

Paul Tergat

To most observers it came as no great surprise that Paul Tergat produced a WR 2:04:55 in Berlin. So great are the talents of this legendary Kenyan—be it on the track, harrier course or the roads—that he faced WR expectations in every one of his previous five marathons. Tergat steadfastly maintained that “the marathon is a completely different event and I have much to learn.”

This says much about the 34-year-old Kenyan, whose quest for running greatness is matched by his passion for knowledge on all fronts. When he is not training his days are filled with a multitude of family, business, and charitable activities, all the while juggling a couple of active cell phones. Conversation with Tergat ranges easily from world issues to athletics or his homeland, and is always spiced with a bit of humor.

While Tergat is the epitome of a Kenyan distance runner, he is far from typical and did not even begin his running career until he completed his university studies. He also moves from track suit

to business suit with ease. In '01 he and Moses Tanui made an Oval Office visit to lobby the President for support of African health initiatives.

Those who remember the grace of Tergat's stride on the track appreciate that the lanky Kenyan covers ground like few human beings. Now in his third year as a marathoner he is indeed a different athlete. The grace of his stride is ever-present, but his stride mechanics are more compact and economical.

Unbelievably, the marathon training

has produced an even leaner Tergat, honing his frame to the minimum—save the powerful quads that with each twitch propel him towards marathon history.

Tergat's efforts to learn the marathon came to fruition in Berlin, where he blistered the final 15K in 43:44—a tick under 70-second 400 pace—to earn his place in history. Sitting down with Paul the day after his record run we discussed his marathon career:

T&FN: Congratulations on your first marathon win and World Record.

Tergat: Thank you very much. I knew that I had the potential. I knew that I had the ability for bringing down the World Record for the marathon, maybe by a few seconds. But it was a big surprise for me to go under 2:05. Whatever you have been putting in—in terms of energy, in terms of mental preparedness and physical torture—it is sweet when you have such great moments.

T&FN: Many people predicted that you would be the WR holder right off the bat. But the marathon is a very difficult event, and you have made slow step-by-step progress.

Tergat: When I try to look at the first part of my career, I started very far [from the top]. I used to run 29 in the 10,000 before I mastered techniques in the training. I knew nothing is easy in life, and either you accept the work or you forget it.

So when I moved to the marathon I knew that most people—my colleagues back at home, my family and everybody—had a lot of high expectations in me that probably I was going to do it in the first marathon.

But I learned that the marathon has to be a long process. It is a different kind of game. You have to start from zero, and to be able to learn the techniques; you have to accept the long process.

It doesn't matter how good you are on the track, it doesn't matter how good you are in 10K or in cross country. When you are talking of 26M you are talking of different limits. It is very punishing, it is very frustrating and it is very technical also if at one point you maybe overtrain, or you undertrain. I've learned to be able to cope with that, and adjust my training.

T&FN: In your last two marathons you had difficulties, with the wind in Chicago and with fluids in London. That left you with great motivation for your next marathon.

Tergat: Honestly, I must say that my last London Marathon I didn't run my own race. I had a lot of problems immediately after 18km, and it became very difficult because every time that I took in fluids I was throwing up.

I believe that with that kind of discomfort that I was in and still being able to run 2:07, I

knew deep in my mind, and deep in my heart, that I was capable of this.

It gave me a lot of motivation, and I embarked on this training to be able to be ready for this marathon. For four to five months we have been training very hard. Ever since we had the invitation to run, I felt that I would try a World Record in Berlin. From the word go, I came here with one mind-set: to try to take the World Record.

T&FN: Did you alter your training for Berlin?

Tergat: Generally, this time around I decided to put in more mileage for endurance than I used to do before. I've realized the last part of the race always I was in pain or struggling to keep up with the pace. I tend to do a lot of workouts in terms of mileage and for endurance, and I think it paid off.

T&FN: Your long runs were up to 45km [c28M]?

Tergat: Yes, sometimes. Once or twice that is what I had to do. Others were 40, 41, 35, 38; these are some things that are a more technical part of the training. I was putting in every 2 weeks a run of the full marathon. I did 41km at almost the speed of the marathon and it was very, very hard. This is what helped me in terms of building up my endurance and building my confidence.

T&FN: The conditions were great; you had a good set of pacers.

