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Sutume shines, Kissa upsets Ebenyo in Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata 2024

Gulveer shatters the event record, while Sanjivani took another title in Indian Elite

Kolkata, Dec 15: Ethiopian Sutume Kebede retained the women's crown in the ninth edition of Tata Steel World 25K, the first World Athletics Gold Label Road Race at this distance, in the West Bengal capital today. Ugandan Stephen Kissa triumphed over the defending champion, Daniel Ebenyo from Kenya, in the men's race.

The Indian elite runners also returned with splendid performances, with Gulveer Singh setting a new event record and Sanjeevani taking the title in the women's category.

As they converged upon the historic Red Road, Kolkata woke up to 14 degrees Celsius and a spring in their feet. More than 20,500 people participated in various categories, making it one of the most popular races in the country.

Confirming her entry just two weeks before the race, Kebede recovered from a stomach ailment just in time to defend her title here in a modest 1:19:17. Having set a stand-alone World Best for 25K here while winning last year's race with a time of 1:18:47, the Ethiopian runner started her campaign in 2024 with fantastic personal best in half-marathon (1:04:37) and marathon (2:15:55) to take the top spots in Houston and Tokyo respectively. Incidentally, her timing in Tokyo made her the 8th fastest among women marathoners to date.

Coming to Kolkata with confidence and the desire to excel, Sutume started today's race with some initial challenges from Bahrain's Desi Jisa, the winner here in 2022, and Kenyan Viola Chpengeno, a third-place finisher in last year's Delhi half-marathon. The Kenyan started fading in the waning stages of the race, thus allowing Kebede to become a clear leader after 23K. The Ethiopian runner's winning time would have been better had Chpengeno continued with her for some more time. However, Kebede signed off 2024 with another winning note.

Chepengeno finished second in 1:19:44, while Jisa finished a distant third at 1:21:29.

Kebede expressed her joy in retaining the title: "I am very happy to win (here) again. I wanted to break the course record, but was a little tired of travelling. I am training for the next year and will participate in the marathons".

"I am happy to come second. It was not easy to run here. Everyone was strong today. I gave my best, and this makes me very happy," Viola said while Jisa added, "I am happy to be on the podium. Thanks to everyone."

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A redemption for Stephen Kissa in the men's race:

Stephen Kissa salvaged some pride after logging his first win in an international competition in five years. He suffered two back-to-back debacles as a non-finisher at the Olympic Games in Tokyo (10,000m) and Paris (Marathon) and took only second spots in a couple of races in between. Hence, making a podium finish on his debut at 25K brought a happy moment for the Ugandan to cherish for a long time.

The race kicked off with a fair bit of nippiness in the air and as Kolkata broke dawn, the top bunch of Daniel Ebenyo, Benson Kipruto, Stephen Kissa, and Haymanot Alew made past the 10K mark at 28:42 but looked up the ante as they were still a few seconds behind their expectation.

Defending champion Ebenyo looked strong, remained at the helm of affairs in the men's race, and ran neck-to-neck alongside Kissa in most parts of the race. They briefly exchanged the lead, but the gap between the duo did not go beyond a meter or two all the time. The Kenyan, who also set a stand-alone World Best for 25K (1:11:13) during last year's race, was looking to improve his time in this edition.

They reached 15K in 42:56, some 30 seconds faster, with Ebenyo and Kissa still leading the pack, as the pace picked up along the tram tracks of South Kolkata. Surprisingly, Kipruto dropped off as Kissa took the lead at the 20K mark, clocking 57:50, with Ebenyo closely behind.

But he lost focus in the last two kilometers. Instead of looking at the clock, he only focused on pulling away from the Ugandan runner. Kissa did not allow that to happen and held off the challenge to sprint out to the tape to claim the men's crown in 1:12:33 and pocket the USD 15,000 prize purse.

Ebenyo finished runner-up four seconds later, while Anthony Kipchirchir surprised everyone with a bronze position at 1:12:55.

"Really I am very happy. India is a very nice country. It is my third time in India. When I was running, I thought we would make the world record. I had two options: either the first place or should I follow the first group. After the first 2 km, I saw my body responding well and so I ran with the first group. I realized that I ran well today. I thought this could be my day. At the last kilometre I was comfortable, and I knew I could do it," said Stephen Kissa after winning the 25K.

