

## New York City Marathon Business Report:

### NIKE LAUNCHES ATTACK ON NEW YORK CITY AND OTHER TALES FROM THE FRONT

By Dave Kayser

The three day marathon expo at the Javits Convention Center has settled into a now familiar sponsor-driven gathering. For the most part, the booths were well-designed and eye-catching but had a corporate feel that is hard to escape at today's running expos. It made for a pleasant but unexciting time unlike many years past when new and ambitious vendors were getting their wares in front of throngs of runners.

After picking up their race bibs, runners were funneled into the **New Balance** store, which took over roughly half of the exhibit area. From there, one could take advantage of the now customary photo-ops and then enter the spacious main exhibit area. **Volvo** crammed a 46' long tour bus into their booth that was wrapped with an image of the marathon route. The interior of the bus contained Volvo history exhibits and videos of past NYC marathons. Two bright orange vehicles that were to be used to lead the runners through the five boroughs on race day complemented the space. The Citizen's Bank booth had the glint of the Wizard of Oz's Emerald Castle and **Culligan** gave out free samples of their water in shiny recycled aluminum cups. The **Tag Heuer** exhibit was the classiest of them all, befitting their status as one of the best known Swiss watchmakers.

The New York Road Runners had a gift shop full of reasonably priced souvenirs that included water bottles, bracelets, shot glasses, beach towels and rubber ducks. Booth staff said there was demand for the NYRR branded wares and the many shoppers present confirmed that statement. A good number of footwear companies were in attendance, including **Altra** who had a large booth that telegraphed their interest in increasing road shoe sales. **Saucony** had a small booth that reflected the high cost of booth space. Also present were **ASICS**, **Oofus**, **adidas** and **Hoka**, who had the largest booth of the lot. Specialty retailer **Fleet Feet** had their own booth and were also partnering with **Balega**, **Gu**, **Shokz** and Asics, making their presence known throughout the expo.

**Maybelline** had an expansive space that was packed with attendees standing in the "Gear Pick Up" line. **Erica Sara** personalized jewelry had a classy looking space that portrayed a jewelry store as did **TwentySixDiamond**, who offer premium jewelry for marathoners. Two of the most unusual booths were **The Pets Table** touting healthy dog food and a company performing teeth whitening on the spot.

The **Running Lab** had some of their presentations in Spanish which was next to a NYRR information booth that was set up to answer any type of question asked by anxious runners. A detailed course map along with information on pacing, security, and tracking of participants was available as were many NYRR staffers answering all sorts of questions. Videos of various sections of the course helped runners familiarize themselves with the route they would be following on race day.

The NYRR's "Beyond the Finish Line" promotion returned that offered runners deals at area cultural institutions. The Natural History Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum had

free or discounted admissions, discounted tickets were available to a number of Broadway plays and a trip to the top of the Rockefeller Center and a tour of aircraft carrier Intrepid were also free.

The *New York Times* gave over one page of the print edition to the race, providing readers with a guide on race essentials, such as start times, street closures and TV coverage. On Sunday, there was a full page profile on actor **Jordan Litz**, who was scheduled to run the marathon and then head to Broadway where he was appearing in the play "Wicked." A story about how training for the marathon has consumed first time marathoner **Laura Habecker's** life filled another page.

The Museum of World Athletics held a Donation Ceremony at the New York Athletic Club on Halloween night, where 15 past running greats, including marathoners Bill Rodgers, Rosa Mota, Denna Kastor, Frank Shorter and Jacqueline Hansen were honored for their running achievements. Each honoree donated artifacts from their career to the Museum's growing collection.

At the same venue the day after the marathon, **261 Fearless, Inc.** presented the inaugural **K.V. Switzer Awards** to those individuals who overcame challenges to become world class athletes and went on to help others attain their own goals. **Molly Barker**, founder of **Girls on the Run** in 1996, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, whose foundation has provided youth, adults and families with a variety of educational, athletic, health and leadership programs and **Tegla Loroupe**, whose foundation advocates for world peace and women's rights, were all in attendance to receive their award.

Adidas won the sneaker wars for the podium finishers, with the top three men sporting the three stripes. The women were divided between **On**, **Under Armour** and adidas.

**Nike** was at their marketing best throughout the weekend, once again making it clear they intend to regain their strong foothold in the running market. At Columbus Circle, video screens at the many subway entrances were filled with Nike ads showing a rotating assortment of catchy phrases, all in the signature orange and black colorways. Interestingly, adidas also had an ad sandwiched in between the Nike ads. In response, New Balance had a stark black and white banner with the company logo held in place in one corner with blue painter's tape in a nearby messy construction area. The banner failed to capture the sometimes gritty life of New York residents, if that was indeed the intended effect.

Nike also organized a 10 mile run starting at Battery Park a week before the race and a Friday morning 5k shake out run starting at their lower Manhattan store. After the marathon they offered free medal engraving at three store locations.

On race day, Nike used the infamous decommissioned Staten Island Ferry owned by Saturday Night Live stars Colin Hanks and Pete Davidson to great advantage. They painted the entire vessel a hot pink with the tagline "NYC Won't Carry You. It Pushes You." on its sides and had it towed around New York Harbor on race morning. It delighted many and riled some runners who said it interfered with their own ferry trip to the start line.

Nike's highly visible presence in New York ended with five pages of Nike ads in the New York Times November 3 Marathon special section that included five pages of race coverage and photos along

with the names of over 35,000 of the 59,266 finishers. The ads, starting with a banner ad on the front page that read "I ran 26.2 miles and all I got was my name in the paper" followed by a four page listing of all the joys and travails of running a marathon. It ended on the back page with "I have this sinking, nagging, terrible, wonderful feeling that I'm going to do it all over again next year."