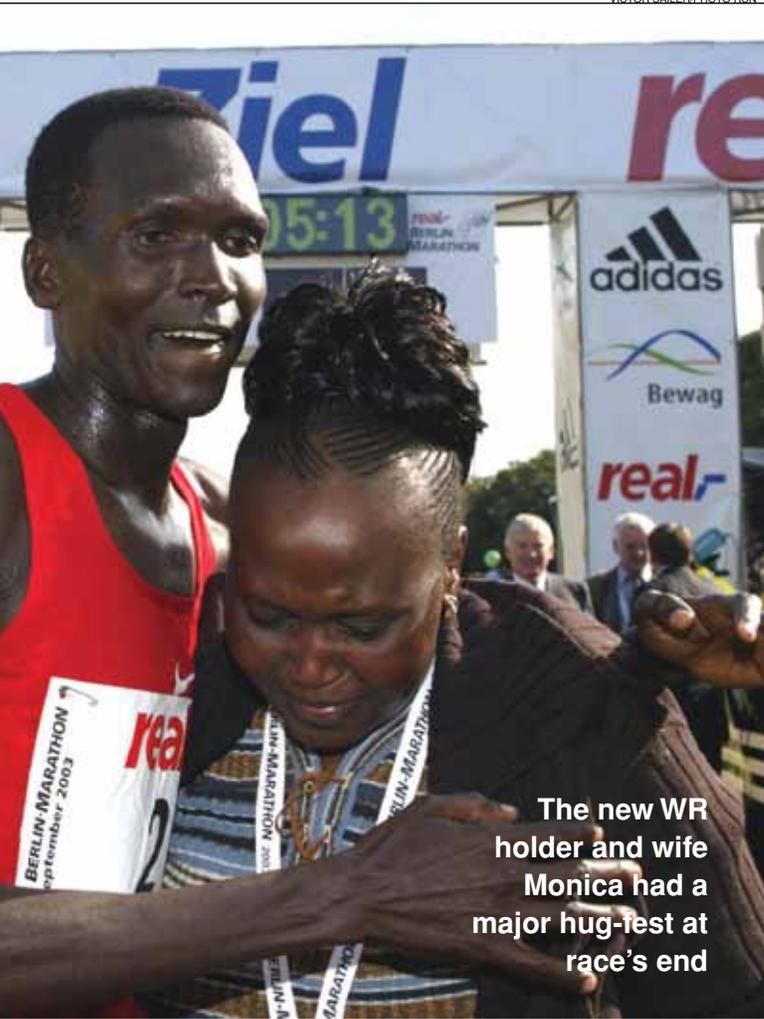
Tergat: Most important, I want to appreciate



by Sean Hartnett

Tergat Facts

- Personal:** born Kabarnet, Kenya, 6/17/69; 5-11¹/₂/137
- PRs:** 3K—7:28.70 '96 (13, x W); 5K—12:49.87 '97 (6, x W); 10K—26:27.85 '97 (2, 2 W); HMar—59:06 '00 (1, 1 W); Mar—2:04:55 '03 WR
- Coach:** Dr. Gabriele Rosa
- Biggest Honors:** 5x World Cross champ (1995–99); WC 10K bronze '95; WC 10K silver '97, '99; OG 10K silver '96, '00
- World Rankings:** 5K—5 times in top 10, high of No. 4 in '00; 10K—7 times in top 10, high of No. 2 in 1997–00; Mar—2 times in top 10, high of No. 2 in '02



The new WR holder and wife Monica had a major hug-fest at race's end

the pacemakers; they did a good job. Rotich, Munji, Korir too. Without them I could not have achieved this kind of incredible result.

The way we had planned the race is that we should start not very fast, but we needed a regular pace; probably the first half to be 63:00. To me, this is a pace that I have been training for, and I was really looking forward to the task.

Based on my own experience in the marathon, it is very difficult to start very fast; for sure, you will pay late in the last part of the race. So it is better to run more conservatively in the first part, and then to try and figure out the last part.

So 63:00; then I wanted to do negative splits after that, and that is what worked out. So running 61:00 is exactly as our plan, and we wanted to push and push the last part as much as we can.

T&FN: You had a pack of 9 at halfway, but at 30km it quickly became a 3-man race.

Tergat: Yes, it was expected. You find with that kind of pace not everyone is able to keep up. Whoever was not prepared and ready psychologically for this kind of pace or this kind of time, suffered a lot. But for me and the other athletes who were ready, we trained so hard and we knew of the potential and ability of each other.

As the pace was picking up, we said that we are not going to relent, we will fight it until

the last minute. It was very difficult when you are fighting the time too; you become a man against time. It was tough.

