

Wharf to Wharf 39TH ANNUAL WHARF TO WHARF 7-24-11

# It's a sprint toward a marathon

Aptos' Gotcher hopes to qualify for Olympic team

By JULIE JAG

jjag@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Brett Gotcher, a nine-time entrant in the annual Wharf to Wharf race, stands as one of the few regular runners who won't be affected by the implementation of timing chips this year.

Then again, not many of the race's 15,000 official entrants can run a mile in 4 minutes, 40 seconds, nor do they consider the six-mile course between the Santa Cruz and Capitola wharves a sprint.

But that's the case for Gotcher, an Aptos High graduate who is hoping to use the race as the first step toward qualifying for the 2012 Olympic Games in a slightly longer distance — the 26.2-mile marathon.

## IF YOU GO

39TH ANNUAL  
WHARF TO WHARF

**WHAT:** A six-mile footrace between the Santa Cruz and Capitola wharves

**WHEN:** 8:30 a.m. today

**WHERE:** Starts at Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk on Beach Street, Santa Cruz

**ON THE NET:** [www.wharftowharf.com](http://www.wharftowharf.com) and [www.santacruzsentinel.com/wharftowharf](http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/wharftowharf)

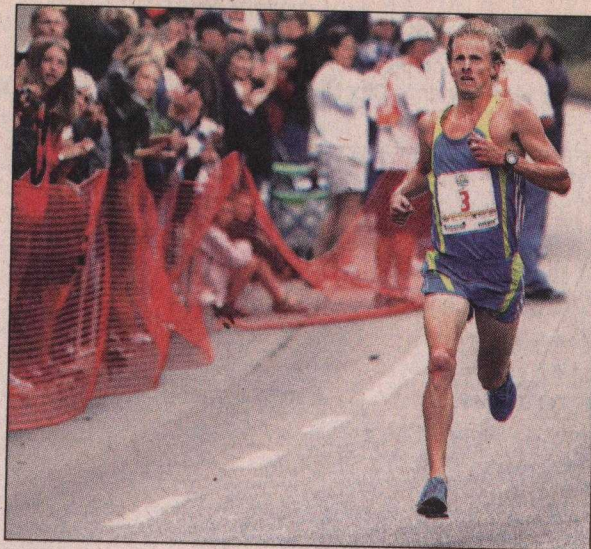
## TUNE IN

LIVE COVERAGE

**RADIO:** 1080 AM starting at 8 a.m.

"The big thing for me is the marathon Olympic trials in January. I'm working backward from that," said Gotcher,

SEE WHARF ON C3



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Top local men's finisher Brett Gotcher sprints to the finish line in Capitola during last year's Wharf to Wharf race.

## WHARF

Continued from C1

who sat out much of the spring and early summer with a hip injury. "The Wharf to Wharf is going to kick it off on the right foot for me heading into this winter."

With the Summer Games in London exactly a year away, Gotcher isn't the only one with the Olympic rings on his mind in today's 39th running of the Wharf to Wharf. On the women's side, former U.S. Olympic marathoner Magdalena Lewy Boulet of San Francisco, who took second at the Wharf to Wharf in 2008, looks primed to compete in the 2012 Olympic trials. Wharf to Wharf newcomer Risper Gesabwa, 22, of Kenya, meanwhile, said she also has eyes on an Olympic berth.

Scott McConville, the race's elite athlete coordinator, said it makes sense for marathoners to enter shorter races like the Wharf to Wharf. For one, it gives them a chance to see how they handle running with an oxygen debt, he said. Secondly, if a runner can keep up a sprint pace for more than six miles, keeping a more moderate pace over a distance three to four times as long should seem more feasible.

"You need to test yourself [with sprints] if you run longer distances," McConville said. "Your body can't handle doing a marathon after a marathon, but it can handle and recover from a 10k."

A third reason McConville didn't mention is that, with all that stamina, distance runners stand a good chance of placing in the top three and bringing home a \$3,000, \$2,000 or \$1,000 paycheck.

