, everything.

THE MODERATOR: Hellen is also only the second woman to win the New York City Half Marathon and New York City Marathon in the same year. Joyciline Jepkosgei the other in 2019.

(Question and answer not in English.)

THE MODERATOR: I don't want you to repeat that whole thing, but can you summarize because I think there was some news about your 2024 Olympic plans.

HELLEN OBIRI: I was saying in Kenya it's hard to get Olympic qualification, maybe about the world ranking. For me, I do hope I will be among the team to be in Paris next year because course of Paris will be like Boston and New York. For me, I've shown that I can do it.

So if I get the chance, that means a gold medal in the Olympics. I've done 1500 in Olympics and 5000. So I'm thinking maybe I can get the gold in Marathon Olympics. So I will set a record with track Olympics, 5000, and marathon. It's so special for me.

Hellen Obiri is the 2023 TCS New York City Marathon Champion.

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