

# Boston Marathon 2025 Review

By Dave Kayser and Phil Stewart

## The Pre-race Scene in Boston

Post-pandemic, pre-race Boston Marathon activities have settled into something of a pattern, but that is not to say the three day bash was a dull affair. In fact, with Boston experiencing its first warm day of the year on Saturday, Newbury Street, the center of race-related activities, blossomed into a springtime festival of good cheer. Runners and Boston residents packed sidewalk restaurants, stores were full of shoppers, and there was plenty of race-related merchandise to please every taste and budget.

Leading the way were many footwear brands' pop-up stores. The **Brooks Hyperion House** had panel discussions, athlete meet-and-greets, a livestream of Des Linden and Kara Goucher's *Nobody Asked Us* podcast and a race viewing party spread across the weekend. **Tracksmith** had long lines out their door.

**Puma** hosted a media event on Saturday to introduce their new *Fast-R Nitro Elite 3* which was immediately proclaimed as the next great thing in the super shoe wars, with Puma-funded testing to back up that claim.



Puma Fast-R Nitro Elite 3

The **Mizuno** ice cream truck made a perfectly timed entrance on the lower end of the street Saturday afternoon and the **adidas Running Studio** had a tasteful exhibit highlighting their wide array of successful racing shoes from the recent past.

On the other side of Boylston Street the **Clif Bar** bar was also packed with customers enjoying drinks and snacks in comfortable surroundings. The Back Bay subway station, a long block from the finish line and a busy spot throughout the weekend, was decorated with **New Balance** banners, posters and turnstile signage. **Topo** managed to sneak into the picture with a nearby large ad on a sidewalk kiosk. **Saucony** set up a tent outside of a store located directly behind the back wall of the finish line structure. When the



//Photo: Dave Kayser for Road Race Management//

company started to play music outside, they were shut down by officials as the adidas-sponsored BAA's permit extended to that area.



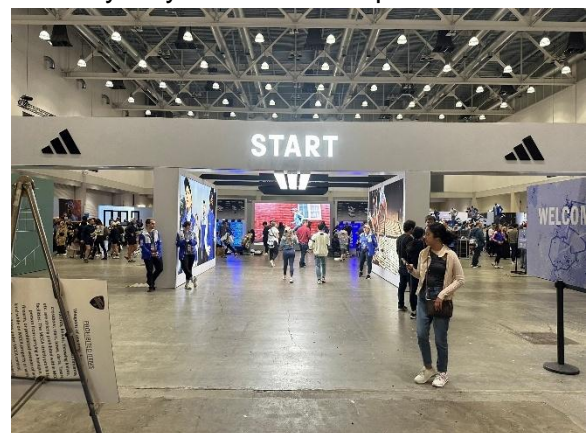
In the morning and early evening hours throughout the weekend **Asics, Saucony, Tracksmith, adidas and Puma** had *shake out runs* that undoubtedly snarled the heavy traffic even more. **Black Men Run Boston** started their shake out run near Government Center and then ran by sites associated with the Underground Railroad.

Local businesses also embraced the event. Hotels in Boston and Cambridge offered free or discounted massages, restaurants had special "All You Can Eat" pasta dinners and a bakery in the Back Bay gave out free cookies to runners after the race.

## The Expo

At the other end of the spectrum and a far cry from the Newbury Street weather-enhanced exuberance was the lackluster **Bank of America Boston Marathon Expo**. The security portal at the Hynes Convention Center, where the number pick up and race expo were situated, appeared to be "for display only." Scanners went unused and package and bag searches were nonexistent as everyone entering the facility was simply waved through without a glance.

