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Carrie Tollefson: Hi everyone, I'm Olympian Carrie Tollefson and I was a member of the broadcast team today for the New Balance 5th Avenue Mile. And now I'm stepping in for Rob and Bex as I get to interview the champions, Gracie Morris and Yared Nuguse. Gracie took the women's pro field and Yared took the men's pro field. Our two Americans were the first to sweep the races, so that means the two Americans won the race together since 2016. It's the first time we've had Americans on the women's side and on the men's side win. So, that's the kind of a cool stat. They both ran the third fastest times ever for the races. So, that's another cool stat. And then listen to this. One on the men's side, 23 men broke four minutes.

Wowza, so fast and on a day that we didn't know it was going to be that fast, it was raining, it was a little bit slippery out there. So, it was just an awesome day and I'm so excited for you to hear their post-race interviews. Maybelline New York, the official cosmetic partner of the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. Get a bold look that lasts with Superstay Matte Ink. Focus on your finish. Maybelline has your look covered. Yared, third fastest ever. I don't know if you realize that.

00:01:14

Yared Nuguse: No, I did not. No, I was in a track.

00:01:16

Carrie Tollefson: Yes. So, you won today, you run the third-fastest time ever. And the same for Gracie, she ran the third time.

00:01:22

Yared Nuguse: Really? Nice.

00:01:23

Carrie Tollefson: Third fastest.

00:01:24

Yared Nuguse: Twinning. Yeah.

00:01:24

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah, exactly. So, let's talk a little bit about the race. So, I have to tell you, we were laughing after because we got so excited in the booth that we didn't even let Ryan, who was the official play by play, Ryan Field, Alysia Montaña, and myself. We were shouting so loud over each other. We saw Parker coming and then you were there and it was so fun. So, can you walk us through your race just a little bit?

00:01:49

Yared Nuguse: Yeah. So, that first quarter, I felt like I was very relaxed and comfortable. Started off strong, got out ahead of everyone, and felt pretty good. That second quarter with the hill I think was very hard.

00:02:02

Carrie Tollefson: The quads start talking.

00:02:03

Yared Nuguse: Yes, I feel like I jogged the hill, but I never sprinted it. I think that just felt very different. I think we were all just, yeah, no one is really grinding up this hill or anything. And I thought about going for the halfway bonus and I was like, "Nah, no, I should just focus on wedding. It's fine." So, we get over the hill and I just feel like I'm just flying at that point. All of a sudden, I feel like I have a really monstrosly, long stride. I feel like I was hitting someone most of the beginning of that race, but I'm just flying down this hill. I'm like, "Okay, we're feeling good again. We're back. It's all good." And then we got to that last quarter and I'm just like, "Okay, this is like where the race happens."

And I'm still mostly in front at this point. I see some people on my periphery, but I'm just focused on doing my thing and getting there. And I don't know exactly when it happened, but I remember Parker gets up on me and actually passes me is in front of me. And I'm just like, "Oh dang, he's really moving. I got to respond to this." And I feel like I had this moment of dower was just like, "Oh God, I don't know if I can really get there." But I was like, "That finish line is a lot further away actually." And I think it is. And I think I had this other moment of just like, oh, giving it all I had and just really pushing through and managing to slip past Parker and get the win.

00:03:24

Carrie Tollefson: I mean that is something that we have all of us, no matter what level you're at, there's that moment of can I do it? Should I do it? Oh, I'm going to do it type thing. A lot of people say turn your brain off, stop thinking and just run, right? But you have to think when it's still a ways out and you were obviously calculating your kick.

00:03:43

Yared Nuguse: A hundred percent. My coach had told me it's like the person who wins fit, that was the last guy to kick. And I was like, "I don't know if that's true based on

how Josh won last year." But it was. In the end, I was like, me and my last kick was at that very last moment is what did it. And you're always going to have those moments, but it's about having that positive talk behind that where it's just like, "But we can do this. This is going to be hard, but you got to choose to do the hard thing."

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Carrie Tollefson: Well, people want to know if you look up at the street signs and count down the blocks, it's 20 city blocks basically from 80th to 60th on 5th Ave. Did you look at those?

