

MEB'S YEAR-BY-YEAR PERSONAL BESTS

AT SAN DIEGO HIGH SCHOOL

<i>Year</i>	<i>1,600m</i>	<i>mile</i>	<i>3,200m</i>
1991	4:22	N/A	9:30.9
1992	4:18	N/A	9:18.79
1993	4:11.82	N/A	9:11.95
1994	4:06.15	4:05.58	8:51.8

AT UCLA

<i>Year</i>	<i>1,500m</i>	<i>5,000m</i>	<i>10,000m</i>
1995	3:47.48	13:52.06	30:41.24
1996	3:45.04	13:37.00	29:55.75
1997	3:43.95	13:33.97	28:26.55
1998	3:42.29	13:26.85	28:16.79

PROFESSIONAL YEARS

<i>Year</i>	<i>5,000m</i>	<i>10,000m</i>	<i>marathon</i>
1999	13:40.86	28:29.27	N/A
2000	13:11.77	27:53.63	N/A
2001	13:23.16	27:13.98	N/A
2002	13:21.87	27:20.15	2:12:35
2003	13:20.50	27:57.59	2:10:03
2004	13:34.00	27:24.10	2:09:53
2005	13:20.71	28:10.57	2:09:56
2006	N/A	28:18.74	2:09:56
2007	N/A	27:41.26	2:15:09
2008	13:33.29	28:28.44	N/A
2009	N/A	N/A	2:09:15
2010	N/A	N/A	2:09:26

MEB'S MARATHON HISTORY

<i>Date</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Time</i>
11/3/02	New York City	9th	2:12:35
10/12/03	Chicago	7th	2:10:03
2/7/04	Olympic trials	2nd	2:11:47
8/29/04	Athens Olympics	2nd	2:11:29
11/7/04	New York City	2nd	2:09:53
11/6/05	New York City	3rd	2:09:56
4/17/06	Boston	3rd	2:09:56
11/5/06	New York City	20th	2:22:02
4/22/07	London	Did Not Finish	
11/3/07	Olympic trials	8th	2:15:09
4/26/09	London	9th	2:09:21
11/1/09	New York City	1st	2:09:15
4/19/10	Boston	5th	2:09:26

MEB'S NATIONAL TITLES

<i>Date</i>	<i>Distance/Event</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Time</i>
7/14/00	10,000 (Track)	Sacramento	28:03.32
2/18/01	12K Cross Country	Vancouver, WA	34:54
3/10/01	15K (Gate River Run)	Jacksonville	43:14
2/10/02	12K Cross Country	Vancouver, WA	35:45
3/9/02	15K (Gate River Run)	Jacksonville	42:48
6/21/02	10,000 (Track)	Palo Alto, CA	27:41.68
7/20/02	7 Mile (Bix 7)	Davenport, IA	32:36
9/15/02	Downtown 5K	Providence, RI	13:45
3/8/03	15K (Gate River Run)	Jacksonville	43:31
4/5/03	NY Road Runners 8K	New York	22:28
9/1/03	20K	New Haven, CT	58:57
3/13/04	15K (Gate River Run)	Jacksonville	43:19
3/27/04	NY Road Runners 8K	New York	22:16
7/9/04	10,000 (Track)	Sacramento	27:36.49
3/11/06	15K (Gate River Run)	Jacksonville	43:43
3/10/07	15K (Gate River Run)	Jacksonville	43:40
1/18/09	Houston Half Marathon	Houston	1:01:25
2/7/09	12K Cross Country	Derwood, MD	36:06
7/25/09	7 Miles (Bix 7)	Davenport, IA	32:25
11/1/09	NYC Marathon	New York	2:09:15

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1: AN AMERICAN DREAM

1. Meb describes having to hear naysayers predict that he didn't have a chance at winning the NYC marathon in 2009. Share a time when you were in a similar situation. How did you respond to those who doubted you?
2. Meb writes, "I am often at my best when things look the worst." What does he mean? Is this true of you as well? If so, explain.
3. What does the American dream mean to you? What does it take to achieve it?
4. Meb Keflezighi prepares himself thoroughly for every race he enters—hard work that often pays off. But even when he doesn't win, Meb chooses to honor the winner. Are you personally satisfied when you do something well, even when you are not the winner or are not acknowledged in any way? Does that come easy to you or is it something that you struggle with?
5. On the start line of the 2009 ING New York City Marathon, Meb prayed that he would be successful and win. Have you ever prayed for success in some aspect of your life? Is it wrong to do so? Explain. If it doesn't happen, what do you think that tells you about God?

