

Men's Wheelchair Preview: Weir in form for fifth title

Josh Cassidy's victory last year showed you don't have to be the fastest man in the field to win the London Marathon wheelchair title. A little bit of luck and some tactical nous can bring the greatest reward.

The Canadian would be the first to admit that it was to his good fortune when his training partner David Weir suffered two punctures while seemingly on course for an unprecedented fifth title a year ago. Cassidy took his chance with aplomb in the wet conditions and will be doing his level best to retain the crown on 17 April.

As for Weir, the 31-year-old Briton returns for his 12th successive London Marathon in the form of his life. Weir not only demolished the opposition at the New York Marathon last November, an experience he described as one of the best of his career, but he went on to win three gold medals on the track at the IPC World Championships in Christchurch in January.

It's now three years since he won here, and surely he'll never have a better chance to win his fifth.

"Following the World Championships, I'm on a real high and looking forward to racing in London", he said. "I'm sure it will be another great race. I'll be ready to make up for the disappointment of last year."

Not that he won't face a challenge. Although his old rival Kurt Fearnley is not in the line-up this year, there are three past winners in Mexican Saul Mendoza, Frenchman Denis Lemeunier and Heinz Frei, the Swiss world record holder who was second to Fearnley at the Worlds this year.

It could be another Swiss, however, who poses the greatest threat to Weir. Marcel Hug, who was second here a year ago, chased Weir to the line in all his World Championships finals three months ago and won the prestigious wheelchair marathon in Oita last year. He also holds one of the quickest ever marathon PBs.

Weir will also have to look out for the in-form Japanese Kota Hokinoue, who was fourth here in 2010, and at the World Championships, and finished second in Berlin and third in Boston last year.

Another Japanese, Nobukazu Hanaoka, was added to the men's elite wheelchair field following a request from the Japan Paralympic Committee after the Nagano Marathon was cancelled. Hanaoka was sixth in this year's World Championships and has a decent PB.

There are 34 entries in total in the men's wheelchair race.

Men's Wheelchair: Elite Entries

Bib no	Name	Country	PB
11	Josh Cassidy	CAN	1:33:50
12	Heinz Frei	SUI	1:20:14
13	Marcel Hug	SUI	1:21:23
14	Saul Mendoza	MEX	1:21:24
15	Choke Yasuoka	JPN	1:22:17
16	Jordi Jimenez	ESP	1:22:18
17	Denis Lemeunier	FRA	1:22:31
18	Roger Puigbo Verdager	ESP	1:23:22

19	Kota Hokinoue	JPN	1:23:22
20	Tomasz Hamerlak	POL	1:27:18
21	David Weir	GBR	1:27:46
23	Tyler Byers	USA	1:32:33
24	Richard Colman	AUS	1:32:03
25	Nobukazu Hanaoka	JPN	1:23:33