
Hassan targeting half marathon world record in Valencia

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Dutch star Sifan Hassan leads an impressive women's field at the **Media Maratón de Valencia Trinidad Alfonso**, an IAAF Gold Label road race, on Sunday (27).

Hassan, who managed an unprecedented 1500 and 10,000m double at the recent World Championships, is mounting an assault on the world record of 1:04:51 set by Kenya's Joyciline Jepkosgei in Valencia two years ago. Hassan broke the world record in the mile in Monaco on 12 July clocking 4:12:33 as well as the road 5km record in February, illustrating her incredible versatility. She broke the European record in the half marathon in Copenhagen last year clocking 1:05:15.

Hassan will be paced by Morocco's Yakoub Labquira and Dutchman Roy Hoornweg who have been tasked with a 3:04-kilometre tempo, on schedule for a 30:40 opening 10km. That would put her well inside world record pace.

The 26-year-old, now training under the guidance of Britain's Charles Van Comenee, faces a field that includes ten runners who have dipped under the 1:08 barrier.

Those include the Ethiopian tandem of Gudeta Kebede and Senberi Teferi. The former is the reigning world champion for the distance, an accolade she managed in Valencia last year in 1:06:11 to set a women-only world record performance. The 28-year-old Teferi holds a lifetime best of 1:05:45 set in Ras Al Khaimah earlier this year. Her last appearance was in Doha where she failed to finish the 10,000m.

Teferi meanwhile produced the fastest half marathon debut in history in Ras Al Khaimah when she led the Ethiopian 1-2 finish just ahead of Kebede where both clocked 1:05:45. The 24-year-old finished sixth in the Doha 10,000m on her last competition.

Yet the two fastest women in the field are Kenyan duo Fancy Chemutai and Joan Chelimo. The 24-year-old Chemutai came just one second shy of the world record in February 2018 when she won in Ras Al Khaimah in a stunning 1:04:52. She also finished runner-up in Valencia two years ago behind Jepkorir's world record run.

Meanwhile, Chelimo boasts a 1:05:04 clocking set in Prague last year but hasn't shown similar form this year, with a season's best of 1:08:01 and a 2:26:24 performance in her marathon debut in Tokyo last March. The third Kenyan in contention will be Dorcas Tutoek, author of a couple of solid performances earlier this year in Istanbul (1:06:33) and Copenhagen (1:06:36).

Further notable entrants include United Arab Emirates' Alia Mohamed Saeed, runner-up last year in a lifetime best of 1:06:13, Ethiopians Genet Ayalew (1:06:26) and Meseret Belete, who holds the world U20 best courtesy of her 1:07:51 set last year in Copenhagen.

Kejelcha leads solid men's field

Ethiopia's newly-minted world 10,000 silver medallist Yomif Kejelcha should be regarded as one of the men to beat. The 22-year-old, who broke the world indoor mile record with 3:47.01 in March, also boasts an impressive range which includes a 59:17 half marathon best from his debut last year. Sunday marks just his second half marathon outing.

Kejelcha will be joined by compatriot Jemal Yimer who finished runner-up here last year with a 58:33 national record.

Relatively unheralded Kenyan Geoffrey Koech could also be a factor. The 26-year-old won the Prague 10km last month in a career best of 27:02, fastest in the world this year. He set his 59:50 lifetime best in Copenhagen two years ago.

Other Kenyans on show include Benard Ngeno, who clocked a 59:16 career best in Copenhagen last month, Albert Kangogo (SB of 1:01:08), Leonard Barsoton (PB of 59:28) and Isaac Kipsang who lowered his best to 59:44 in Lisbon last March.

The Eritrean challenge will be led by Nguse Amsolom, a 59:39 runner who will be making his marathon debut in Valencia on 1 December. He'll be joined by world half marathon bronze medallist Aron Kifle, who is still on the mend from a stomach infection that forced him to settle for a 15th place finish in the 10,000m. Others to watch include 2015 world marathon champion Ghirmay Gebrselassie who will be competing the first time this year and Norway's Sondre Moen (59:48).

Organisers are offering a €70,000 (US\$ 77,700) world record bonus on top of an additional €30,000 (US\$ 33,300) bonus for landmark performances, sub 58:00 for men and sub-1:04:30 for women.
