

## Louisiana PASS



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[An interactive game about Kenyan distance runners](#)

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### Distance Running in Kenya

Kenya is made up of over 70 tribal groups. In fact, when two people first meet, one of the first questions they may ask each other is, "What tribe are you from?" Each tribe has its own language or dialect (regional or cultural variants of a language), its own set of beliefs, and its own ways of life. While the main languages of Kenya are English and Swahili, other tribal languages are spoken as well. One tribal language, Sheng, is a blend of both English and Swahili, along with a few other languages.

Sports are a big part of life in Kenya, just as they are in many other African countries. Kenya is by far the leader in distance running, collecting 38 Olympic medals since 1964. One of Kenya's most famous distance runners, Kip Keino, won gold medals at both the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City and the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany. Keino is considered one of the most influential runners ever for a number of reasons. Not only did he put Kenya on the map athletically, but he paved the way for black athletes throughout the African continent to pursue distance running as a competitive sport. The success of Keino and fellow Kenyans also led other athletes to experiment with high-altitude training as a way of building endurance and stamina.

Until recently, Kenya's most successful distance runners had all been men. Recently, however, women have become more and more prominent on the national sporting scene. Evidence of this can be seen by looking at the latest Boston Marathon results. Three of the last four champions have been Kenyans, including two-time winner Catherine Ndereba who had only been running marathons for a year before winning both the Boston and Chicago Marathons in 2000 and 2001! When Ndereba finally did finish second in Boston, it was to another Kenyan, Margaret Okayo.

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