00:04:18

Yared Nuguse: I tried a little at the very beginning, but I think it was just much harder to see than I thought it was going to be. And I was like...

00:04:24

Carrie Tollefson: You're going so fast. It is a board.

00:04:27

Yared Nuguse: I cannot just be turning my head.

00:04:28

Carrie Tollefson: No, no, you can't.

00:04:29

Yared Nuguse: I feel like hello. But no, no, I mean I also think that would've counting the seconds in a day, I think that would've gotten in my head a little bit.

00:04:39

Carrie Tollefson: It really goes so fast. Do you know that 23 men broke four minutes today?

00:04:42

Yared Nuguse: Twenty-five, is that the whole field or is that...

00:04:44

Carrie Tollefson: Basically, the whole field. Our final runner today ran four flat 0.6 or something like that. I mean it's just amazing. The sport really is changing, isn't it?

00:04:55

Yared Nuguse: A hundred percent. I think everyone's been running really, really fast and it's just so deep these days. Whereas before, I think especially when I was starting my pro career, it didn't feel like that. It felt like it

was just some really good guys and then not as much depth, but that's really awesome. I feel especially given the conditions too ideal out there.

00:05:15

Carrie Tollefson: Was it slippery? We were wondering. Could you feel a kickback or not really?

00:05:19

Yared Nuguse: Not really. I was...

00:05:19

Carrie Tollefson: Because there was quite a bit of rain this morning.

00:05:21

Yared Nuguse: There was. But I think once the race started, I feel like I was locked into it. I think before, I was whining in my head of just like, "Ugh, it's wet and cold and it's raining a lot." But I think once the race started, the adrenaline took over for that. So, yeah, I didn't really feel anything. Even going down the hill, I thought that's where it was going to be really slippery, but it wasn't really bad.

00:05:42

Carrie Tollefson: We know you like to run well here in New York. You went to the Millrose games last year, set the world record indoors for the mile. It was later broken that week, but it's just amazing how well you run here. Do you feel the love of the city?

00:05:56

Yared Nuguse: I do. Honestly, I feel like New York, I've always really just enjoyed visiting as a place. It just always feels like there's so much to do and so many people here are fans of mine. It's crazy.

00:06:05

Carrie Tollefson: Yes.

00:06:06

Yared Nuguse: Anytime I go run in Central Park, I'm guaranteed to get stopped at least once.

00:06:10

Carrie Tollefson: So fun.

00:06:10

Yared Nuguse: And it is fun and just seeing everyone

afterwards and signing as much as I could. Anyway, it was really, really fun too. But yeah, no, I feel like my coach was saying, "Oh, you're undefeated in New York." I am like, "Oh, that's gross."

00:06:24

Carrie Tollefson: All these things to chase.

00:06:25

Yared Nuguse: No, yeah, I mean I've only done three Millroses and this, but yeah, it's still really cool and I really, really do like this city a lot.

00:06:32

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah, I'd say, I mean your whole team does well here in New York and they always loved Dathan Ritzenhein and the On Athletics Club, but okay, let's talk a little bit about how you got into the sport. I mean, anyone that's watched you now at the world champs or the Olympic Games, they know your family is usually in the crowd and very big supporters of yours, but I think it's later in your high, early high school ninth, 10th grade is really when you started in the sport, right?

00:06:57

Yared Nuguse: No, yeah. I didn't really start until my ninth grade with Trap and Cross Country or anything that first year. And yeah, it was really more of a happenstance sort of thing, where I was running these fast miles in PE and then my PE coach tells the track coach and he comes to me and he's like, "Oh, you should run track." And I was like, "Not really my thing." Also, I'm on the bowling team, but he was very persuasive, luckily. And I really just fell in love with it so quickly, just not just that I was okay at it, but also just the teammates and friends I made just very, very quickly. No one told me about Cross Country afterwards. I was like, "Oh, there's another track in the fall." And they're like, "Yeah, basically..."

00:07:41

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah, you just got to run on the grass and up and down hills and...