The long trudge to the expo was a dispiriting slog, as visitors were forced to endure the same endless hike that the runners endured to pick up their numbers. That was after being forced to wade through the bustling adidas shop, since it was the only way to enter the expo area. If one tried hard enough they could find their way to the "*Partner Pavilion*" that hosted the other sponsors of the race. **Clif** was handing out samples and **Abbott** had reps on hand to explain how to earn their various awards. **Schneider Electric**, the race's Official Sustainability Partner, had stationary bikes hooked up to display powered by the bike riders. (Schneider Electric, the title sponsor of the Paris Marathon, is not an electric company, but a company which sells devices to monitor and control electricity use in homes.) The **Bank of America** space looked suspiciously like a bank lobby with a huge carpet showing the course map, high tables used to decorate cheer banners and a photo op with a Fenway Park background. The one area that was generating some excitement was the **Sneakers4Good** booth that was staffed with energetic volunteers handing out prepaid mailers to send in used shoes. Gone were last year's many **non-sponsor** running-related vendors who used to enthusiastically sell their wares to attendees, along with booths promoting running events around the world and assorted charity booths. The entire



enterprise had the aura of a salesman's expo with little buzz. Not surprisingly, most attendees, after a quick look around, appeared to head to the not-easy-to-find exit.



Exiting the space was just as convoluted as entering. One open doorway appearing to be a way out featured a sign reading NO ENTRY, and immediately behind it another said EXIT. Puzzled attendees who decided to look for another egress were led to a crowded, dimly lit narrow stairway to exit the venue.

### Bank of America Enlarges Its Presence

In 2024, the first year of the Bank of America's role as presenting sponsor, runners recoiled from the commercialized look of the finisher's medal (below left). Responding to harsh criticism, the 2025 medal (below right) was redesigned to compress the bank's logo into a modest emblem under Spike's neck.



The medal redesign was a partial nod to tradition prior to 2024, when neither the name nor logo of principal sponsor John Hancock appeared on finishers' medals.

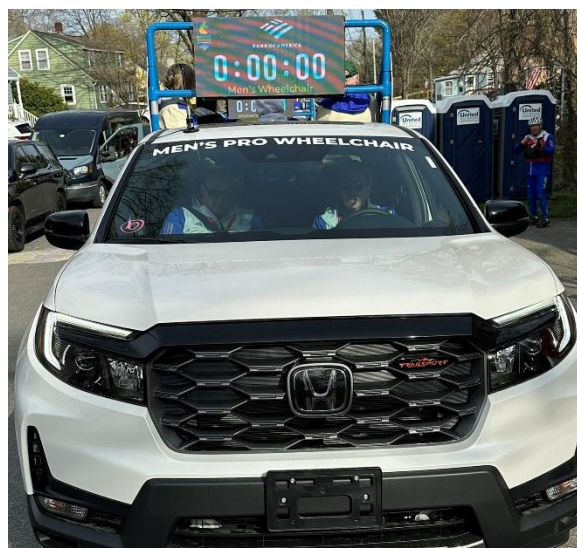


However, other areas featured Bank of America brand creep with the company's name appearing *directly under* "Boston Marathon" on the 2025 signage (top image below) where it appeared *to the right* of the words "Boston Marathon" in 2024 (bottom image below).



The 2025 wording was often inconsistent, with the terms "Boston Marathon," "2025 Boston Marathon" and "129th Boston Marathon" all being used.

As illustrated in a photo of the Men's Pro Wheelchair lead vehicle below, the Bank of America clearly was more front-and-center than the BAA logo on all of the lead vehicles in the race.



One can applaud the bank's restraint when comparing the Boston and London finish line tapes (see below). In Boston, the viewer's eye centered on the words "Boston Marathon" (if not on the winner). In stark contrast was the London tape showing Tata Consultancy Services, the race's main sponsor, logo and name from end-to-end numerous times.



Kenya's Sharon Lokedi sets women's course record in Boston: 2:17:22  
//Jane Monti for *Race Results Weekly*//



Ethiopia's Tigst Assefa sets women-only world record in London: 2:15:50  
//Bob Martin for TCS London Marathon//



## Race Day

Race operations during the event generally went smoothly, save for the tripping of event winner John Korir at the start (see video next page). The fall ripped off Korir's bib number which he stuck in his shorts throughout the race.