CHAPTER 2: OUT OF ERITREA

1. As a small child, Meb was impacted by the example of his parents' strong faith and reverence toward God. How did this affect Meb's outlook on life? Who helped you understand who God is? What did that person say or do that made God real to you?
2. Meb's parents encouraged Meb and his siblings to pray often. How important is prayer to you? Do you think prayer affects your relationship with God? How so?
3. Two aspects of God that Meb's parents explained to their children are His holiness and power. How would you describe God to someone? Which of His characteristics immediately come to mind? How have you seen those aspects of God in your life?
4. Today, after receiving an Olympic medal and making a name for himself as a top runner, Meb has not forgotten the struggle he and his family faced during his childhood in Eritrea. What aspects of your own past do you cling to today? How did they help shape the person you are?
5. Meb writes that his parents are his heroes and his role models. Their trust in God and devotion to their family inspires him. Who are your heroes? What did they teach you?
6. How might America seem like heaven to Meb, a 12-year-old boy who had lived through poverty and violence in Eritrea?

CHAPTER 3: COMING TO AMERICA

1. The Keflezighi family was a team. Meb remembers Fitsum's top ninth grade student award as "our most rewarding

moment.” Discuss the importance of being surrounded by a trusted team of supporters. Who is on your support team?

2. Knowing the advantages that it could provide their children, education was strongly emphasized by Meb’s parents. In what way did this serve as preparation for the discipline required to be a marathon runner?
3. Meb’s parents instilled a strong work ethic in Meb and his siblings. They said that if you work hard, the rest will follow. Did you have strong role models growing up? What words of wisdom did they give you that you continue to live by today? If you are a parent, what advice do you want to pass on to your children?
4. Because Meb’s father, Russom, knew how critical education was for his children, he laid down strict rules about studying. Do you think his approach was too restrictive? Why or why not? What was the hardest work you ever did to achieve a goal? What was the outcome?
5. Meb learned valuable lessons from growing up in a large family—like planning ahead and paying attention to details. Whether you grew up in a large family or not, family dynamics do influence you in many different ways. Can you think of specific things you picked up from your family that are assets to you? Detriments?
6. Dick Lord, Meb’s PE teacher, immediately recognized his student’s athletic talent, which was later fine-tuned by Coach Eduardo Ramos. Steve and Gail Van Camp befriended high schooler Meb, investing their time to help him reach academic goals. Did you have a teacher or mentor who saw and helped develop your potential? Have you ever let that person know what you are doing now and

how much you appreciate the time and encouragement he or she gave you? Have you yourself been a mentor or have you thought of being a mentor to someone else?

7. Balboa Park's Morley Field is a special place to Meb—he still considers it his “home field” where he nurtured his passion for running. Do you have a place with special memories for you? What happened there that changed your life? Have you ever revisited it? What does returning there mean to you?
8. Though Meb would have loved to run a sub-4 mile, he knew it wasn't his top priority. Explain a situation when you had to examine and prioritize your goals. What was the outcome?

CHAPTER 4: UCLA DAYS: STUDENT FIRST, ATHLETE SECOND

1. UCLA coach Bob Larsen considered Meb a strong long-distance runner prospect based on Meb's performances in high school. When Coach Larsen met Meb's family, what impressed him the most? Even though they were from two completely different cultures, what did the coach and the Keflezighis have in common? Have you ever met someone whom you immediately connected with, only to find out later how similar your stories were? Did that surprise you?
2. What impressed Meb the most about Coach Larsen? Why were they the perfect athlete-coach team? Have you ever found a coach, teacher, or boss who brought the best out in you?
3. Creating a balance between priorities is often a difficult task. As much as he wanted to succeed as a runner, Meb also knew that he had to establish himself academically. What do you believe is the key to achieving this balance?

