

Colorado's Drossin, Kenya's Koskei Run Away With Titles

By Adam Hodges
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The 23rd running of the Bolder Boulder was packed with tough fields as Deena Drossin from the U.S. and James Koskei from Kenya ran away with victories.

The women started at 11:30 under overcast skies with a hint of sun. The thermometer inside Folsom Stadium read 69 degrees. From the start, Deena Drossin of Alamosa led the tightly bunched field out of the stadium and down the hill to Folsom Street. Sally Barsosio and Jane Ngotho, both from Kenya, ran on Drossin's shoulder for most of the first mile.

The group went through mile 1 in 5:14, with Barsosio at the front. Then Barsosio made the first big surge of the race, taking Ngotho with her. As the two Kenyans pressed the pace, Drossin slipped to fifth.

After the race, Drossin spoke of that break, "Some of the girls went out hard. I just stayed conservative and it worked in my favor today."

Barsosio went through mile two in 10:44 with Ejagayou Dibaba from Ethiopia in a close second. The two-runner breakaway ran together until the bridge over Boulder Creek then Barsosio surged going into the climb up to the stadium.

Barsosio entered the stadium a few seconds ahead of Dibaba. Meanwhile, Drossin had moved up to third.

Inspired by the crowd, Drossin left the stadium and pulled up on Dibaba's heels going downhill to Folsom Street. By mile 3.5, Drossin and Dibaba caught the race leader. Then the tactical racing began.

Drossin, Dibaba and Barsosio ran in a tight echelon through mile 4. Then Barsosio dropped off the back.

At 24:50 into the race, Drossin tested Dibaba with a surge and pulled away from the Ethiopian. By the final turn to the stadium, Drossin owned a ten to fifteen second lead on Dibaba.

Once Drossin stepped onto the stadium surface, she grabbed an American flag and smiled all the way to the finish.

"For a little plastic flag, it sure was heavy," joked Drossin after crossing the finish line to a hard earned victory.

"I love Boulder!" exclaimed Drossin. "Everyone was so unbelievable out there."

To the applause of a wildly cheering crowd, Drossin became the sixth American woman to win the Bolder Boulder. Was this a big focus for her?

"Absolutely," said Drossin. Being in her home state, Drossin was motivated to do well and redeem herself "for a poor season so far."

Drossin's goal was a top five finish, but she felt strong and pushed on when she found herself in the lead.

Dibaba from Ethiopia finished behind Drossin in 33:42. Ludmila Petrova from Russia took third in 33:54.

Kenya won the women's team competition with Russia only a point behind in second. The U.S. women claimed third.

"The most exciting thing is that both the men and women walked away with third place," Drossin said after the men had matched the women's efforts with their own gutsy performances.

The men's race started at 12:17 with the sun hiding behind a dark cloud and a temperature of 71 degrees. Like the women, the men stayed in a tight pack throughout much of the beginning. Silvio Guerra, a Boulder resident running for Ecuador, led the group through the first two minutes of the race with Miguel Mallqui from Peru on his shoulder.

The large pack stayed together through mile 1, running a conservative 4:45 split. Even the Kenyans were content to let a tactical race unfold as their team controlled the pace with Guerra and Armando Quintanilla from Mexico at the front.

Dominic Kirui from Kenya used a u-turn on Folsom to open up a gap on the pack. Koskei ran up to join him. A few seconds later, Elarbi Khattabi from Morocco did the same and soon Birhanu Addane from Ethiopia and Joseph Kimani from Kenya were in the mix.

The leaders passed mile 2 in 9:15 and a pack of six headed up the hill into Folsom stadium. At the top of the hill, five runners emerged onto the stadium floor. One after another came Koskei, Khattabi, Tekeste Kebede from Ethiopia, Kimani, and Kirui. Jose Castillo from Peru followed a few seconds later with Mohamed Aryn from Morocco, Armando Quintanilla from Mexico, and Clint Wells from the USA in the next group.

Going down the hill back to Folsom Street, Koskei and Khattabi formed a two-man breakaway and gapped the four runners behind them as they proceeded north on Folsom.

At 14:53 into the race, Koskei surged and quickly put some space between him and Khattabi. A few moments later, Khattabi recovered and responded with speed from his own arsenal. As he rejoined and passed Koskei, the look on Khattabi's face spoke of the psychological battle brewing between the race leaders.

At 17:25 into the race, Koskei tried again and this time it was for keeps. Koskei decisively broke away and left Khattabi struggling for his legs.

Over the next several minutes, Kimani moved up from third to overtake Khattabi, while teammate Kirui moved into fifth place for Kenya.

By 23:52 into the race, Koskei had a 14 second lead on Kimani and the race for third, fourth and fifth began.

Koskei crossed the finish line for the win in 29:00. Kimani came next in 29:29, followed by Jose Castillo from Peru who worked his way up to a 29:31 finish.

Castillo ran a "gutsy race over the second half," said pro athlete coordinator Rich Castro.

It was Koskei's first victory at the Boulder Boulder and he led his team to a repeat title.

"I was happy with what I did," said Koskei, who will focus next on the 10,000m at the Kenyan track trials.

His teammate Kimani told him before the race that if he moved, "then Kenya would do the best it can to defend the title."

With time bonuses set for the new course, this year's prize purse of \$153,500 was the largest payout in the history of the race.

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