00:07:43

Yared Nuguse: And like 5K instead of one mile. It's great. And I was like, "Oh, this is different." But no, yeah, I really enjoyed just running. Even in high school, I feel like, yeah, even though I didn't picture it as a pro career for myself, I'm glad that I just get to have the opportunity to just continue to do it.

00:08:03

Carrie Tollefson: Do what you love. Do you think your mom or dad would've been an athlete because...

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Yared Nuguse: My dad says he would've been if he had different opportunities and whatnot. They both came from Ethiopia when they were 18, 20 and been working ever since.

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Yared Nuguse: But yeah, my dad's like, no, I could have been a soccer player working there for sure. And I was like, "Maybe, but you weren't. Sorry."

00:08:29

Carrie Tollefson: It's so interesting though. I just find it fascinating to hear the backstory of an athlete and to wonder if the mom and dad didn't do it, could they have, if they had the opportunity? It sounds like your dad would've liked maybe an opportunity to do it. My dad was a college football player, but my mom never had the opportunity. And so, I always wonder, where'd this come from? Maybe it was my grandparents, who knows. But all right, Yared, we know that this week also has the world championships and you're not there. We're thankful that you're here, but I know that we would love for you to be representing the US. So, tell us about that. How's your heart? Were you excited to be here? Were you torn?

00:09:11

Yared Nuguse: Oh yeah, I was pretty excited to be here actually. I think Zurich was my last chance to make it and when that didn't work out, I was just definitely a little fun. But I feel like I'd gotten most of my, I don't know, grieving that I didn't make the team out at USAs. And I was just like, "Well, I'm glad I had one more shot to do it, but it is what it is." And I think coming here, I've done all these races where there was a lot of pressure to perform well and really get the most out of myself, but I really felt like ending on a race where I could just go out and enjoy it more. I really do want to win of course, but there's less stakes. It's more just like, "Oh, just a road race, end the season at a really fun meet that everyone has a good time at."

00:09:56

Yared Nuguse: And so, yeah, I think that I've already have gotten over my-

00:10:01

Gracie Morris: New process.

00:10:01

Yared Nuguse: ... fortunate, yeah, circumstances from USAs, but I think it's definitely going to fuel me next year. But I think coming to this race, I just wanted to be just have fun. That's what I always talk about.

00:10:12

Carrie Tollefson: Well and being fifth, that our USAs right now is still very, very good. And it was very fast. I mean it wasn't like it was a race that you shouldn't be proud of, you know what I mean?

00:10:23

Yared Nuguse: No, yeah. I led almost all of that race because I wanted it to be fast and I'm glad I ran in the race I wanted. There's still a lot of things about that race that I'm really happy about. I think it was just a lot more guys that are a lot better than you think and that's what happens, but really proud of that team that is going. I'm sure they're all going to make to the final and do great.

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Carrie Tollefson: Yeah. Well, we were so thankful you came here. We know that now it's break time. You and your boyfriend are heading on a trip. Where are you going? What are you doing? Can you tell us?

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Yared Nuguse: Yes, yes. We were going to Puerto Vallarta in Mexico. Very, very fun place that we've heard of anyway. I've never been, but my sister has great things to say about it.

00:11:04

Carrie Tollefson: So fun.

00:11:04

Yared Nuguse: And we've never had a trip that wasn't running related in some way. So, I think it was going to be really, really fun for both of us and I won't have to run or anything.

00:11:13

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah, leave your running shoes here in New York.

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Yared Nuguse: No, not here. I mean...

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Carrie Tollefson: You're going to still take them with you?

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Yared Nuguse: Yeah, I'm going to need those eventually.

00:11:19

Carrie Tollefson: Okay, okay, okay, okay. So, what's the goal for this next year? Because listen, we've had an Olympic Games in 21, World Championships in 22 and 23. Then Olympic Games, 24 world champs in 25 next summer.

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Yared Nuguse: The break summer, summer rest.

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Carrie Tollefson: It's offs.

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Yared Nuguse: I mean they are doing that whole world champs ultimate thing, but you don't have to qualify for that as much. That's a little different.

