

February 21, 2013

Tokyo Marathon Foundation

Summary of the LOC press conference

The Local Organizing Committee of the 2013 Tokyo Marathon held a press conference at 2PM on Thursday February 21, three days before the big race. The following is the summary of the LOC press conference.

First, Koji Sakurai, Chair of the board of directors of Tokyo Marathon, explained the two important pillars of this year's race. First, because Tokyo Marathon joined the World Marathon Majors last November, superb elite field was assembled for this year's race. Thus the elite race is one of the intriguing aspects of this year's race. Second important pillar of this year's race, of course, is mass race where more than 35000 runners start the race, while over 1.7 million spectators will line up along the course to cheer the runners. Furthermore over 10,000 volunteers will help with the smooth operation of the race. He explained how the spectators and volunteers are instrumental in helping runners finishing the race, especially in the late stage of the race.

Next, Eiji Ando, a member of the board of directors of Tokyo marathon, explained how the charity runners can contribute to the society through running. This year 3000 spots are reserved for the charity runners. Several aspects of charity runners have improved this year. First, the tax reduction for charity was inaugurated which in turn should entice more runners to participate in the charity run. Second, not only the runners can pledge their own contribution to the charity as has been the case in the previous years, but they can also recruit sponsors to pledge for the charity on the condition that they finish the marathon on Sunday. And third, starting this year, the corporations can also participate in the charity run program. Finally he also invited the media to attend the Tokyo Marathon Symposium, featuring the panel discussion by the directors of all six World Marathon Major directors. He also explained about the family run on Sunday afternoon and introduction of tomatoes, which presumably help runners with post race recovery, in the refreshment station along the course.

Finally, Tadaaki Hayano, Tokyo Marathon race director, explained how Tokyo Marathon joined the World Marathon Majors in November of last year. First he explained the philosophy behind the World Marathon Majors – like improvement of elite performances and spreading of running movement. He also explained that joining the World Marathon Majors has been one of the goals from the inaugural year of Tokyo Marathon. He then introduced Glenn Latimer of WMM, who was in the audience for the LOC press conference. He then invited media to attend elite runners' press conference and Marathon symposium, the panel discussion by all six World Marathon Major directors along with the director of road racing from the IAAF.

In 2010 Tokyo Marathon became the IAAF Gold Label road race. Thus the next obvious step for the Tokyo marathon was to join the rank of the World Marathon Majors. He explained that there are no clear-cut objective criteria for joining the World Marathon Majors. Subjective decision by other World Marathon Majors directors also matters. After clearing each hurdle of criterion, at the end, what Tokyo Marathon lacked was the standard of elite runners. This aspect has been improving over the last few years, and this year four 2:04 marathon runners are invited to Tokyo to make the Tokyo Marathon the best elite race in the history of Japanese marathon. He is committed to make Tokyo Marathon even better as he says that it is our responsibility to host the world class marathon races in Japan. Finally he explained that after joining the World Marathon Majors, Tokyo marathon started to receive world wide media attention that is worthy of the World Marathon Majors races. Among the world leading media, New York Times and BBC for example also showed the interest in the race.