4. When Meb was not given a UCLA travel bag right away, he was mad at Coach Larsen. Later, Meb realized that Coach was sticking to his principles. Have you ever been in a similar situation, either as the person who feels slighted or as the person enforcing the rules? Were you able to get through it and remain friends? If so, explain.
5. In his sophomore year of college, Meb began second-guessing his choice to attend UCLA. He envied friends in programs at other schools and seriously considered transferring. Have you ever had serious second thoughts about a decision you made? Did someone help you see the wisdom behind that decision?

CHAPTER 5: TURNING PRO AND LIVING SMALL

1. One person Meb admires is the late John Wooden, legendary UCLA basketball coach. Wooden never talked to his teams about winning; instead, he told his players to push themselves to their full potential. Why was that a crucial concept for Meb?
2. In 1998, Meb faced a major decision—what country would he compete for, his native country of Eritrea or the United States, his adopted country? In the end, his decision seemed to be a win-win situation for both countries. Do you think he made the right decision? Have you ever faced a major decision where there were several good choices? What process did you use to help make your final decision? In hindsight, do you regret the decision you made or can you see how it was God's perfect plan?
3. Meb's attitude for the mid-July 2000 Olympic trials was "to remember the hard preparation I had put in, be thankful

I was healthy, and leave the rest to the Lord.” How easy is it for you to prepare well and then leave things in God’s hands? If you need to work on that attitude, what would help you become stronger?

4. Meb’s mother often told him and his siblings, “You have to think ahead and prepare, but ultimately it’s God who will finish the job.” What “jobs” has God finished in your life? What is He still in the process of completing?
5. Meb writes, “I believe in setting high goals, but I also believe in being realistic. Some people say you can do whatever you want to do, but I don’t think that’s always right.” Do you agree or disagree?
6. At the 2002 ING New York City Marathon, Meb admits that he got his “PhD in the marathon.” What did he mean by that? What lessons had he learned for future races? Have you ever earned a “PhD” the hard way, through making and learning from mistakes?
7. After the marathon, Meb visited Eritrea with his mother for the first time since they left. There, his attitude changed about competing in marathons. What changed for him? What had been the catalyst for the change? Has any situation in your life caused your perspective about something to change dramatically? If so, explain.

CHAPTER 6: ATHENS . . . ANOTHER JOYOUS MOMENT

1. Going into the 2004 Olympic track & field trials for the 10,000, Meb admits that three things gave him an edge: having cinched a berth on the team as a marathoner, having a chip on his shoulder, and being in love with Yordanos. How did each of these help his performance?

2. As an ambassador for long distance running, Meb wants to inspire the next generation of runners. Is there something you have always dreamed of doing or are planning to do to inspire young people, either your own or others? How can you help them capture your vision?
3. During a training run on Crete before the Athens Olympics, Meb was attacked by a dog. Have you ever had something totally unexpected catch you off guard that it significantly affected your life? How did you regroup and get back on track?
4. The last two miles of the Olympic marathon, Meb started thinking of all the people who had helped him get to that moment. He writes, "A lot of people got me to the Olympic Games. I felt my victory was for all the people I encountered on my journey." Can you recall an achievement in your life that was only possible because of the host of people who helped you along the way? If so, explain.
5. Just past mile 23, Stefano Baldini from Italy made his move, but Meb let him go. Baldini ended up winning the gold medal. After the race, Meb reflected on his decision. "I decided at that point to protect the medal. I don't think I lost the race as much as Baldini won it." What does this tell you about Meb's decision-making process while competing? What lessons might that have for you?

CHAPTER 7: LOVE STORY

1. Both Coach Larsen and Steve Van Camp gave Meb advice regarding finding his future wife. Whether you are married or single, did you receive relationship advice? What was it? Did you follow the advice? What was the outcome?

2. Almost immediately after meeting her, Meb was convinced that Yordanos was the woman God wanted him to marry. Have you experienced situations—whether it was finding your spouse or another significant event in your life—where you could clearly see God’s hand at work? If so, explain.
3. It is an Eritrean custom for children to take on their father’s first name as their surname. In your family, do you have any traditions regarding names? How would you answer the question that Shakespeare posed: “What’s in a name?”
4. Meb writes, “Without Yordanos, I would be like a car with a flat tire.” What did he mean by that? Do you have someone in your life that you could describe in a similar way? What analogy would you make? (“Without _____, I would be like _____.”)

