



FULL STORY

Cox ready for CLICO marathon

Defending champ Sawe, Ballantyne in the mix:

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FOOT INJURY: Curtis Cox

Defending CLICO Trinidad and Tobago International Marathon champion, Kenyan Simon Sawe, seven-time winner Pamenos Ballantyne and US-based T&T record holder for the event, Ronnie Holassie, are all here for tomorrow' big race.

But locally-based favourite Curtis Cox, despite battling a foot injury, is hoping there will be room on the podium for him in the 27th running of the marathon, which starts at 5.30 a.m. at Mid Centre Mall, Chaguanas.

The odds are against Cox, the 2005 winner, to regain the title with a sore Achilles tendon, which may need surgery 'depending on how it feels after the race'.

The veteran athlete has already set himself a target for a top-three finish over the 26.2 mile course, which was certified last year. The race ends at the Hasely Crawford Stadium, Mucurapo.

'My main aim is to come in the top three,' Cox told the Express yesterday. 'I'm hoping to do between 2:26 and 2:30. Anything around there will be good. I've had some trouble with my right Achilles tendon.'

Cox explained his training had been hampered by the injury, which kept him out of last year's Barbados marathon, although he did run the 10K and half marathon on consecutive days. He will however, give a strong challenge to the favourites, injury permitting.

That's (the injury) my main concern right now,' he stated.

Local distance runners Richard Jones and Kenrick Williams, as well as Kenyans Stephen Tanui (based in Caracas), Albert Omboga and Sammy Kosgei are all expected to feature in the race. Ballantyne is chasing his eighth victory on the local course, while Holassie is searching for his maiden triumph, although he finished second to Ballantyne twice (1998 and 2000). He was third on two occasions as well, and fourth last year.

Cox is not going to worry about the competition. 'I just want to run my best race,' he said. 'Once I do my training, I don't worry about no one. In a marathon you don't know. When you reach 20 miles, you know (how much) your body can take. The last six (miles) is reserve. I (have) never drop out the race.'

Defending women's champion Caroline Katam Chemwolo had not been confirmed to defend her title up to yesterday. Mexico-based Kenyan Monica Muthoni, though, and former double winners Mary Akor (2006 and 2007) and Joanna Gront-Chmiel (2004 and 2005) are tipped to provide the biggest test to the local women.

Last year's second runner-up Christine Regis, as well as Tracy Carter and Leisl Pukerin, all of T&T, should give strong performances in the race.

So far, the event has attracted about 400 applicants: 100 for the 3.30 a.m. run, and the rest competing at the official 5.30 a.m. start. This year CLICO have chosen diabetes as the charity for the marathon.

Cox, though, with a 22-year career, and consistent top ten performances in recent years at the marathon, has not been able to secure a sponsor despite his best efforts.

'I won the marathon in 2005 and since then I haven't had a sponsor. It's real depressing because in the marathon you spent a lot for the vitamins and stuff. Just to complete the race is an achievement. You need to be prepared.'

The runner has put a lot of money and effort into his craft over the years, and yet has been met with disappointment, even as he attempts yet another marathon. ' (Even) people who haven't come in the top ten are getting sponsors,' Cox declared. You don't have to give (athletes) them everything, but help.'
