

## Matt Pelletier Named USATF-New England Athlete of the Month for May 2012



*photo: Scott Mason*

BOSTON – **Matt Pelletier**, age 32 of West Greenwich, RI, has been named USA Track & Field – New England’s Athlete of the Month for May 2012. On May 27 at the 24<sup>th</sup> KeyBank Vermont City Marathon in Burlington, Pelletier won in 2:21:30 with an almost 5 minute margin of victory. This was his fourth win at Vermont City. In March of this year, Pelletier won the USATF-NE half marathon championship at New Bedford with a 1:06:31 performance.

Pelletier was previously selected as Athlete of the Month in October 2008 when he won the Bay State Marathon in Lowell, MA, by more than 5 minutes, finishing in 2:21:41. Ironically, an ankle injury he sustained during that race, led to more serious injury, two surgeries and a gap of more than three years before he could run another marathon. Matt says that he suffered a bad sprain that felt excruciating over the last miles of the race in 2008. Had he taken time off, the injury would have healed in a short time.

However, he knew he was in great shape and was taking aim at the 2009 Boston Marathon, so he didn’t want to miss a single day of training. The result was that the injury lingered and his ankle eventually locked in compensation, putting increased torque on his knee. That caused a meniscus tear and although he continued to try to train through, eventually he needed surgery. His progress after surgery was slow and painful, but not until almost 18 months afterwards did he learn, through an MRI, that the surgery had been a failure. He chose a different surgeon who said he could resolve the problem, by removing 40% of his meniscus but warned him that this could lead to arthritis years later.

Pelletier decided to accept the risks. He had the surgery and felt better almost immediately. Within days he was able to bike, then run. In the past, he had run 120-140 miles a week in peak training, but now his build-up to high mileage training took more than a year, as he gradually reached milestones of 40 miles a week, then 70 a week.

The good news is that his drive and patience have brought him Pelletier all the way back. In March, he ran the New Bedford Half Marathon without tapering for the race. Though he was challenged by Nate Jenkins through 8 miles, eventually he broke away and won decisively in 1:06:31, his second fastest half marathon. Unfortunately, he believes that he peaked early and was sick and somewhat burned out after the race. Because of this, he approached the Vermont City Marathon with more self doubt and less confidence than usual.

Before the race, a runner from Tanzania told him that two Kenyan runners in the race were planning to pace with him through the opening miles, then, if they felt good, drop down to 2:14 to 2:15 pace. This added to Matt’s worries. Though he led at the half marathon in a fast 1:07:35, he felt stressed by the tactics of Kenyan, Felix Marube, who repeatedly dropped back, then caught up with him. Although Matt’s pace slipped over the second half of the race, eventually he pulled away to a 4:57 margin of victory. Only afterwards did he learn that Marube’s “tactics” were caused by his need to take fluids frequently, and then make desperate attempts to stay in contact. In fact, Marube dropped out at 21 miles and required medical attention.

Pelletier says he likes to be able to look around at the start of a race and know, “I trained harder than anybody else here and if anyone is going to beat me, they are going to have to earn it.” His focus race this fall is the Hartford Marathon in October. “I enjoy putting in the work and seeing the results,” he says, “I enjoy getting the best out of myself.” Asked about longer range goals, Matt said he would like to run “whatever the qualifying standard is for the 2016 Olympic Trials.”