

Akaba, Yukiko (JPN)

DOB: 18 Oct 1979; Born in Tochigi Prefecture; Height: 158cm; Weight: 43Kg

Team: Hokuren (since 2002); Coach: Shuhei Akaba (husband); College: Josai University

Personal Bests:

5000m: 15:06.07 (2008); 10000m: 31:15.34 (2008);

Half marathon: 1:08:11 (2008); Marathon 2:24:55 (2010)

International Championships Highlights:

10000m: 20th in 2008 Olympics; 3rd in 2001 World University Games

Half Marathon: 26th in 2009 & 10th at 2008 World Half Marathon Championships;

2nd in 1999 World University Games

Marathon: 31st in 2009 World Championships; 5th in 2011 World Championships

Progressions (since 2006):

Year	5000m	10000m	Half Marathon	Marathon
2011				2:24:09
2010	15:41.96	32:26.25	1:11:09	2:24:55
2009	15:35.05	31:57.44	1:08:50	2:25:40
2008	15:06.07	31:15.34	1:08:11	
2007	15:22.73	31:23.27		
2006	15:51.01			

Marathon career

	Time	Venue	Place	Date
	2:29:35	World Championships – Daegu	5 th	4 Sept 2011
Personal Best	2:24:09	London	6 th	25 Apr 2011
	2:26:29	Osaka Women's Marathon	1 st	30 Jan 2011
	2:24:55	London Marathon	6 th	25 Apr 2010
	DNF	Osaka Ladies Marathon	DNF	31 Jan 2010
	2:37:43	World Championships Berlin	31 st	23 Aug 2009
	2:25:40	Osaka Ladies Marathon	2 nd	25 Jan 2009

Last seven Half Marathon

	Time	Venue	Place	Date
	1:12:57	Shibetsu Half marathon	3 rd	25 July 2010
	1:13:30	Sapporo Half Marathon	7 th	4 July 2010
	1:11:09	Matsue Ladies Half Marathon	2 nd	21 Mar 2010
	1:12:20	World Half marathon Champ – Birmingham	26 th	11 Oct 2009
	1:08:50	Sendai Half Marathon	1 st	10 May 2009
	1:11:39	World Half Marathon Champ – Rio de Janeiro	10 th	12 Oct 2008
Personal Best	1:08:11	JPN Corporate team Half marathon champ - Yamaguchi	1 st	16 Mar 2008

2011 Results

Date	Race	Distance	Place	Time
4 Sept	World Championships – Daegu	Marathon	5 th	2:29:35
25 Apr	London Marathon	Marathon	6 th	2:24:09
30 Jan	Osaka Women's Marathon	Marathon	1 st	2:26:29

2010 Results

Date	Race	Distance	Place	Time
19 Dec	JPN Corporate team Ekiden – Gifu	Stage 3 – 10Km	2 nd	31:55
3 Nov	East JPN Corporate team Ekiden – Saitama	Stage 2 – 12.2Km	2 nd	39:56
24 Oct	Nittai University Distance – Yokohama	5000m	1st	15:45.32
24 Sept	JPN Corporate team T&F Champ – Niigata	10000m	6 th	32:26.25
25 July	Shibetsu Half marathon	Half marathon	3 rd	1:12:57
4 July	Sapporo Half marathon	Half marathon	7 th	1:13:30
6 June	JPN National Championships – Marugame	5000m	3 rd	15:41.96
4 June	JPN National Championships - Marugame	10000m	3 rd	32:36.32
25 Apr	London Marathon	Marathon	6 th	2:24:55
21 Mar	Matsue Ladies Half Marathon	Half marathon	2 nd	1:11:09
31 Jan	Osaka Ladies Marathon	Marathon	DNF	DNF

2009 Results

Date	Race	Distance	Place	Time
13 Dec	JPN Corporate team Women's Ekiden – Gifu	Section 5 – 11.6Km	1 st	37:00
23 Nov	Chiba Ekiden	Section 4 - 5Km	1 st	15:34
11 Oct	World Half Marathon Championships -	Half marathon	26 th	1:12:20
23 Aug	World Championships – Berlin	Marathon	31 st	2:37:43
27 June	JPN National Championships – Hiroshima	5000m	6 th	15:35.05
25 June	JPN National Championships – Hiroshima	10000m	1 st	31:57.44
10 May	Sendai Half Marathon	Half marathon	1 st	1:08:50
3 May	Tokyo Championships	10000m	1 st	32:50.86
25 Jan	Osaka Ladies Marathon	Marathon	2 nd	2:25:40

