With a record entry of over 14,600 runners the 34th edition was a celebration of both the capital city and the grit and determination of the men and women taking part. The fact that it was the first Irish double in 20 years was a great boost.

The men’s race was won at around 32km when Seán Hehir slowly closed up on Joe Sweeney and then swiftly overtook him. Hehir ran the last 10km in cruise control, vastly improving on his debut 13th place finish of last year. Not since John Treacy survived a minor hamstring cramp in the last mile to win the 1993 edition had Dublin produced an Irish men’s winner. Maria McCambridge became the first Irish women’s winner since Sonia O’Sullivan won 13 years ago. She was overtaken when making a toilet stop at 30km and had to strive to close the resulting 50-second gap, but the Dubliner hit the front again with 3km to run.

Both Hehir and McCambridge are coached by former three-time Dublin Marathon winner Dick Hooper who won the inaugural Dublin Marathon in 1980, with Carey May taking the inaugural women’s title. Irish doubles – even Dublin hometown doubles – were not uncommon in the early years. After the first edition sparked a running boom in Ireland entries swelled to over 8000 for the 1981 race, with almost 6500 finishing the event. Neil Cusack, who had finished second to Hooper in the first race, coasted to a popular victory in 2:13:58 – just a little outside the 2:13:39 time that he had posted for his famous Boston Marathon victory in 1974.

In 1982 Jerry Kiernan, a sub-four minute miler who had progressed to road running, held on bravely to win the Dublin title in 2:13:45. Kiernan went on to finish ninth in the Olympic Marathon of 1984 in 2:12:20 – an event in
Ironically, the Dublin Marathon received a boost in domestic interest this year when the absence of a title sponsor in the planning stages left the organisers unable to recruit an elite international field. This made for a more tactical if not cautious race, and the 28-year-old Hehir, who was second Irish finisher last year in 2:17:19, made his experience count. And even if he wasn’t quite the hometown victor, it felt as good as: “I’ve been living here in Dublin for over 10 years, since I was 17,” he said. “We do have a great marathon tradition. Two weeks ago, as part of the Dublin Marathon Mission, John Treacy spoke about what it’s like to win Dublin. “It’s a very special feeling, it really is.” Living in Dublin for the last decade, running with the Rathfarnham club, and teaching locally, Hehir was greeted at the finish by a sizeable band of friends and family members. McCambridge added “It’s a great feeling to win my hometown marathon; it’s something I’ve always wanted to do.” Both Hehir and McCambridge, apart from the acclaim, were rewarded with new Renault Fluence ZE electric cars valued at €30,000.

Despite the absence of the foreign elite this year, the international flavour of the event was undiminished. The free-to-enter Breakfast Run in Dublin the day before the marathon has achieved enviable success. It is an uplifting and joyous event in which runners from across the globe come together every year in Dublin’s Docklands area for a few preparatory kilometres followed by refreshments and live Irish music and dancing in Dublin’s International Convention Centre, along with some enthusiastic T-shirt swapping. The 2013 Airtricity-sponsored Dublin Marathon welcomed over 3000 international runners in a record entry of 14,500 and the Breakfast Run was bigger and better than ever.

The onlooking crowds in Dublin are always hugely appreciative of runners’ efforts and each year the number of spectators all around the course seems to increase.

The Dublin Marathon organising committee, led by Race Director Jim Aughey, is made up of runners or former runners and the same applies to the vast army of volunteers who help out on Marathon weekend. With the Irish energy giant Airtricity coming on board as title sponsor overseas elite athletes will return from 2014, but their temporary absence was an interesting, if short-lived chapter in the history of this great marathon.
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