"Every day, a champion is born in sports. Last year, it was me. This year, it was Kissa. That is the fun of sports. I am very happy. He has flown the flag of Uganda and congratulations. I was a little tired this year as I did not recover from the Chicago Marathon. I will take a break for the festive season and spend time with my family. I felt some fatigue today, but it is sports," Daniel said.

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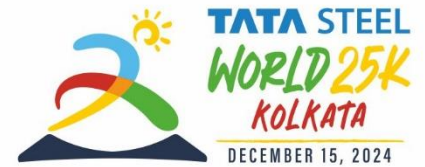
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"First of all, I thank the organizers for calling me. I am on the podium for the first time. Next time, I will come back again; I like the course and hope to win here. I was cheered all along, and I liked it. I cut the pace towards the 15K mark and ran at my best. I settled for the third. But next year, I will come back stronger," said Anthony, who finished his first podium here.

Gulveer, Sanjeevani excel among the Indians:

Gulveer Singh (26) habitually breaks the national record in every distance event. He has improved the national marks in 5000 and 10,000m twice this year. The Guangzhou Asian Games bronze medalist, who just eight weeks ago became the Asian cross-country champion, is now turning his focus towards road running. Sawan Barwal, the 2023 Asian half-marathon bronze medalist, led Gulveer in a significant portion of the race today. As in the international category, Gulveer broke away from Sawan and sprinted to finish first and also registered another Indian Best at this distance by clocking 1:14:10. Sawan clocked a close 1:14:11 to cross the finish line fractionally behind the leader. Gaurav Mathur completes the Indian podium in third place.

"I am in good form, and I thought we could break the course record. We practiced together, and then we pushed each other. After 12 km there was some traffic, so we lost a little time and made up. I am very happy to win," Gulveer Singh said.

"We get a lot of support. AFI has given us a good coach from the USA. We also get to visit foreign countries. That has reduced the gap with the elite internationals. Now we are preparing for the Asian and World Championships," he further said about closing in on the International elites.

"Condition was better this time. We wanted to break the course record, and so we did. We are very happy to achieve this. I tried my best to win, but Gulveer was very good today," Sawan Barwal said.

Sanjivani Jadhav, popular among women runners in the country, returned to Kolkata after 2022, where she was a top finisher among Indians. Kavita Yadav aided her by initially challenging Sanjivani before allowing her to run a solo race. The 28-year-old runner improved her best by over 5 minutes, winning in 1:29:08.

Lili Das (1:30:58) and Kavita Yadav (1:32:19) took the next two spots among the Indian women.

"I am very much pleased to win here again. I practiced running a solo race. The 28-year-old runner improved her best by more than 5 minutes. I have a personal coach and this prize money is a great help. I am working very hard for the Asian Championship. I will give my best. The World Championship will have a ranking system. If we can compete outside, we can also get the rankings to participate," Sanjivani said after winning the race.

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Following are the provisional results:

Overall International Men:

Stephen Kissa (Uganda) 1:12:33 ; Daniel Ebenyo (Kenya) 1:12:37; Anthony Kipchirchir (Kenya) 1:12:55; Benson Kipruto (Kenya) 1:13:25 ; Asbel Rutto (Kenya) 1:13:36 ; Hillary Mosop (Kenya) 1:13:56 ; Dejene Hailu (Ethiopia) 1:14:10 ; Gulveer Singh (India) 1:14:10; Sawan Barwal (India) 1:14:11 ; Rodgers Murei (Kenya) 1:15:37.

Overall International Women:

Sutume Kebede (Ethiopia) 1:19:17 ; Viola Chepngeno (Kenya) 1:19:44; Desi Jisa (Bahrain) 1:21:29; Alemaddis Eyayu (Ethiopia) 1:21:42 ; Degitu Azimeraw (Ethiopia) 1:22:16; Misgane Alemayehu (Ethiopia) 1:24:40 ; Sintayehu Lewetegn (Ethiopia) 1:28:26 ; Sanjeevani Jadhav (India) 1:29:08 ; Lili Das (India) 1:30:58; Kavita Yadav (India) 1:32:19.

