

Records & Redemption in Wellington

With perfect weather and entries from 23 countries, the 2023 Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon was a record breaker before the gun even fired. But three record breaking winners had the last word.

Rotorua's Mike Voss had the first word. A year ago in Wellington he came within a minute of the race record in terrible conditions. This year he took advantage of perfect weather and tougher competition to shave six seconds of the course record and claim a national title to date.

Voss came into the race as co-favourite with Alexandra's Daniel Balchin. Balchin had more of a track record in national championships, but it was Voss who put the hammer down from the start and while Balchin did everything he could to hold the Rotorua runner in the first 10k, Voss eventually broke the elastic and moved away to an 81sec winning margin and new course record of 1hr 06min 21. Behind them Taupo's Cullern Thorby, Auckland's Jaydan Kuijpers and Japan's Naoto Akiba filled the minor placings.

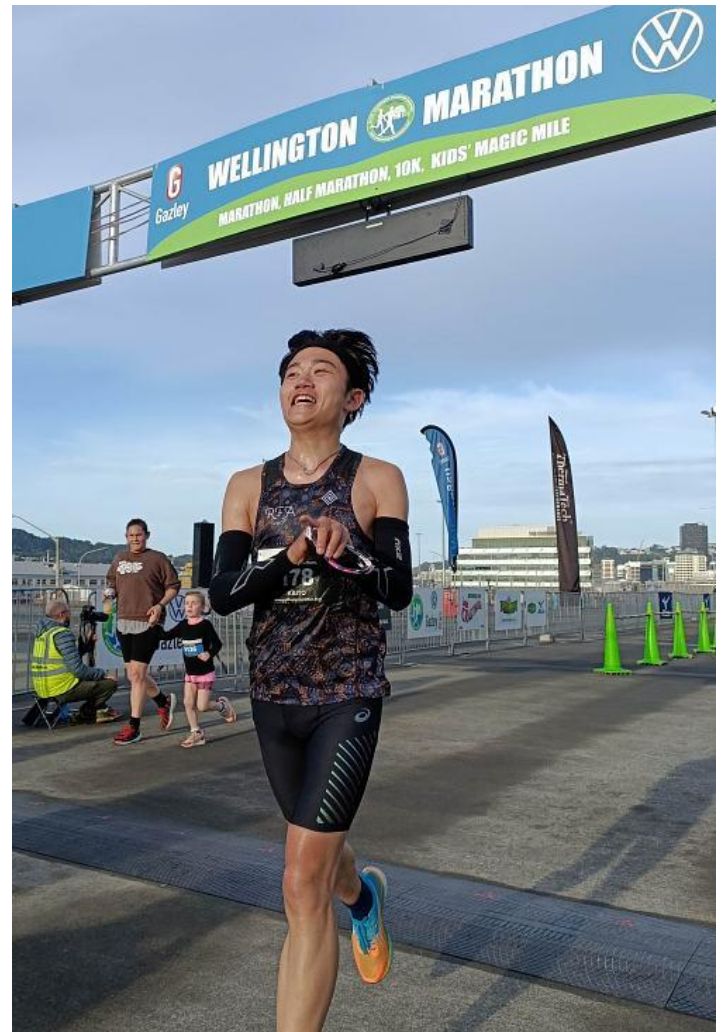


Mike Voss

Japanese runners featured strongly in the men's full marathon and while their race didn't produce any records it did produce the days tightest race.

Japan's Kaito Iwasa came into the race as odds-on favourite, but local standout Dougal Thorburn - a past winner here over both the half and full marathon, threatened the favourite for all but the final 5k. It was only in the last 5k of classic 42.2k distance that Iwasa clicked up a gear to prove a worthy winner by 46secs in 2hrs 28min 20secs. Not far behind them, Wellington trail running specialist David Haunschmidt held out Frenchman Arnaud Betems and French Polynesian runner Benoit Valadier.

The women's racing at this year's Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon was much clearer cut, but no less classy as both the half marathon and marathon produced race records.



Kaito Iwasa

Wellington's Ingrid Cree was a popular winner. Cree, who won here in 2019, was a late withdrawal in 2022 due to covid. So, when she romped away from the field to win by 14min and shave 17secs from the race record of five-time national champion Alice Mason, it seemed like some sort of redemption. Cree crossed the line in 2hrs 48min 19secs, with Auckland's Gabriela Diver and Cambridge's Angela Hancock claiming second and third.



Ingrid Cree

The women's half marathon had the least surprising winner, but the performance was arguably the best of the day. Wellington's Sarah Drought came into the race as defending champion and hot off some of her best ever results after being the leading New Zealander at the world cross country championship and then winning the Christchurch Half Marathon in a personal best time. In Wellington she was favourite to nab the national title, but she did so in fine fashion, clearing out from the gun to win by more than two minutes to break her own race record with a time of 1hr 15min 44secs. Behind her, Wellington's Esther George and Tauranga's Deb Fuller claimed silver and bronze.

The 10k event went to Auckland's Simon Cromarty in 32min 02secs, while Lower Hutt's Genevieve Coffey won among women in 37min 49secs. Also in the 10k event was Wellington's Des Young, who continued his streak as the only person to have run all 36 editions of the Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon.

Few runners have a streak to match Lower Hutt's Mike Stewart. The 71-year-old completed his 608th marathon in Wellington, this time in 5hrs 52min 11secs. Although he wasn't the eldest, as Auckland's Terry Thompson finished in 6hrs 16min 10secs just three days shy of his 83rd birthday.

Almost 3500 runners and walkers from 23 countries lined up for the 36th Gazley Volkswagen Wellington Marathon. Full results at www.wellingtonmarathon.co.nz.



Sarah Drought

