WORLD AT HIS FEET KIPLIMO PLOTS TO STAMP HIS MARK IN MARATHON

SH733M BONANZA

By Charles Mutebi

Kiplimo's Major Honours

- **World Cross Country Championship Gold: 2026, 2024 & 2023 Silver: 2019**
- **World Half-Marathon Championship Gold: 2019**
- **Chicago Marathon 2025: winner**
- **London Marathon 2025: Runner-up**
- **2020 Olympics 10,000m: bronze**
- **2022 World Athletics Championships 10,000m: bronze**



Uganda's long distance star Jacob Kiplimo regained the half-marathon world record on Sunday in Lisbon, Portugal

Jacob Kiplimo's last appearance on the track ended in a disappointing eighth-place finish. That was back in the 10,000m final of the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

The track was speaking loud and clear. Kiplimo got the message, and world athletics may never be the same again.

As Kiplimo regained the half-marathon world record on Sunday in Portugal, putting to bed the disappointment of losing his previous world record on a technicality, the worst-kept secret in athletics became even more apparent – Kiplimo is the biggest attraction in long-distance running.

He is, in other words, the runner that stops everything, the one fans tune in to watch. And this after just two marathon appearances.

"I am so happy to break the world record," said Kiplimo after his exploits in Lisbon. "After the first 10km, I thought the world record was possible. I tried to keep pushing the pace in the final two kilometres."

Kiplimo ran 21km at a pace of two minutes and 43 seconds per kilometre. That, in case you are not sure, is ridiculous. But Kiplimo is ridiculously good. He is precisely what the best scientific minds would produce if they were funded to build the perfect road runner.

On the track, where he won two bronze medals in the 10,000 (one apiece at the Olympics and World Athletics Championships), Kiplimo was good.

On the road and the cross country (where he is the three-time reigning champion), Kiplimo is generational. The Paris Olympics told him it was time to forget the track and go own the road. And since then, he has raced nine times and won on seven occasions. On the other two occasions, including his marathon debut in London, he finished second.

Next month, Kiplimo will be back in London for the marathon, where he will be joined by Joshua Cheptegei, in what will mark the first occasion that the two greats feature in the same 42km race. Kiplimo undoubtedly will be the favourite of the Ugandan pair, if not the entire field.

It is fascinating how good Kiplimo looked in Lisbon, when this race was very likely a parenthesis in his ongoing build-up to the London Marathon. He clocked 57 minutes and 20 seconds, but could Kiplimo have been faster if this race didn't fall within the build-up period for the London Marathon? Some think so.

Cash bonanza

Still, there were plenty of incentives for Kiplimo to break the record. One, there was a €150,000 (sh550m) bonus in Lisbon for a world record, besides the regular cash prize, possibly at €50,000 (sh183m). Then there is the likelihood of a significant bonus from Nike, who have a contract with Kiplimo. And you cannot rule out that it all began with the incentive of an appearance fee, which for athletes of Kiplimo's calibre is pretty much standard practice. In all, Kiplimo left Portugal with a lot more in his bag than a world record and an enhanced reputation.

And with every win, Kiplimo's financial prospects only improve. His presence becomes more valuable and his appearance fees among the best in the trade. For Kiplimo, normal service in the half-marathon has been restored with another world record.

But the real prize is similar dominance in the marathon, and for most, it seems a matter of when and not if.

Printed and published by The New Vision Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, P.O. Box 9815, Kampala. Tel: 041 4337000. Fax: 4235843. Registered at GPO as a newspaper. Advertising offices are situated at Pike House, Plot 17 First Street Industrial Area, Tel. 4337000 Fax: 4232050