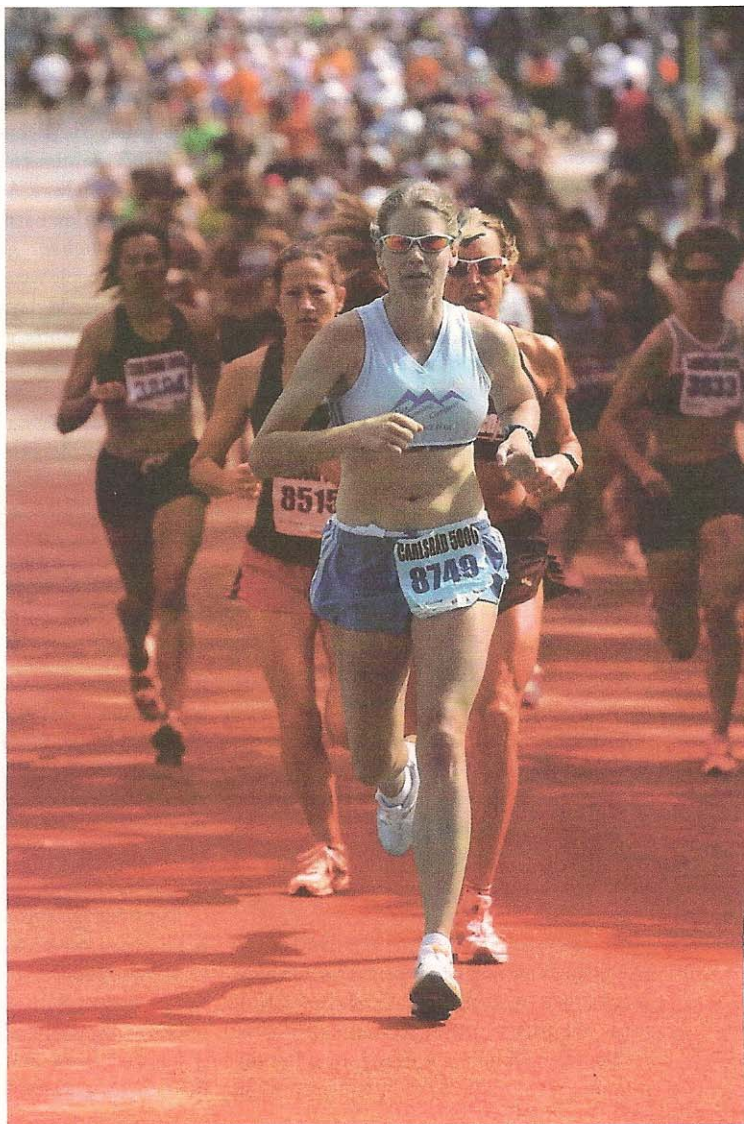


WHERE TO RUN FAST

America's Speediest Road Races

By Brian Metzler

There's no secret recipe for running fast times. You need to mix together weeks of good training, sprinkle in some stay-healthy karma, add a touch of good weather, maybe a pinch of good luck, and then put it all in the oven on race day and you usually get tasty (even if sometimes not perfect) results. Sometimes the missing ingredient is an optimally fast course. Running the 15 races highlighted in the next four pages won't guarantee PRs and these aren't the only fast ones in the country, but they could help you put the icing on your competitive cake.



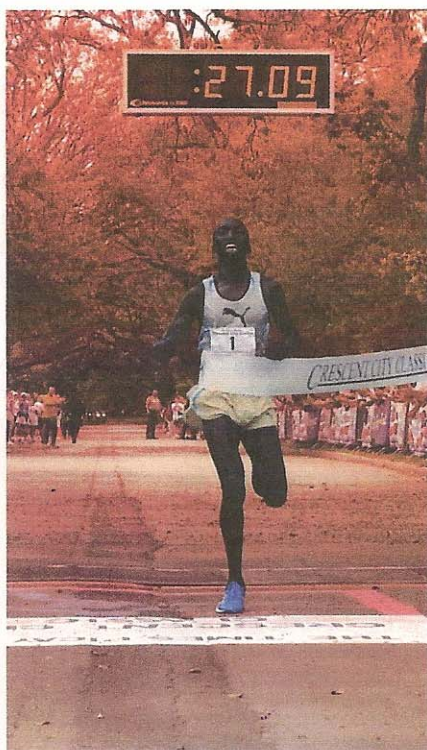
10K

CRESCENT CITY CLASSIC

APRIL 11 / NEW ORLEANS

CCC10K.COM

A flat course with few turns through the heart of the Big Easy, this race includes a 2-mile straightaway on Esplanade Avenue before it winds through City Park and finishes at Tad Gormley Stadium (site of the 1992 U.S. Olympic track trials). In 2005, Isabella Ochichi ran the fastest time on U.S. soil (31:23), just 6 seconds slower than Paula Radcliffe's world record. (Radcliffe was second in that race, and at the time, it was the fastest 1-2 finish ever.) Kenyan Sammy Kipketer set the 10K road world record (27:11) here in 2002, but it's more the depth of the field that makes this race fast. At last year's race, 132 runners broke 40 minutes — 29 of whom were competing in masters divisions. The weather is usually mild this time of year, and there's also a New Orleans-style party after the race.



MIDNIGHT MADNESS 10K

JULY 11 / AMES, IA

FITNESSSPORTS.COM

OK, so maybe you haven't considered going to Iowa to run a fast race, but maybe you should. Aside from the Bix 7, which is definitely a barn burner, Iowa boasts a few other fast races, including this low-key event that serves as the state championship of the Iowa Games. In its heyday, this race attracted all the top names and still boasts Mark Curp (28:44) and Priscilla Welch (32:44) as its record-holders. Last year's 10K had only 457 finishers, but 78 of those runners (66 men, 12 women) broke 40 minutes on the pancake-flat course. The two-loop course has only one slight incline and has plenty of spectators to cheer on runners. And the race starts at 8:30 p.m., which, if you're lucky, is when scorching summer temperatures have cooled into the upper 70s and humidity is just slightly less than stifling.