

LONDON MARATHON

## Floored by Kipchoge (the dog), but is Emile Cairess the heir to Farah?

The 25-year-old from Yorkshire, making his London Marathon debut on Sunday, has been tipped to make a big impression

Tom Desborough

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Having proved himself as a cross-country runner, Cairess is now turning his attention to the marathon  
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With Sir Mo Farah confirming that Sunday's London Marathon will be his final race at the distance, eyes will begin to turn to the future.

Enter Emile Cairess. The 25-year-old is making his marathon debut this weekend, and hopes are high that he can make an instant impact.

Cairess has made a name for himself over the past year, most notably breaking the European ten-mile record in March. Finishing in 45min 57sec, Cairess beat the long-standing record of 46:02 set by Richard Nerurkar in 1993.

He is no stranger to racing on the big stage. He earned his first British vest in 2017, finishing eighth in the European Cross Country Championships, despite taking a tumble in the first kilometre. He won a bronze medal in the 10,000m at the European Under-23 Championships in 2019 and qualified for the 10,000m final at the senior 2022 European Championships.

Growing up in Yorkshire, Cairess first took to running at the age of five and would accompany his mum regularly on her three to four-mile runs.

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His training partner, Phil Sesemann, partially inspired Cairess's move up to the marathon distance, as the 30-year-old was the first Briton home on his debut in London two years ago. It gave Cairess the belief that he could do the same.

Cairess rarely accompanies Sesemann on long runs on a Sunday these days. Instead Kipchoge and Haile, two dogs named after legendary distance runners and owned by Sesemann, tag along – or at least they used to. One routine training run last year ended with Cairess on the floor after the dogs bundled him over. As a result of the incident, he now refuses to run with them.

Back to Sunday's race, and Cairess isn't short of quiet confidence. "Like any race, I want to perform my best and achieve a target, but I think the primary objective is to learn the race and have a good experience," he said.





Cairess, right, will line up alongside his compatriots Thompson, left, and Farah on Sunday  
WARREN LITTLE/GETTY IMAGES

"Hopefully, I can take that to future races where I can be more competitive with the top guys, so this is just a platform for that."

Despite his inexperience over the distance, there is a lot of buzz over Cairess's potential in the marathon. The former British champion, Chris Thompson, likes his attitude.

"It's refreshing to hear a young person be so positive," Thompson said. "Emile has this presence about him that's really impressed me, and I hope he keeps that because it's not often that you get an athlete that's precocious but humble and ambitious."

There have been suggestions that Sunday's race could be a target for protesters, after last weekend's Grand National was delayed by animal rights activists, while a Just Stop Oil protest delayed a match at the World Snooker Championship on Monday. Cairess hopes there is no disruption.

"It's an event that benefits a lot of people throughout the country. And I think for that to be interrupted would be a real shame," Cairess said.



Cairess says British marathon running has more strength in depth than ever  
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"It's a good cause. Everyone's concerned about the environment, and I think the majority of the people in the race will be concerned about the environment."

The depth in British marathon running is improving all the time. Along with Cairess, 20 other Britons made the entry list for the men's race — all of whom possess a personal best under 2hr 20min.

"Ten years ago you could qualify for the Olympics with a 2:13. You need to be five minutes faster now," Cairess added. "That's really given me and everyone else a kick up the backside."

As Farah exits stage left and with the Olympic Games only 15 months away, the London Marathon could be the perfect place for Cairess to announce himself as the next big thing.

**Other Brits to look out for**

**Dewi Griffiths**

Age: 31

Marathon best: 2:09:49 (2017)

The second-fastest Briton on paper, but the Welshman has recently struggled to replicate his best form, having been hit by injuries.

**Chris Thompson**

Age: 42

Marathon best: 2:10:52 (2021)

He may be the elder statesman of the field on Sunday, but Thompson still has the potential to produce a big performance. He qualified for his second Olympics in 2021, nine years after his first, and was the only Briton to finish the marathon in Tokyo, coming 39th.

**Ben Connor**

Age: 30

Marathon best: 2:11:20 (2020)

The Derby-based athlete enjoyed an impressive marathon debut in London in 2020, before finishing second behind Thompson at the Olympic trials in 2021. However, he struggled in the heat in Tokyo and failed to finish.

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**Luke Caldwell**

Age: 31

Marathon best: 2:11:33 (2022)

Impressed on his marathon debut in Houston last year, clocking his best time to date, and was rewarded with a place in the 2022 European Championship marathon, but failed to finish. This will be his first attempt at the London Marathon.

**Weynay Ghebresilasie**

Age: 29

Marathon best: 2:11:57 (2022)

The British champion competed for Eritrea in the steeplechase at the London 2012 Olympics, before seeking asylum and settling in the UK. Set a personal best in last year's London Marathon.

**Phil Sesemann**

Age: 30

Marathon best: 2:12:10 (2022)

The Leeds-based athlete was the first Briton home in the 2021 London Marathon, running 2:12:58 on his distance debut. Should the junior doctor perform to his capabilities, he could be in line to break the 2:10 mark.

**Ross Braden**

Age: 29

Marathon best: 2:14:32 (2022)

The Kent athlete was the third Briton home in last year's London Marathon, behind Ghebresilasie and Sesemann. Has spent most of this year so far training in Kenya.

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