Indian Men:

Gulveer Singh 1:14:10 (**NEW COURSE RECORD**) ; Sawan Barwal 1:14:11 ; Gaurav Mathur 1:16:59 ; Abhishek Pal 1:19:00 ; Mohd Aleem 1:19:00 ; Hemant Singh 1:19:02 ; Kartik Jayraj Karkera 1:19:03; Nikhil Singh 1:19:07 ; Mayangam Lung Leng 1:19:10 ; Manoj Kumar 1:19:38.

Indian Women:

Sanjeevani Jadhav 1:29:08; Lili Das 1:30:58 ; Kavita Yadav 1:32:19 ; Nirmaben Bharatjee Thakor 1:35:14 ; Bhagirathi 1:36:17 ; Sanghamitra Mahata 1:38:22 ; Shyamali Sing 1:39:45 ; Madina Paul 1:40:54.

Vijay Diwas Trophy:

Indian Army 1 (Anand Singh Rawat, Manjit Singh, Hardeep Singh) 4:08:52; Indian Army 2 (Bheem Singh, Dattatray Mahadev Tambe; Manoj Joshi (4:10:37); Indian Army 3 (Vagaram Prajapati; Pintu Sharma; Banee Singh (4:13:33).

Police Cup Winners:

Police Cup Men Team 39 (Joydev, Rishikesh, Manas) 1:47:53; Police Cup Men Team 54 (Md Wazed, Rabindranath, Prasanta) 2:05:06 ; Police Cup Men Team 66 (Ardhendu, Kousik, Amresh) 2:07:38.

Police Cup Women Team 7 (Mallika, Sabina Jasmina) 2:20:01; Police Cup Women Team 8 (Puja, Moumita, Tanushree) 2:48:17; Police Cup Women Team 11 (Madhumita, Jayashree, Priyanka) 3:57:07

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A Great Place to Work-Certified™ organisation, Tata Steel Limited, together with its subsidiaries, associates, and joint ventures, is spread across five continents with an employee base of over 78,000. Tata Steel has announced its major sustainability objectives including Net Zero by 2045.

The Company has been on a multi-year digital-enabled business transformation journey intending to be the leader in 'Digital Steel making'. The Company has received the World Economic Forum's Global Lighthouse recognition for its Jamshedpur, Kalinganagar, and IJmuiden Plants. Tata Steel has also been recognised with the 'Digital Enterprise of India – Steel' Award 2024 by Economic Times CIO.

Tata Steel aspires to have a 20% diverse workforce by 2025. The Company has been recognised with the World Economic Forum's Global Diversity Equity & Inclusion Lighthouse 2023. The Company has been a part of the DJSI Emerging Markets Index since 2012 and has been consistently ranked among the top 10 steel companies in the DJSI Corporate Sustainability Assessment since 2016. Tata Steel's Jamshedpur Plant is India's first site to receive ResponsibleSteel™ Certification. Subsequently, its Kalinganagar and Meramandali plants have also received the certification. In India, Tata Steel now has more than 90% of its steel production from ResponsibleSteel™ certified sites. Received Prime Minister's Trophy for the best performing integrated steel plant for 2016-17, 2024 Steel Sustainability Champion recognition from worldsteel for seven years in a row, 2023 Climate Change Leadership Award by CDP, Top performer in Iron and Steel sector in Dun & Bradstreet's India's top 500 companies 2022, Ranked as the 2024 most valuable Mining and Metals brand in India by Brand Finance, 'Most Ethical Company' award 2021 from Ethisphere Institute, and 'Best Corporate for Promotion of Sports' recognition at the Sportstar Aces Awards 2024. Received the 2023 Global ERM (Enterprise Risk Management) Award of Distinction at the RIMS ERM Conference 2023, 'Masters of Risk' - Metals & Mining Sector recognition at The India Risk Management Awards for the eighth consecutive year, and ICSI Business Responsibility and Sustainability Award 2023 for its first Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR), Excellence in Financial Reporting FY20 from ICAI, among several others.

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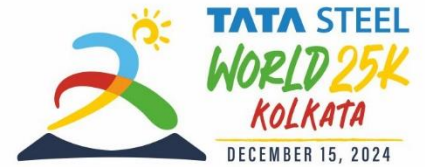
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