

Men's marathon update: Toptun surges to victory in last 3 miles

By Scott Venci svenci@greenbaypressgazette.com May 18, 2008

William Sarem and Richard Kandie led for most of the first 23 miles of the Cellcom Green Bay Marathon today, running side by side. It was Andrii Toptun who showed the rest of the way.

Not only did the Ukrainian from Miami surprise the two Kenyan runners, he shocked almost everyone by coming out of nowhere to pass the two as the race turned off Broadway.

Toptun, 27, blew past Sarem and cruised to the win in 2 hours, 22 minutes, 51 seconds in the ninth annual event.

Sarem, 23, never threatened after he was overtaken and finished second in 2:25.00. Kandie, 23, was third in 2:26:22. Both men are from Coon Rapids, Minn.

"I knew about the 23rd mile that I was going to win," Toptun said through an interpreter. "It was surprising. I didn't know if I'd have enough time to pass the Kenyans. I thought, 'Maybe. Maybe not.'"

The temperature at the start of the 26.2-mile race was 46 degrees, with a north wind of 9 mph. Toptun said the 20th mile was the most difficult in terms of dealing with the wind, which picked up later in the morning. Sarem and Kandie were well ahead of Toptun at that point, but he saw the two at the 22nd mile and felt there was a chance to make a move.

"I started to think about them," said Toptun, who won \$2,500. "I am very happy. The most difficult experience was around (Lambeau Field) because there were so many people."

There had been a feeling among some that a course record could be broken with the talent in this field and with several runners pushing each other. But nobody ended up challenging William Komen's 2:17.32, set in 2005. Seven runners entered the race with personal records of 2:20 or faster.

Toptun didn't come close to the record, but he did like the course.

"Very much," he said. "I liked how the people support you while running in the neighborhood."

Toptun said it's a possibility he would return to Green Bay next year to defend his title. Last year's winner, Onesmu Nyerere, wasn't here to defend his title because of visa and finance problems.

Shadrack Muteri, 27, of Marietta, Ga., won the half-marathon in 1:04.38. Raphael Kuto, 26, of Coon Rapids, Minn., finished second in 1:04.58 and Matt Hooley of Madison, 25, was third in

1:05.21.

Derrick Fameree, 23, of Algoma, defended his championship in the 5-kilometer race with a time of 15:30. He also was the runner-up in 2006. Todd Wagner, 38, of Green Bay, was the runner-up for the second straight year. He finished in 15:32, the same time as last year.

Maynard Read, 46, of Rochester, Minn., won the wheelchair marathon in 2:35:10.