Korir recovered quickly enough to come within two seconds of the lead group by the 5K mark. According to David Monti of *Race Results Weekly*, Korir continued to grind out miles quietly within a large pack until the 20 mile mark. According to a plan hatched by coaches Ron Mann, Haron Lagat, and Korir's brother Wesley (2012 Boston Marathon champion), Korir then broke away from the group with a 4:39 uphill split, gaining an 18-second lead in one mile which he stretched to 55 seconds by race's end.



John Koir, in white shirt, follows 2024 champion Sisay Lemma (who later dropped out) and Conner Mantz. Mantz went on to finish fourth in 2:05:08, the second-fastest time at Boston for an American.



**Ouch! John Korir's fall at the start of the marathon**

**Safety through barricades:** after the protests at the top of Heartbreak Hill a few years ago, the organizers appear to have put more and more barricades throughout the course with increasing frequency to separate the spectators from the runners than in the past.



*John Korir leads the Boston Marathon in solo break, protected by long lines of barricades resembling a common practice in bicycle races.*



**Wheelchair hazards:** with the elite wheelchair competitors covering the course in just over 3:11 minutes-per-mile, there is always a risk of a violent crash as occurred in the 2024 race at the turn at the Newton Fire House. This year, one competitor went down at Coolidge Corner where the course turns and crosses over some trolley tracks.





## Security

Security was a concern in the days before the race as politics reared its head in the form of online trolls expressing anger at the B.A.A. for recognizing trans runners in the race, and a small



but fired-up group of protestors hoisted anti-Tesla signs at the Tesla showroom on Boylston St. just a few hundred yards from the finish.

There were concerns that other divisive issues could spill into violence on race day. For the most part, security was hidden in the background, but the media were reminded of the issue when they had to show their race credentials to get into the Fairmont Copley Plaza Boston

hotel where the Media Room was located, and then had to scan their pass once inside the hotel and then again to enter the Media Room.

## Post Race and Miscellaneous

*The Boston Globe*, as usual, impressed readers with their coverage of the race. Numerous stories appeared before the race, including a lengthy profile of Bill Rodgers by long time race reporter John Powers.

**On right:** Rodgers, who won the first of his four titles in 1975, was joined by Bob Hall, who competed in a hospital wheelchair as the first wheelchair competitor in 1975, as the Grand Marshalls for the race.

On race day, the paper published an editorial extolling the many virtues of the event in which volunteers and spectators were applauded and the fact that runners from 128 countries, including those from Canada, Mexico and China are more than welcomed along with those from both red and blue states. And perhaps most importantly, in the eyes of the editors, runners showed how important it is to never give up.



On Tuesday, besides a front-page story, the print edition had five pages of stories and photos, including a Sports section front-page column on Des Linden and her love of the race.

Linden's full-page ad in the Globe on race day announcing her retirement from competitive marathoning garnered much attention. (She went on to finish the race in 2:26:19, her fastest time since 2019 and placed first in the women's masters division.) Another full-page ad sponsored by massachusetts250.org in the April 6 print edition of the paper that didn't receive nearly the same amount of recognition featured Bobbi Gibb, who was the first woman to finish Boston in 1966. The ad read "They said women weren't allowed to run marathons. She said, **"watch this"** in bright red letters. It was the perfect bookend to Des's heartfelt ad.

### **Post-Race Press Conference: a Model of PR Professionalism**

The Media Room had a large four-way split screen capturing all the race feeds. Despite the perfect weather, images broke up frequently. Similar to the New York City Marathon media room, a large podium obscured the lower left hand screen for many viewers during the entire race.

The Boston Athletic Association's Head of Public Relations **Lorna Campbell** proved to be a master of the post-race proceedings, where she asked simple, direct questions to the many runners who spoke English as a second language, was cordial to them all and kept questions from the assembled media moving along at a brisk but not rushed pace.

*All photos are by Phil Stewart unless otherwise indicated.*