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Carrie Tollefson: Little breather.

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Yared Nuguse: But it is nice to not be as making a team focus. I think it gives a lot of opportunities for people to just mix things up, do something, and there're not really any real consequences for it. So, it's going to be really, really cool I think and I'll probably do not a ton of different things. I don't want to perform generally well, but I definitely want to fix some things that might've been wrong this year and just really get the best out of myself next year.

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Carrie Tollefson: There's not much you can fix, buddy.

00:12:13

Yared Nuguse: Yeah.

00:12:13

Carrie Tollefson: You do that game well. A couple of quick questions. Everyone talks about the turtle. When does he go into hibernation?

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Yared Nuguse: He'll be going in around Thanksgiving.

00:12:22

Carrie Tollefson: Turtle, right?

00:12:23

Yared Nuguse: Yes, or tortoise. I was going to say.

00:12:25

Carrie Tollefson: Oh.

00:12:26

Yared Nuguse: Yeah, he's technically a tortoise. He doesn't swim, but...

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Carrie Tollefson: Oh, I see, okay.

00:12:28

Yared Nuguse: Yeah, little...

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Carrie Tollefson: It's technicalities.

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Yared Nuguse: Yeah. But he is been enjoying the last few days of summer a lot. I think once October rolls around, that's when he starts getting a little more groggy and whatnot.

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Carrie Tollefson: Oh, like a saw?

00:12:44

Yared Nuguse: Yeah, I think he is like winter.

00:12:46

Carrie Tollefson: Yes.

00:12:47

Yared Nuguse: I could sleep three months and he just passed out.

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Carrie Tollefson: So true.

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Yared Nuguse: Yeah. But yeah, yeah.

00:12:53

Carrie Tollefson: That's fun. I think I've seen a video of how you help him hibernate and all that fun stuff. Very cool. If you need to check that out, books, what are you going to be reading? Because everyone loves that you read and do all these other things besides just run.

00:13:04

Yared Nuguse: Yeah, I'm actually about to start this book called The Lies of Locke Lamora fantasy book that one of my teammates really recommended, but I mostly just read fantasy. Honestly, I haven't read anything that has been fantasy in a long time just because I really love the idea of just immersing yourself into a new world and whatnot. So, that'll be my next thing. And then the The Will of the Many after that.

00:13:25

Carrie Tollefson: Oh my goodness. You plan those, you plan your races pretty far off.

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Yared Nuguse: I have a list where I'm just like when I tell someone like, "Oh, I'm going to put this on my list," I mean it is going on a list and I will get to it because I'm only have five more things on the list right now.

00:13:39

Carrie Tollefson: Oh my gosh, I love this. So, calculated just like you are when you're racing, but yet as free and nice as can be. So, thank you for putting on a wonderful show and for being a kind human being. It's so fun to watch you because we all love rooting for you.

00:13:52

Yared Nuguse: Of course, yeah. Thank you guys for having me. This was really, really a fun meet.

00:13:56

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00:14:30

Carrie Tollefson: Greasy, I mean, amazing job today. You must be just flying high. Third- fastest time ever and also now the new champion of the 5th Avenue Road Mile.

00:14:41

Gracie Morris: The season's been going well, but I wasn't really expecting this today and I honestly, when I crossed the finish line, had no clue what time I'd run.

00:14:46

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah. Well, either did we actually. I've done commentary years and it was so fun to watch you race the way you raced. Alysia Montaño was on the call with me and she said, "You read Karissa Schweizer like a book." And you know what, Karissa, she's tied the record. Last year she tied it with Laura Muir and that was a big thing that she would have talked about. Did you talk at all about time?

00:15:09

Gracie Morris: No, my coach was just, he told me to key off Karissa, so I was just trying to see what she was doing. I figured it would probably be a similar race plan to last year and I feel like it went out pretty similar.

00:15:22

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah, you guys took it out hard. Let's walk through it 400 by 400. So, you have four 400s, right? Not three, four and the first 400, talk about that.

