

Monday Matters

May 14, 2012



Wesley Korir wins Boston Marathon

Wesley is a member in my home church, Southeast Christian in Louisville, Kentucky. Thanks to Ruth Schenk and The Southeast Outlook for allowing me to share this article with all of you.

This race was different than all the rest. When the pistol fired in Hopkinton, Mass., for the start of the 116th Boston Marathon April 16, Wesley Korir was not sure what would happen.

He had trained, but still battled weakness and fatigue after a bout with typhoid fever while training in Kenya. Weather was not ideal. More than 4,000 of the nearly 27,000 runners registered for the race decided not to run because of record high temperatures in the 80s. Newscasters talked of the 1909 Boston Marathon when they called the race "an inferno" and the 1976 marathon that they called the "run for the hoses" because they turned garden hoses on runners to cool them down.

Before the 26.2-mile race, Wesley saw the competition—seven elite runners with faster times than his first place finishes in the L.A. and Chicago marathons.

That morning, he followed normal race-day routine. He bought two 6-inch tuna subs from Subway, ate one and gave the other to a homeless man. He wrote his wife Tarah's name on his water bottle along with their baby girl Mckayla. With a degree in biology from the University of Louisville, he knew hydration was the key to survival.

Tarah, also an elite runner, gave her usual race-day advice: "Don't be afraid. Just go out there and do your best and leave it to God." Wesley's coach, Southeast member Ron Mann said, "Wesley, you have done all you can do. Let God take you to the finish line."

God did. Two hours, 12 minutes and 40 seconds later, Wesley was the first to cross the finish line and win the Boston Marathon. He dropped to his knees, raised his hands toward heaven and thanked God for the victory. "I felt all through the race that God was smiling at me," Wesley said. "At the finish line, I smiled back at Him."

Drama played out throughout the race. Wesley saw runners collapse from the heat. The medical tent was packed. About 120 runners were taken to hospitals in ambulances.

Raised in the Rift Valley in Kenya, where he ran barefoot, Wesley is used to the heat.

Wesley talked to God throughout the race. "God, I know You chose this day for the marathon for a reason," he prayed. "You chose the heat. You chose me to be here. I'm ready to do Your will." As always, he sang worship songs as he ran, prayed and quoted Scripture. Over and over he sang an original song, "Come Holy Spirit, come Jesus" and recited the words to Isaiah 40:31: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Around mile 20, Wesley heard someone shout that he was in sixth place. "I saw the guys in front of me and started working on getting fifth," Wesley said. "Then I passed the guy in fourth and the guy in front of him, then the next." By the end of the race, Wesley focused on one step at a time.

Coach Mann waited for Wesley at the finish line. "I can't even begin to say how much God is in the middle of this win," he said. "Wesley warmed up in a church where we stayed in a small room away from everyone else. And he was very conservative in warming up." As Wesley took his place at the starting line, Mann prayed, "If it's Your will, put Wesley in this one."

Over the years, they have had a close coach/athlete relationship, but now even more. Mann baptized Wesley at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, KY, on Dec. 4, 2005. "Coach Mann taught me to run for God," Wesley said.

After the race, bodyguards escorted Wesley back to the hotel. His Facebook and email crashed from the volume of well-wishers, and he had to turn off his cellphone.

Tarah said she believes that since Wesley was weak going into the race, God showed up strong. "That way, God gets all the glory," she said. "We trained as usual, prayed as usual. It's nothing we did."

Wesley said the win is still hard to believe. Winning has already opened doors. Runners in the Boston Marathon raised the \$27,000 Wesley needed to finish the hospital he and Tarah are building through Kenyan Kids Foundation, their charity that provides school tuition and uniforms for about 40 children. It also provides food for families living in the slums near where Wesley was raised in Kitale, Kenya.

Their dream is to provide for yet more children.

"I love to run," Wesley said. "But what I love even more is helping the poor in Kenya."



Wesley Korir

Monday Matters Contact Information

Ron Nelson, CCA

P.O. Box 397

Folly Beach, South Carolina 29439

noctelopus@bellsouth.net