

Cox sets American 50K record

Over eight years after setting a marathon PR of 2:13:55 in Chicago, American Josh Cox set a new USA Track & Field record for 50 kilometers at the P.F. Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Marathon on Sunday, Jan. 18. With an official time of 2:47:17, Cox bettered the previous 50K record by over four minutes set in 2002 by Alex Tilson.

“My legs felt fine, but I was having a hard time keeping fluids down,” said Cox, who leading up to the race had his sights set on the world best. “It was tough out there, but the crowd support really helped, especially once I got going around the track. I was training such that even though it was an off day, I still got the American record.”

Cox overcame two bathroom breaks and an upset stomach, which plagued him over the first 20 miles of the race. His marathon split of 2:20:32 was his best time in the past two years and good for ninth place overall. His final lap on the track was clocked at 71 seconds. “Marathon is still my sport and 2012 is my goal,” added Cox, referring to the Olympic Games in London. “But like when running 50 miles helped my performance in college track, these types of efforts will hopefully help my marathon running.”

Moses Kigen of Kenya won the men’s title in his marathon debut. His final sprint was good for a half second victory over Ethiopian Tekeste Kebede. Kigen, 25, won the race in 2 hours, 10 minutes, 36 seconds, the second-best time in the six-year history of the event. “It feels great to win in my first marathon,” said Kigan. “The course is fantastic, flat and very fast. The running conditions were perfect.”

Nearly the entire men’s field jockeyed for position over the first few miles of the race. A lead pack of seven runners then began to click off sub 5-minute miles. After the 10-mile mark, mile splits were 4:51, 4:53 and 4:44, with a half marathon split of 1:05:09. At the 25K mark, Kigan, Kebede, and fourth place finisher Keteme Nigusse of Ethiopia pulled away.

It was a three-man race until the water station at mile 22, when the pace caught up to Nigusse and he fell back. Kigan and Kebede ran side-by-side until the final few meters. Kigen, who also finished third overall at the 2008 Rock ‘n’ Roll Half Marathon in San Jose, received \$20,000 for his first place effort. Defending Champion Michael Aish of New Zealand finished sixth overall.

In the women's marathon, Olena Shurkhno of the Ukraine cruised to victory in 2:31:22, nearly three minutes ahead of Ethiopia's Salomie Getnet. In addition to six European marathon titles, Shurkhno has previously won the 2007 Country Music Marathon and was also runner- up in Nashville last year. Two time-defending champion Adanech Zekiros of Ethiopia dropped out with an injury before mile 19.

After leading five miles over the first half of the race, local Arizona resident Sally Meyerhoff finished in fifth place setting a new PR with a time of 2:35:52. Meyerhoff won additional prize money as the first American woman, Arizona resident and Maricopa County finisher.

Albuquerque resident Kris Houghton and Nickey Archer of the United Kingdom won their respective half marathons.

A record field turned out for the first race in the 2009 Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon Series. Annually the largest combined marathon and half marathon in the U.S., the sixth annual event was the largest in the history of the Rock ‘n’ Roll series. Conditions on the flat Arizona course were almost ideal for

marathon running, dawning sunny and with temperatures around 48 degrees and very little wind at the start line.