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Gracie Morris: I was just trying to stay relaxed. I knew I needed to get out and this race, I was like, "Do not look at the clock." Just because you're running downhill, so you're flying. So, I was just trying to stay calm. I get to the front. I knew I needed to find Karissa, she was going to be there. And then next 400, she started going for the halfway bonus.

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Carrie Tollefson: Did you know?

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Gracie Morris: I didn't know she was going to, but she surged and I was like, "Okay, she's very clearly going for that." And so, I just tried to stay where I was because I was like, "I don't want anything to do with that."

00:16:00

Carrie Tollefson: And it is uphill. Second quarter, I mean it looks flat. 5th Ave looks flat, but you have to climb. You

got to dig deep.

00:16:08

Gracie Morris: Yeah, you do. So, I just stayed relaxed up that quarter and then the goal was to make it to 1200 because my coach was like, "That's where the race starts." Once she did that, I started pressing into that last or that 1200 and I slowly just started really nearing and then it gave me some more momentum that last 400.

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Carrie Tollefson: Last 400.

00:16:28

Gracie Morris: Yeah.

00:16:28

Carrie Tollefson: So, it was really at about, I don't know, 300 meters, right? Before the 200-meter mark, you were up there even in front of her I think already by then, right?

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Gracie Morris: I think so.

00:16:38

Carrie Tollefson: Was it scary? This is a big race. Last year, you were fifth here, so you were the second top returner, if you can follow that. So, Karissa was the top returner. She was first and then second through fourth did not return and you were the next one that returned. So, when you cross the tape, what does that feeling feel like this is a big race to win a lot of greats have won here, a lot of greats have come here and haven't won here, but you did?

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Gracie Morris: It was just very satisfying to end the season here and take the win too. And again, I've been working on building my confidence and just feeling like I belong with these women. So, adding this to the resume definitely is helping that.

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Carrie Tollefson: You definitely belong. So, what has it been like since we're just a couple hours after the race? What have you done since cracking the tape and doing your post-race interview?

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Gracie Morris: Really nothing. I had drug testing and then by

the time I got back here, I had to shower and then come straight here.

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Carrie Tollefson: Yeah, you're just busy.

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Gracie Morris: I've been busy.

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Carrie Tollefson: I want to hear a little bit about the drug testing because I love that New York Roadrunners does this. They take their races and they bring in USADA or WADA, the World Anti-Doping Agency or the US Anti-Doping Agency, and they randomly pick people in the race. And you and Yared, our winner, both got picked. So, tell us a little bit about that. You have to go and pee in a cup basically, but I mean it can be a hard process. It seemed like it went pretty well?

00:18:03

Gracie Morris: Yeah, it was smooth this time. Yeah, I mean it's just always hard after a race.

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Carrie Tollefson: I know.

00:18:08

Gracie Morris: You feel dehydrated after, so it's a process. But yeah, they just follow you around until you're ready to go to the bathroom.

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Carrie Tollefson: But isn't it nice that they do that and we want to have a clean sport and it's a lot. It takes a lot of money and I'm just thankful that New York Roadhouse does that.

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Gracie Morris: Me too.

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Carrie Tollefson: It brings clean athletes here.

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Gracie Morris: Yes. No, it's definitely good for the sport.

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Carrie Tollefson: It is. Now, what? What's the rest of the day for you?

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Gracie Morris: Probably going to go to the after party.

00:18:32

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah, eat a little something.

00:18:32

Gracie Morris: Eat a little something. One of my friends was already telling me to, she wants to take a shot with me.

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Carrie Tollefson: Oh, nice.

00:18:42

Gracie Morris: And then after that, one of my best friends lives in New York, so I'm going to go get dinner with her.

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Carrie Tollefson: Okay, fun. Well, I want to hear a little bit about who you are, where you grew up and how you got to this stage where you are now the 5th Avenue mile winner, and that will be a big highlight on your resume. So, how'd you get into the sport?

00:19:02

Gracie Morris: My brother's first grade teacher, her husband was a track coach for a summer team and she saw us running around at recess and was basically, I guess recruiting us to the team. So, my mom took us out. Yeah, that was how we started.

