NEWS LESSON

Why Kipchoge Keeps Coming Back to Race



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. At what age do people start telling others to slow down?
2. Would you rather beat your own record or win a race?
3. What makes a sports comeback exciting?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**rivals**	☐	A	people who do a sport for fun, not as a job
2	**retire**	☐	B	the time it takes to feel strong again after effort
3	**recovery**	☐	C	a strong force or strain on something
4	**joints**	☐	D	natural feelings that tell you what to do
5	**amateurs**	☐	E	strong wishes to achieve something
6	**instincts**	☐	F	the parts of the body where bones meet, like the knee
7	**ambitions**	☐	G	to stop working or playing a sport for good
8	**pressure**	☐	H	people or teams you compete against

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

He won in 2:09:10, some way short of his personal best, pulling clear in the last ten kilometres. Other runners reported shortages of water.

1 By the time most runners reach their forties, their fastest races are usually behind them. Eliud Kipchoge has never been particularly interested in following the usual timetable. On 11 October 2026, the Kenyan athlete won the Melbourne Marathon in 2:09:10, breaking the course record at the age of 41. He pulled away from his closest rivals during the final ten kilometres and crossed the finish line at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

2 Kipchoge is already one of the most successful distance runners in history. He won Olympic marathon titles in Rio and Tokyo, set world records and, in a specially arranged event in Vienna in 2019, became the first person to complete the distance in under two hours. That run was not eligible for an official record because it used special conditions, including rotating pacemakers.

3 More recently, the story has become less straightforward. There have been difficult races and results that did not match his earlier dominance. Inevitably, questions followed about whether he should retire. Elite marathon running demands more than strong lungs and determination. Training places enormous pressure on muscles and joints, while recovery generally becomes harder with age. There comes a point in almost every sporting career when experience can no longer make up for lost speed.

4 Melbourne suggested that Kipchoge has not reached that point just yet. He ran a controlled race, kept himself among the leaders and made his decisive move late on. Australians Thomas Do Canto and Reece Edwards were unable to stay with him. His winning time was some way short of his personal best, but that is partly what made the victory interesting. He did not need to reproduce the fastest performance of his life to win convincingly.

5 Not everybody had such an enjoyable race. Other participants reported shortages of drinking water, crowded sections of the course and problems after the finish. Those complaints became a separate story about the organisation of a mass participation event. They also underlined something easy to forget when the cameras focus on a champion: the thousands of amateurs attempting the same distance have their own very different challenges.

6 For Kipchoge, the Melbourne result is unlikely to silence every question about retirement. Nor should one race be treated as proof that athletes can simply ignore ageing. What it does challenge is the idea that sporting achievement has a fixed expiry date. His pace has changed, but his competitive instincts remain intact. For anyone whose own ambitions have been written off as unrealistic, that may be the most compelling part of his story.

Sources: ABC News Australia. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Kipchoge has won the Olympic marathon more than once. T F NG
2. His Melbourne time was a personal best. T F NG
3. The organisers have apologised for the water shortages. T F NG
4. The 2019 Vienna run took place under the same conditions as an ordinary race. T F NG
5. The two Australian runners could not keep up with the winner. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

compelling	decisive	eligible	intact	obsolete	straightforward	unrealistic	vague

1. Runners must be over eighteen to be _____ to enter the race.
2. The online form was so _____ that it took me only two minutes to fill in.
3. The captain's _____ action in the last minute won the match for the team.
4. The documentary was so _____ that nobody in the room could look away.
5. The old bridge was damaged but still _____ after the storm; no part of it had fallen.
6. Winning every race in a season is an _____ target for most athletes.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the amateurs arrived, the champion _____ and gone home. (FINISH)
2. Many complaints _____ about the water supply after the race. (MAKE)
3. Runners _____ plenty of water before a long race. (SHOULD / DRINK)
4. Kipchoge _____ two Olympic marathon titles. (WIN)
5. If the organisers had ordered more water, fewer runners _____ . (COMPLAIN)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Many verbs and adjectives need one fixed preposition. Learn the whole pair, such as cope with, rely on, specialise in.

at for from in on to with

1. Experience cannot always compensate _____ a loss of speed.
2. Some critics object _____ the idea that older athletes should retire.
3. Athletes have to cope _____ the pressure of competing at a high level.
4. He specialises _____ long-distance races.
5. Marathon training relies _____ patience and routine.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Who should decide when an athlete has had enough?
2. Can a slower performance still be someone's greatest achievement?
3. Which ambition would you like people to stop putting an age limit on?

9 Role-play: am I too old to race?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the worried friend

Your friend is 45 and wants to run a marathon in six months. You think it's too hard on the body. Ask at least two questions, then say what you really think.

Student B · the keen runner

You're 45 and you want to run your first marathon. Explain why it matters to you and how you'll train safely. Try to get your friend's support.

Useful phrases

I'm worried that it's too much for you.
I've always wanted to do it.
How are you going to train?
I'll start slowly and build up.
Age is just a number, isn't it?
I'll support you, but please be careful.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the friend agree to support the plan, and was that a good decision?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 G · 3 B · 4 F · 5 A · 6 D · 7 E · 8 C

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 eligible · 2 straightforward · 3 decisive · 4 compelling · 5 intact · 6 unrealistic

6 Verb forms

1 had finished · 2 were made · 3 should drink · 4 has won · 5 would have complained

7 Language focus

1 for · 2 to · 3 with · 4 in · 5 on

This lesson is free. If it saved you time, you can support johnplusnews at **ko-fi.com/johnplusenglish**