That is what we planned. We tried to push ourselves as much we can. Surprisingly, we were able to hold on the pace until the last stages of the race.

I really enjoyed myself and had a very good run, and never had any problems like stitches or muscle cramps.

Usually the last stages, [from] 38 or 39km, has been very hard for me. But for this time I put in a good deal of workouts that were able to cover that.

T&FN: Titus Munji fell back at 37km and you ran with Sammy Korir and had to be concerned with both the competition and the clock?

Tergat: I was not worried so much with the competition, but the time.

I knew that everything was going on well, and now that the rabbit had changed to be a competitor so now

he was a big rival. But I knew that I was in control. Honestly, I had a lot of stamina and will because I felt that I was not struggling at all and I knew I was going to run fast over the last stages of the race.

The last stages of the race became more interesting too when there were two people running at the World Record together. I mean it was very exciting, and this is a moment that I will never forget.

When I moved, I made a move that was decisive. I made a move and I was going well until I had some confusion at the Brandenburg Gate. That is where I almost lost the race as I considerably reduced my speed, and Korir closed up very fast. I was lucky to pick it up again and got the win.

T&FN: Finally in a marathon you were able to surge away like you had in your cross country victories.

Tergat: I have been working hard because this is the weakest point of my race. When I made the move, I didn't want to look back. And when I made this move I should make it in a way that I'm not destroying myself too. I have to save energy for the finish, in case anything happened.

You are looking for that special mo-

ment, the special time like that. I was sure that I was going to finish in maybe 2:05 low. I cannot equate it to anything else, being my first time winning a marathon, and being the first to break this World Record.

I believe that the time is still capable of being lowered. Maybe someone could bring it to 2:04 lower, but I don't think that it will be easy to bring it under 2:04.

T&FN: I noticed that you were not wearing a watch in this race against the clock.

Tergat: This was the first time that I ran without a watch and I am surprised that you noticed that.

Any time that I have a watch, I'll probably be wasting a second looking at it—and I didn't need anything that would distract me. So I decided to remove my watch at the start line, and came out and said, "This is me, I will do it." Whether with the watch or not, we will go.

T&FN: You came to the marathon with the Olympics in mind. Now you will probably toe the line in Athens as the World Record holder.

Tergat: Whatever I have been achieving for many years, I don't think that it's been by chance; it is through very hard work. So the most important thing is that I don't take any success and put it in my mind.

I'll take the past as a challenge for the future. I know this is a pressure time, the pre-Olympic time, so you have to work it and use it now or never.

T&FN: The Olympic marathon will be a very difficult and different race than Berlin.

Tergat: It doesn't matter. When you are ready, you are ready. When you have prepared yourself, it doesn't matter whether it is going to be a tactical race, a fast race or a pushing race. I'll try to give the best I can.

I have never had a gold medal in the Olympics, so this is a big challenge for me now and I will be going out to try, but first I have to make the Kenyan team. □

Marathon WR Progression

Starting with the first to break the 2:20 barrier, 15 different men have lowered the marathon best on 21 occasions. The pace per mile has gone from 5:22.1 for Jim Peters to 4:45.9 for Paul Tergat.

2:20:43	Jim Peters (Great Britain)	Chiswick '52
2:18:41	Peters	Chiswick '53
2:18:35	Peters	Turku '53
2:17:40	Peters	Chiswick '54
2:15:17	Sergey Popov (Soviet Union)	Euro Ch '58
2:15:17	Abebe Bikila (Ethiopia)	OG '60
2:15:16	Toru Terasawa (Japan)	Beppu '63
2:14:28	Buddy Edelen (US)	Chiswick '63
2:13:55	Basil Heatley (Great Britain)	Chiswick '64
2:12:12	Bikila	OG '64
2:12:00	Morio Shigematsu (Japan)	Chiswick '65
2:09:37	Derek Clayton (Australia)	Fukuoka '67
2:08:34	Clayton	Antwerp '69
2:08:18	Rob de Castella (Australia)	Fukuoka '81
2:08:05	Steve Jones (Great Britain)	Chicago '84
2:07:12	Carlos Lopes (Portugal)	Rotterdam '85
2:06:50	Belayneh Dinsamo (Ethiopia)	Rotterdam '88
2:06:05	Ronaldo da Costa (Brazil)	Berlin '98
2:05:42	Khalid Khannouchi (Morocco)	Chicago '99
2:05:38	Khannouchi (US)	London '02
2:04:55	Paul Tergat (Kenya)	Berlin '03