00:19:16

Carrie Tollefson: And then you went to college and ran?

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Gracie Morris: Mm- hmm, I started at University of Texas and I transferred after a year and a half to TCU. And the smaller environment was really good for me, a good transition. I feel like I started finding myself in running and had some pretty big improvements. And then after college, I signed with Puma Elite in North Carolina or coached by Amy and Alistair Cragg. And just being in that environment and surrounded by all those runners who just have so much to their name and everybody's just like Amy to be one of the best in the world. So, it's just definitely helped elevate me this season.

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Carrie Tollefson: Did both your coaches, Amy and Alistair Cragg

run here at the 5th Ave? I mean I know that they've run New York race...

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Gracie Morris: I know Alistair has. I'm not sure about Amy.

00:20:05

Carrie Tollefson: I feel like Amy was one of those athletes that could run the marathon and run the 1500 and do it all. But how cool is that, that your coaches have been there, done that? Both Olympians, both been to World Championships. I mean they have this phenomenal group in North Carolina and it's a young group. I mean, some of the athletes are a little... they've been around for five, six years, but most of them are pretty much new professionals.

00:20:27

Gracie Morris: Mm- hmm, yeah. I mean, it just makes it so much more relatable. They've lived and experienced what I'm going through and that just gives me so much more trust. I know what they're saying is true, somebody that thinks they know what they're talking about.

00:20:42

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah. Well today, we were talking about how this is a melting pot of a city, right? Any type of person from anywhere around the world can be here. And they do, they live here. But also the mile today was a melting pot of distance runners or middle distance runners. So, you are an eight 15 gal. You're coming up in distance to run the mile, maybe not coming up, but you're more of an 800- meter runner. At least right now, it seems like it. Now you're moving up, but then you have Karissa Schweitzer who you're chasing down, who's a 10,000- meter runner, 5, 000 meter runner, and can also run very fast over the mile.

So, how fun is that when you're hearing and even steeple chasers are out there? Did you think about that today or not really? It's just another body you have to beat.

00:21:24

Gracie Morris: It's just another body I have to beat. The way we train now, I'm coming more from strike backgrounds. So, I knew being on the roads, it's going to play more to my favor. And I've had quite a few road miles this year, so I knew what to expect.

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Carrie Tollefson: Are you thinking you're more a miler now?

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Gracie Morris: I think so.

00:21:42

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah?

00:21:43

Gracie Morris: Yeah, we set up definitely more for 15-mile this year. So, maybe in the future year, we'll focus more on the eight.

00:21:51

Carrie Tollefson: Okay. So, where do you go from here? Are you on a break after this? So, officially how long? One week, two weeks?

00:21:59

Gracie Morris: Probably two weeks. Not completely off the whole time, but definitely a few days.

00:22:03

Carrie Tollefson: Take some time, regroup. I mean maybe even more so mentally, physically, and then get ready. What's up for next year?

00:22:11

Gracie Morris: We haven't really talked about it yet. My coaches are very like be present in the moment, don't get ahead of ourselves. So, we haven't really discussed that, but hopefully some bigger races next year and just some faster times.

00:22:23

Carrie Tollefson: Well, now that this podcast is done and you have had it sink in just even 15 more minutes, what was the highlight of the day? Was it cracking the tape, making that move, getting interviewed? What is it?

00:22:36

Gracie Morris: My best friend was at the finish line. So, once I finally got through the media, she was right there and we had to hug. So, that was cool having somebody there.

00:22:45

Carrie Tollefson: Yeah. Well, I said to you, walking in here, I said, "I think when you watch that race, you're going to be so proud of yourself. The power that you had behind your stride today, that arm carry everything was like, whoa. You have entered the world of professional distance running and middle distance running and you did it in style today, lady. Way to go."

Well, that's it for today's Set the Pace. Back to Rob and Bex again next week. But I want to just say thanks so much to Gracie and Yared. You guys put on such a great show. It was so much fun to watch you race. And like I say on my own podcast, C Tolle Run, make sure to get after it.