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2008 New York City Mini Celebrates Women's Running

June 6, 2008
by: LetsRun.com

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▶ Thursday was the press conference for the 37th annual New York Mini. The Mini was the first women's only road race in the world.

As for the race itself, let us say one thing, **Hilda Kibet** is the heavy favorite will win. **Kibet** ran 30:58 for 10k last weekend and is the class of the field. If she is a little jet lagged or tired from her 30:58, then there is a chance **Madai Perez** could challenge her (Perez ran 31:30 at Stanford in May).

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What about **Deena Kastor**? Kastor admits she's far from being in top 10k shape and is focused on the getting ready for the marathon at the Olympics in Beijing. She **got soundly beaten last week in the Boulder**

Boulder so don't expect a huge improvement here. (For a video interview with Deena and a recap of the part of the press conference with the pro women [click here](#))

This week really is about a celebration of the sport of running, the New York Road Runners (NYRR), and women's running. Wednesday was the 50th Anniversary of the **NYRR** and all week with **Running Week** they have been having events celebrating the fiftieth anniversary.

It's fitting with a woman, **Mary Wittenberg**, now in charge of the New York Road Runners that the Mini concludes the week. And we want to take a moment to acknowledge how far women's running has come in the last 37 years. A lot of people our generation take it for granted that women are running 5ks, 10ks, and marathons. They shouldn't.



Deena Kastor, Magdalena Lewy-Boulet, Blake Russell, Hilda Kibet, Victah Sailer, www.photorun.net

The NYRR brought together the US Women's Olympic Marathon Team (Deena, plus **Blake Russell** and **Magdalena Lewy-Boulet**) to celebrate Running Week and women's running. They also brought in **Kathrine Switzer**, the first women to officially enter the Boston Marathon and run it.

Wejo watched the impressive Fred Lebow (famous head of the NYRR) Documentary, "[Run for Your Life](#)" on Tuesday as part of Running Week. He was amazed at how much the sport has changed in the last 40 years (and how much it has stayed the same).

Nowhere has the sport changed more than with women's running. In 1967, Kathrine Switzer entered herself in the Boston Marathon without checking her sex off. Most of you know she was nearly tackled on the course by a race official. What most of you don't know is that after that year it took Boston 5 years to relent and let women officially into the race.



Mary Wittenberg
photos by Victah Sailer, www.photorun.net

NY Mini, Playboy Bunnies, and Uteruses Staying Intact

Once women ran Boston officially for the first time there was a lot of attention. As Kathrine Switzer said yesterday, "There was so much publicity. Women can run a marathon, they can run long distance races, their uteruses aren't going to fall out, their legs aren't going to get big, they're not going to grow hair on their chest. It was really quite an astonishing revelation (to many people)." (You need to see the 3 US Olympians start laughing when she says this, video below).

A sponsor approached **Fred Lebow** about a women's marathon in NY. Lebow was a great marketer and he knew that very few women actually ran marathons in the US. (As Kathrine Switzer said only half joking yesterday at the press conference, "There were about 6 women in the United States who could do a marathon.")

So he proposed a "Mini-Marathon" and the sponsor was gung ho about it. Then, according to Switzer, the NYRR was "scared" about being able to get a decent size field for its women's only race. So they

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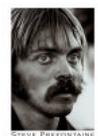
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sent out 10,000 fliers throughout New York State. The response according to Switzer was "huge." **78 women** signed up for the race.

Yes ladies and gentleman, 78 women signed up for the first NY Mini and it was considered a tremendous success.

Kathrine Switzer herself said, "We got 78 women which was considered huge... We were so excited."

So the Playboy bunnies were brought in for the photo shoot (we're not making this up, it's in the documentary as well. As Switzer said yesterday of Lebow who was quite the ladies man, "He was an incredible male chauvinist who loved women and really supported women. He was a wonderful mix."). The race went off (Switzer said, "I get chills just thinking about it") and the rest is history.



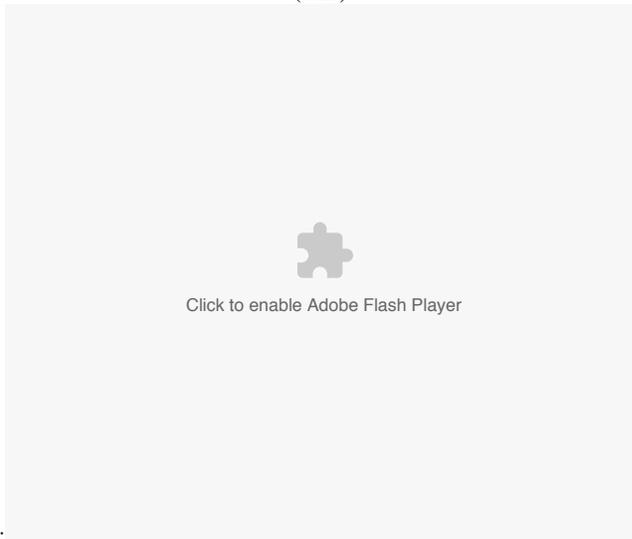
Kathrine Switzer
photos by Victah Sailer, www.photorun.net

Switzer said, "One of the whole purposes of that race was in 1972 to call attention to the world and the International Olympic Committee to the fact women could and deserved to run the 5000m, the 10,000m and the marathon in the Olympic Games, and here we are...What a fabulous triumph it is to bring our team here today."

As Mary Wittenberg said, "We're in a whole different place today, when the New York Road Runners began, you didn't see women in business, you didn't see women in politics, you didn't see women in the forefront of the sport of long-distance running. Today we have women doing all these things and more. We're so proud the New York Road runners has had the opportunity to open the door for these women."

A lot of us take it for granted there are women in running. We wanted to take a moment out to thank everyone who made it possible.

Kathrine Switzer and Mary Wittenberg Talk About How Far Women's Running Has Come (7:18)



More Coverage Part II: Brief Interview with Deena Kastor and writeup of the pro part of the press conference [here, plus full video of the press conference](#)

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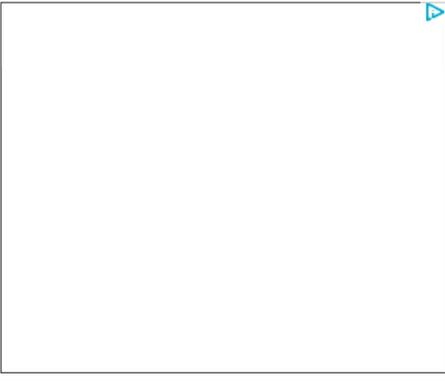
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