

## Film, Town of Runners, set for showing at LSE

*LSE will show the film, Town of Runners on Tuesday 1 May. The feature-length documentary tracks a new generation of running hopefuls against the backdrop of development in the Ethiopian town of Bekoji, home to the likes of athletics stars, Tirunesh Dibaba and Kenenisa Bekele.*

There are very few events that can unite a global audience, apart from the quadrennial football World Cup and Olympic Games. No doubt, all eyes will be focussed on London when the latter event kicks off on 27 July this year. Athletics is, without doubt, the marquee Olympic sport and one that provides something for everyone whether it is the sprint or endurance races on the track, or the throws or jumps in the field.

I, for one, will be keeping a keen eye on the 5,000 and 10,000 metres races to see if Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele and Tirunesh Dibaba can reassert their dominance and retain their Olympic titles after what has been a troubled inter-Olympic period for them. Both these runners and their talented siblings hail from Bekoji, a rural town in central Ethiopia, as do Fatuma Roba, the first African woman to win an Olympic Marathon in 1996 and Derartu Tulu, another double Olympic champion.



Coach Sentayehu Eshetu at work

What is it about Bekoji that has led to so many remarkable athletes coming from the town? A new feature-length documentary, *Town of Runners*, explores this very question. The director, Jerry Rothwell, discovered that the success of the runners from the town is partly due to Sentayehu Eshetu, a former PE teacher in the local primary school. Ever since his protégé, Tulu became the first African women to become an Olympic champion in 1992, he has served as the conduit for countless elite runners who have set aight race tracks, road courses and cross-country routes around the world.

*Town of Runners* follows the progress of three of Sentayehu's hopefuls over a period of three years against the backdrop of development in the town. As Hawii, Alemi and Biruk chase their dreams of emulating their heroes, Tirunesh and Kenenisa, we see how the traditional way of life in Bekoji is transformed by incursions from the outside world. The Chinese build a road to connect Bekoji to the capital Addis Ababa, reliable electricity is followed by mobile phone masts and finally, the end of the film, the internet has arrived in Bekoji.

This film will be shown at LSE on **Tuesday 1 May** from **5.30 – 7.30 pm** in the **Sheikh Zayed Lecture Theatre** in the **New Academic Building**. The film will followed by a discussion with the director, Jerry Rothwell and the coach, Sentayehu Eshetu. No ticket is required for this event.



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