

Wet runnings

Text and photographs by Tony McNicol



On the Feb. 18, Tokyo hosted its first ever public participation marathon. Over 30,000 people followed the wheelchair competitors and top runners around a route that began at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government buildings in Shinjuku, took in Yasukuni Shrine, the Imperial Palace, Asakusa and Tsukiji, and ended outside the Big Sight exhibition hall in Odaiba. For the day, organizers laid on 228,000 sport drinks, 42,000 bananas, 200 portaloos, and 106 doctors and nurses.

The weather conditions were truly abysmal – pelting it down with rain for much of the day, windy and cold. To help keep off the rain, race officials handed out plastic capes to nervous and shivering runners waiting at the starting line. After the 30 minutes it took for everyone to get moving, officials quickly began collecting up piles of abandoned umbrellas.

At the finish in Odaiba, hundreds of family and friends had gathered to watch the runners jog, limp and occasionally collapse over the line. At around five hours, the sun finally came out to warm the last weary finishers, though by that time it seemed like every other runner was bursting into tears. Tokyo’s inaugural marathon was undoubtedly a momentous event for city and runners alike.

