

Ottawa Tulip Festival Road Races By: Shu Minami

Eleven Striders traveled to Ottawa, Ontario to participate in various road races held as a part of the Canadian Tulip Festival. Mary Minami and Eric Chorney ran the 5K race, while Genia and Brian Sanborn, Emily Strong, Pat Kiesselbach, Mike Levesque, Yuki Minami, and Shu Minami ran the half marathon. Pauline Levesque and Karl Kiesselbach stood in the bone chilling cold wind to cheer their heroes.

The tulip festival started in 1945 when people of Holland presented 100,000 tulip bulbs to Ottawa in appreciation of Canada's dual role of harboring the Royal family members and aiding with the liberation of the Netherlands. During the Nazis occupation, the Dutch Royal family including the pregnant Queen evacuated their country and came to Ottawa. However, imminent birth of the child created a crisis since the successor to the throne must be born on Dutch soil according to the law. The Canadian government quickly transferred the room, which the Queen was hospitalized in, to Dutch government so that the child to be born will have the right to succeed the throne. The RHR Princess Margriet was born in 1943 at Ottawa Civic Hospital. (The guide on the tour bus did not mention, but I am assuming that the hospital bed has been returned to Canada, it is no longer a territory of the Nether-

lands.)

The Dutch government has been presenting hundreds of thousands of tulip bulbs as "Gift of Tulips" to Canadians every year, and this is



the 50th anniversary since the Annual Tulip Festival was established. HRH Princess Margriet was there to unveil the monument "The Man with Two hats" donated by the Netherlands government to the Canadian people. Luckily, some of us ran into the unveiling ceremony at the Commissioners Park during the bus tour of the city on Saturday. Ottawa Citizen National Capital Race Weekend was the major part of the Tulip Festival, and it included 10K in-line skate and 10K run/walk (Saturday, May 11), marathon & half marathon, wheelchair marathon, in-line skate marathon & half marathon, 5K run/walk, and 2K family run/walk (all on Sunday, May 12). More than 17,000 runners and in-line skaters took part in these events. The weather was cold (7 degree C) and breezy, but the rain held up giving all events almost ideal conditions. All events started and finished at

the City Center after running both sides of the beautiful Rideau Canal. Marathon (2-loops) and half marathon covered the entire length of the canal, while 5K and 10K covered

only portion of the canal depending on the distance. The entire course was indescribably scenic as the canal meandered through the city. Tulips were everywhere, and numerous number of music bands entertained us throughout the course. Every aspect of the races went very well, and all of us from the Gate city did pretty well. Half marathon finishers received

bronze medal with maple leaf and the parliament building sculpted on it. Pat was particularly happy with her 1:48:33 half-marathon PR and 3rd age group performance. 5K finishers received copper medal with Farm boy and cowboy hat sculpted on it, which didn't make Mary overly happy in spite of her 3rd age group finish. However, Eric didn't mind what was sculpted on his medal, since it was the first medal he earned by running a race.

None of us were crazy enough to drive 7 hours all the way to freezing Canada just to run a race. In fact, the priority seemed to be more on the sightseeing aspect for most of us, and on dinning & shopping for others. In any case, the capital city of Canada sure lived up to our expectation. We took the guided tour on the famous double-decker bus on Saturday morning, which

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