CHAPTER 8: LIFE ON THE RUN: THE ELITE GAME

1. At the beginning of his pro career, Meb had a conversation with running superstar Paul Tergat that set Meb on a course to achieve his own acclaim in the running world. What did Tergat say to him? Why did that make a difference in Meb’s life? Can you think of any conversations you have had in your life that have impacted you significantly? What changes did they implement?
2. Every elite athlete has a disciplined routine—Meb is no exception. As you read his day-by-day training schedule, did it make you think of areas in your life where you need more discipline? What are they?
3. Meb spends his regular scheduled time with God in an unusual circumstance. What is it? Why does it work so well

for him? Do you spend time with God on a regular basis? Is there a certain time and place that this happens? How does that strengthen your relationship with God?

4. Meb resonates with Jabez's prayer in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. Why does it mean so much to him? Do you have a verse that resonates with you? Why is it so special?
5. What has been the most effective deterrent for drug use for Meb? Why has it worked so well? What keeps you from doing what everyone else is doing? How difficult is it for you to remain strong?
6. In the earlier part of his career, Meb admits that he "spent too much time thinking about money"—to the point of stressing over things. But then he reexamined why he fell in love with running in the first place. What did he discover? How did that help him? Is there something in your life that you need to get back to basics on, remembering why you loved it in the first place? If so, explain.

CHAPTER 9: TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS: A TEST OF FAITH

1. At the 2007 London Marathon, Meb had to drop out of the race because of a bad Achilles. Yet in the midst of his disappointment, a series of things raised his spirits. What happened? Have you ever felt sorry for yourself and then been encouraged by some surprises? Were you satisfied with the way the circumstances eventually turned out?
2. Whenever he visits his home country of Eritrea, Meb is moved by the spirit and self-reliance of the people there. How would you describe the people of your home nation? What makes you the most proud?

3. Before the 2008 New York City Marathon, Meb ran into his friend and competitor Ryan Shay. It would be the last time they'd talk—Ryan suffered a cardiac arrest on the course and died. Have you discovered that life is too short? In what way? What do you need to do right now that you shouldn't put off any longer? Whom would you like to connect with?
4. Meb describes 2008 as personally “getting hit by life's punches.” Things continued to spiral out of control after Ryan Shay's death, like Meb's severe health issues and the financial hit when the family business failed. Yet again and again, Meb was able to say, “The Lord is in control.” Have you ever felt life spinning out of control for you? Were you able to see, in the midst of everything, how God was in control? If so, explain.

CHAPTER 10: KING OF NEW YORK

1. Going into the 2009 running season, Meb exuded confidence. He was certain it would be his comeback year. Have you had a comeback experience in your life? What did you do to bolster your confidence?
2. Before Meb entered the London Marathon, he made it a serious matter of prayer. In fact, Meb always tries to seek God's will before making any major decision. Are you seeking God's will in a major decision you are facing now? If so, explain.
3. What did London Marathon race director David Bedford say to Meb that fired the marathoner up? Have you ever been able to use someone's negative perspective to your advantage, turning it into a positive motivational tool?

4. Meb considers his 17-year association with Coach Larsen as an internship—he’s always learning something from his mentor. Who have you “interned” with in your life? What makes that relationship invaluable to you?
5. In September 2009, Meb dreamed that he won the New York City Marathon. Have you ever had an actual dream come true? What surprised you the most?
6. The 2009 New York City Marathon win was gratifying for Meb on many levels. What were they? Discuss an accomplishment in your own life that is especially meaningful.

CHAPTER 11: THE BELL LAP

1. Like 400-meter Olympic medalist Eric Liddell nearly a century before him, Meb knows running is what God “created me to do.” Have you discovered God’s gift to you? How are you using it? Are there ways to develop or utilize it even more?
2. Meb writes, “You have to conduct yourself like a champion before you can ever win a championship.” What does he mean by that statement? What characteristics of a champion do you need to work on in your own life?
3. Now that you’ve finished the book, what one lesson from Meb’s life would you most like to apply to your own?