



FULL STORY

## More improvement for Jones

Kwame Laurence klaurence@trinidadexpress.com  
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T&T RUNNERS: Ronnie Holassie, left, and Curtis Cox. -Photo: robert taylor

Richard Jones was the fastest local on show in Sunday's CLICO Trinidad and Tobago International Marathon.

Running just the fifth 26.2-mile race of his career, Jones got home in two hours, 28 minutes, five seconds to capture fourth spot, behind Kenyan-born American Simon Sawe (2:25:09), Mexico-based Kenyan Peter Omae Ayieni (2:27:04) and Pamenos Ballantyne (2:27:15) of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Jones first competed in the T&T Marathon in 2005, finishing seventh in 2:45:32. In the 2008 edition of the race, he moved up one notch to sixth in a much faster 2:34:29.

In the 2008 Barbados Marathon, Jones finished fourth in 2:32:06. And there was further improvement when he competed in the 2009 T&T Marathon, the T&T runner stopping the clock in 2:29:18 for fifth spot.

'Last year I had a PR (personal record) of 2:29. This year I got 2:28, so I'm happy with that.'

'I'm targetting to do the Chicago Marathon in October,' Jones continued, 'and I'm targetting 2:27 there.'

Of the three T&T runners who finished in the top ten, on Sunday, 33-year-old Jones is the least experienced. Seasoned campaigners Curtis Cox (2:30:55) and Ronnie Holassie (2:33:12) were fifth and sixth, respectively.

'I know it's always competitive,' Jones told the Express, 'when Ronnie and Curtis and the guys step out there. I'm pleased to be the first local.'

On Sunday, Cox was bidding for his second T&T Marathon victory. For two-thirds of the race, the 2005 champion seemed in contention, but he faded coming home and was forced to settle for fifth spot.

Cox, 42, said lack of preparation prevented him from challenging for the top prize.

'Through San Juan I was feeling real good, but I guess the mileage wasn't there. I can run with those guys. The edge they have is leg speed and more mileage.'

Holassie has finished second in the T&T Marathon four times and is the national record holder in the 26.2-mile event at 2:13:03. On Sunday, though, the 38-year-old runner was nowhere near his best.

'I felt good the first part of the race, maybe up to ten miles, and then I start falling apart. I wasn't sure I was going to do this race three weeks prior to today, with a groin injury and also a calf injury. It (the calf injury) really acted up the second part of the race. I felt like I wanted to drop out.'

But Holassie showed character, battling on to complete the gruelling event. Afterwards, the Florida-based runner promised to return next year, when he'll try again for that elusive first T&T Marathon title.

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