

Sifa's 62km: Janne Seletto

While Sifa was running the first 20km, she thought of all the people who said she was crazy. She thought they were right.

She struggled to keep up with the leading group and felt the pain of the 5,000m (heat and final) and 10,000m events in every step.

But then, after she passed the halfway mark, she started to feel fine.

Sifa Hassan stopped to stretch her legs, and then caught up to the front runners again. This was the Olympic final, the pinnacle of the sport, stacked with World and Olympic record holders, but she was able to catch them anyway.

Then over the last 5km the others gradually fell away, leaving only Sifa and World Champion Tigst Assefa. At the 42km point, Sifa passed Tigst on the inside of a turn and sprinted, after 42km, she sprinted to the finish line and an Olympic gold medal.

So Sifa did something that no one - male or female - had done for 70 years. She won medals in the same Olympics in the 5,000m, 10,000m and now the marathon - where as well as winning gold, she set a new Olympic record.

Her astonishing achievement was celebrated in appropriately glorious fashion. For the first time the women's marathon was held on the final day of the Paris Olympics and closed off the track and field events. And that night in the closing ceremony, watched by millions around the world, the medal ceremony took place. It was the only one that night - the final medal awards of Paris 2024.

In a way, it was the greatest honour of the games.

And surely, finally, it was Farewell to the bad old days when women first tried to compete in the 42km event.

In 1967, in almost unbelievable scenes, an event organiser tried to physically drag a competitor out of the Boston marathon - because she was a woman. She was protected by her boyfriend and shocked fellow competitors, and kept running. As a result Kathrine Switzer became the first woman to officially complete a marathon, clocking in at four hours and 20 minutes.

Things speed up a bit over 57 years, and Sifa's gold medal run took her just two hours and 23 minutes. But like Katherine, people told her 'No', and she did it anyway.

Nike says: Just Do It. I prefer: Look At Us Now!