



## Nike's Breaking2 initiative was a crazy physical achievement and a brilliant marketing campaign

Posted yesterday by [Anthony Ha \(@anthonyha\)](#)



Nike's [Breaking2 initiative](#) didn't quite reach its goal of breaking the two-hour marathon mark, but that hasn't stopped the company from crowing about the results.

Nike has been working with three runners, Eliud Kipchoge, Lelisa Desisa and Zersenay Tadese, to break the two-hour threshold. It wasn't just giving them shoes — a variation of the [Zoom Vaporfly Elite](#) — but also putting them through an array of tests and creating race conditions (including choosing the right course, date and time) for optimal speed.

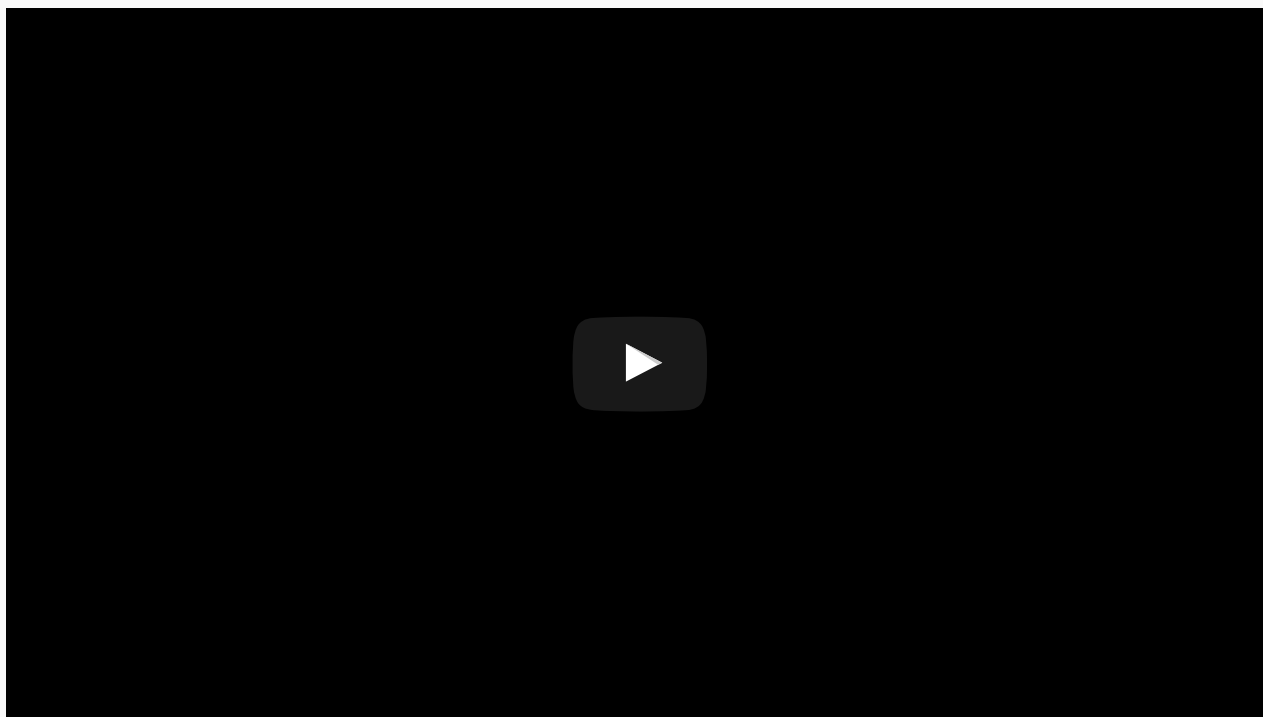
The result? Well, Kipchoge was the fastest of the three. With a time of 2 hours and 25 seconds, he not only he beat his personal best of 2:03:05, he also came awfully close to finishing under two hours. And that's two minutes faster than the world record, which is held by Dennis Kimetto at 2:02:57.

And while Kipchoge didn't quite reach that official two-hour goal, Nike will get plenty of mileage from the event. It posted live video of the race on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) — on Facebook, as I write this on Saturday evening, the livestream has been viewed 4.9 million times, and [a shorter clip highlighting Kipchoge's finish](#) has been viewed 4.2 million times. (You'll probably see plenty more ads featuring that clip.)



running Twitter ads promoting the #Breaking2 hashtag all day on a whim.

You might feel even more cynical about the initiative when you realize that Nike [paid the three runners to skip the London and Berlin marathons this year](#), and that Kipchoge's time won't become the official world record, because the Breaking2 marathon [used a non-compliant arrangement of runners](#) who ran ahead to set the pace and reduce drag.



That doesn't mean everything was done for the sake of marketing. After all, if you want a lot of eyeballs on your race, you probably don't schedule it for 11:45pm Eastern on a Friday night, and you don't close it off from the general public. First and foremost, Nike seems to have been laser-focused on getting the fastest times possible — and then promoting the heck out of the results.

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To me, at least, Breaking2 seems to have reached a kind of marketing nirvana, something that brands promise all the time without really delivering — a great story that also happens to be part of an advertising campaign.



Nike's success, they just need a team of sports researchers, months of training time and the participation of the world's top athletes.

Maybe my favorite part of this story is the fact that Michael Joyner of the Mayo Clinic had previously **predicted that the best possible time** for a man running a marathon is 1:57:58. Today, Kipchoge came within three minutes of that physiological limit, closer than anyone's ever come before. If that feat helps Nike sell more shoes, I'm totally okay with that.



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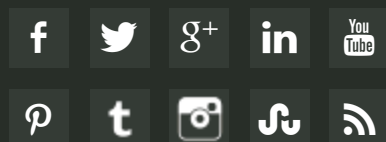
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