

Interview with Mr. Dejen, winner of the Kagoshima Marathon

Q. Congratulations on winning the Kagoshima Marathon. How do you feel now that it has been two weeks since your victory?

A. Thank you very much. After winning the Kagoshima Marathon, I immediately changed my mind and have now started training for the upcoming events in Kumamoto and Nobeoka. I will compete in the 5000m at both next time.

Q. Did you have a good race at the Kagoshima Marathon? Please tell us about the race development.

A. I had only trained for the Ekiden (relay race around Kagoshima prefecture) and the half marathon, and had not trained for the full marathon for the Kagoshima Marathon, so I did not think I would win. We were all running together until around the 27km and 28km mark and I decided to get out there. But I didn't know how I would move. I knew that the last 5km and 4km of the marathon would be the decisive point, so I had to think about that or I would lose the race. I started to pull ahead at 32km, and from there I pulled away a bit, and when I looked behind me, I saw that nobody was following me, so that's when I knew I could win the race!

I didn't think anything at 36 km, 37 km, and 38 km. From 38 km, I looked at my time and saw that I was running at a meet-record pace, so I decided to do my best from there and tried to set a new record. When I reached the goal, I was happy, but also frustrated because I could not set a new record when I looked at my time.

Q. What kind of reactions did you get from people around you after winning the competition?

A. I am often told about the win by the locals. Especially when I go out to the field for work, people around me say, "Congratulations!" The people at my company were also very happy. My mother in my home country was also very excited to hear about my victory.

Q. Yasuo Miyazawa, Honorable Chairperson of SEISA Group was like your father in Japan. If he were here, I am sure he would praise you and be more pleased than anyone else. Please take this opportunity to report this victory to him.

A. I will always remember his words and what he said to me and I keep them in mind. After winning the race, I keep remembering his words. "Make history! Make it! Make it!" He told me. I wished he were still alive. I thought he would be happy for me. I dedicate this victory to him. I will always remember him. I am not yet ready to make history, but in the future, I would like to become an athlete who can be selected to represent my home country, Eritrea, and achieve good results.

Q. Tell us about your life in Kagoshima.

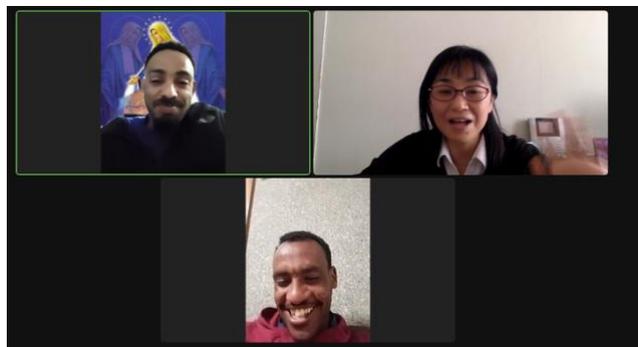
A. Kagoshima is a very good training environment with a lot of nature. It is very comfortable to run. The food is also very delicious. It takes only 30 seconds from my office to my house. I usually walk or ride a bicycle, but when I go to Kagoshima city, I use a bus. There are unattended vegetable and rice sales and supermarkets nearby, but I don't need to buy them because the people at the company share a lot of vegetables and rice they grow. Kagoshima has its dialect, and I learned to say "kibare (do your best)" and "nanshiyotto (what are you doing?)" and so on.

Q. Tell us about your daily schedule in Kagoshima.

A. On weekdays, I work at the office from 8:00 to 17:00, and from there I practice for 2 to 3 hours depending on the day. After practice, I go home, have dinner, and go to bed before 10:00 pm. I also work one to two Saturdays a month. The training consists of point and jog with 8 other members of my company's track club, and I receive instruction from an outside coach about twice a week. On Sundays, I am off work and do training. On holidays when I do not have to work, I sometimes go to my athletic friend in Kagoshima City and train with them. I never have a full day off, so I spend most of my time training. Last year, I participated in an exchange program to teach endurance running at a local elementary school. The children were very cute. I am living a fulfilling life every day here in Kagoshima.

Q. Since you came to Japan in your first year of high school, you have studied at SEISA Kokusai High School Shonan, graduated from SEISA University last September, and now you are leading a new life away from SEISA, please give a message to everyone who always support you at SEISA.

A. I have not forgotten how grateful I am for all that SEISA has done for me in the six and a half years since I came to Japan. I am especially grateful to Honorable Chairperson Miyazawa for giving me a great opportunity to come to Japan, and from there, I have been able to have a good life in Japan. Thank you for all your support. I will do my best even more from now on.



Interviewer : Foundation for Global Children (FGC)

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