## ELITE FIELD

BIB NO./NAME	MEN			10K PR
	AGE	HOME		
1. Shadrack Kosgei	26	Kenya		28:05
3. Stephen Muange	30	Kenya		27:48
4. Macdonard Ondara	27	Kenya		28:22
5. Brett Gotcher	25	Aptos		27:58
7. Tonny Okello	28	Uganda		28:23
8. Silas Kipruto	27	Kenya		27:26
11. Christian Hesch	32	Hollywood		29:03
12. Yong-Sung Leal	26	San Leandro		N/A
	WOMEN			
	AGE	HOME		
10. A. Misganaw	31	Ethiopia		32:58
16. Magdalena Boulet	37	S.F.		31:48
17. Risper Gesabwa	22	Kenya		31:48
18. Clara Peterson	27	S.F.		33:01
28. Teresa McWalters	26	S.F.		34:00

"Six miles is like speedwork for me," Gotcher said. "It helps to get out there and get my legs turning over, running 4:30 and 4:40 per mile. In the end, that makes the marathon pace feel slightly easier, and we'll take any advantage you can get."

But will that pace be enough to win?

Gotcher, a hometown favorite who has won the top local finisher award nine of the past 10 years, took sixth last year in 27:58 and has finished as high as third. Yet, he said winning isn't among his goals. He picked the Wharf to Wharf as the kickoff to his Olympic quest because he is hoping his typically positive experiences in the race will give him confidence and a strong mental springboard as he dives into the crux of his athletic career.

Then again, he's well aware that the biggest shot of confidence would come from breaking the finishing tape.

"I think I'm capable of running fast, I just don't know if it's fast enough," he said.

Gotcher will have to keep

pace with Shadrack Kosgei of Kenya if he wants to stand a chance. Kosgei, 26, is the defending Wharf to Wharf champion. He ran the course in 27:01 last year and also won in 2004 with a time of 27:51. Kenyan Silas Kipruto, 27, may also be in the mix. Kipruto brought in the fastest 10k time this year, 27:26, and has fresh legs after taking much of the early season off.

Gotcher will surely also be on the lookout for Yong-Sung Leal of San Leandro. The two competed against each other in track and cross country in high school. At the time, Leal made a habit of shredding the pack — including Gotcher — winning three California state track titles in the 3,200 meters. But Leal suffered the first of a string of injuries in his senior season in 2003 and was forced to give up running competitively until this year. He said he hopes the Wharf to Wharf will kick off a long and prosperous running career.

"I want to compete, and some of the great runners are right here," he said. "In high

school I had weight in running. We'll see now. I'll be the rabbit at least."

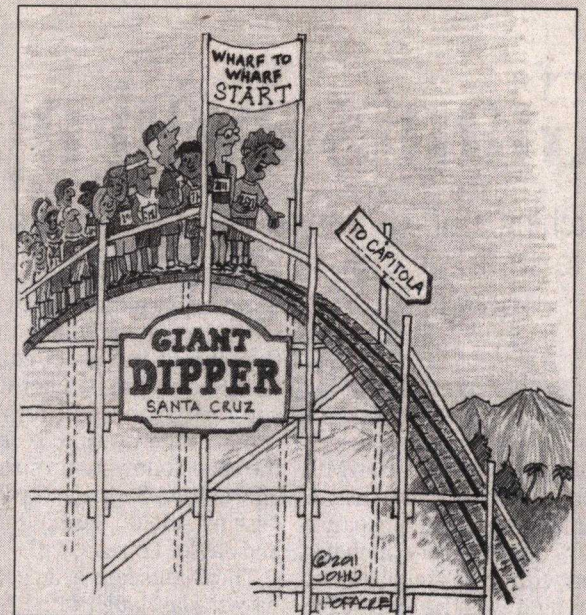
Like Gotcher, the female distance runners aren't just coming for the training. Lewy Boulet, 37, stands a good chance of taking the Wharf to Wharf title this year after finishing as the top American in the 7.6-mile Bay to Breakers in San Francisco [sixth, 41:26]. Her top 10k mark for the year is the same as Gesabwa's — 31:48 — the fastest in the field.

Last year's runner-up, Alemtehay Misganaw, 31, of Ethiopia, will return to try for the win after also taking second in 2007 and third in 2006. But Gesabwa, for one, said she isn't worried. She said she has raced Misganaw three times this year and beat her every time, including a one-two finish at a 10k in Maryland.

After running 13 races since February, though, she realizes that once the timing chips are in place and the race gun goes off, anything can happen.

"I don't know tomorrow what I'll be," she said Saturday.

## THE RUNNING JOKE



JOHN HOFACRE/CONTRIBUTED GRAPHIC

**CAPTION CONTEST:** Santa Cruz Wharf to Wharf runner and cartoonist John Hofacre drew this panel for today's 39th annual footrace. Now it's your turn to fill in the caption. Email your funniest suggestions to [sports@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:sports@santacruzsentinel.com) or visit [www.santacruzsentinel.com/wharftowharf](http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/wharftowharf).