2008 Results

Date	Race	Distance	Place	Time
14 Dec	JPN Corporate team women's ekiden champ – Gifu	Stage 5 – 11.6Km	1 st	36:17
3 Nov	East JPN Corporate team women's ekiden champ	Stage 3-11.95Km	2 nd	37:51
12 Oct	World Half Marathon Championships – Rio de Janeiro	Half marathon	10 th	1:11:39
19 Aug	Olympic Games – Beijing	5000m heat	12 th	15:38.30
15 Aug	Olympic Games – Beijing	10000m	20 th	32:00.37
13 July	Hokuren distance Challenge – Kitami	5000m	1 st	15:06.07
29 June	National Championships – Kawasaki	5000m	2 nd	15:13.96
27 June	National Championships – Kawasaki	10000m	2 nd	31:15.34
29 Apr	Oda Memorial – Hiroshima	5000m	3 rd	15:24.45
27 Apr	Hyogo Relays – Kobe	10000m	4 th	31:36.54
16 Mar	JPN Corporate team Half Marathon Champ -	Half marathon	1 st	1:08:11
24 Feb	Yokohama Women's Ekiden	2 nd stage-10Km	2 nd	31:43
13 Jan	Inter-Prefectural Women's Ekiden - Kyoto	9 th stage-10Km	2 nd	32:02

Only world class runner who is also a mother of a small child in Japan, Yukiko Akaba has the 5000m best of 15:06.07, 10000m best of 31:15.34 and the half marathon best of 1:08:11. She started to compete in athletics in junior high school, won the Prefectural high school Championships at 3000m, but never contend for a medal at the national level until she was in Josai University. Her breakthrough came in 1998, her first year in college, when she recorded the stage best in the national collegiate women's ekiden championships. A year later, she won the 5000m in the 1999 national collegiate championships and won silver medal at the half marathon in the 1999 World University Games. Two years later, in her second World University Games, Akaba won a bronze medal at 10000m.

After graduating from the university, Akaba joined Hokuren track team, based in northern island Hokkaido. Her career, unfortunately, was plagued with injury problems for the next few years, however, and she even contemplated leaving the sport from time to time. When she married Shuhei Asari (after marriage Shuhei took Yukiko's last name Akaba), her Josai University track teammate, in March of 2004, Akaba was going to retire from the sports. She was going to take over the family farm in Tochigi Prefecture. However, Shuichi Morita, coach at Hokuren track team, suggested to Akaba to continue to run at elite level, but based in Tochigi-prefecture with Shuhei as a coach. Shuhei was a middle distance runner in college, and although he was also a manager of men's track team in Josai University and was involved in setting up training schedule, Shuhei never functioned as a coach of any athlete. So coaching his wife was a learning experience for Shuhei. Initially they were arguing all the time. However, soon, Akaba's career took off, and now, she completely trusts Shuhei's judgments as a coach. In November, she recorded 15:11.17 for 5000m. After daughter Yuuna was born in August 2006, instead of concentrating in motherhood Akaba returned to training in the fall. Although Akaba was only 15th in the 2007 national championships, and thus failed to make the World Championships team, six month later in December, Akaba recorded 31:23.27 for the 10000m. Akaba was superb in 2008. In March, she won the All JPN Corporate team Half Marathon Championships with 1:08:11. She followed it up with a second place finish in both 5000m and 10000m in the national championships in June, and thus qualified for the Beijing Olympic team. At the nationals, Akaba recorded a personal best of 31:15.34 at 10000m. Later, she also recorded a personal best at 5000m, 15:06.27. In Beijing, however, Akaba was only 20th at 10000m and failed to make the final at 5000m. According to Shuhei, it was because they lacked proper experience for the big Game. After the Olympics, she was 10th with 1:11:39 in the 2008 World Half Marathon Championships.

Because of her performances at 10000m as well as half marathon, Akaba's marathon debut was awaited with much anticipation. At the time the need for a marathon star was especially pressing, because of disastrous results in the Beijing Olympics, where the Japanese women's medal winning streak that started in Barcelona Games came to an end. Akaba run the 2009 Osaka Ladies Marathon, in her attempt to make the marathon team for the World Championships in Berlin. Although Akaba could not keep up with Yoko Shibui when she made her move at 30Km in Osaka, Akaba still finished second in 2:25:40, which after all was enough to make the team for Berlin. Akaba continued to run well after her marathon debut in January of 2009. She won the Sendai Half Marathon in May with 1:08:50 and then won the national championships 10000m in June with 31:57.44.

Two days before the race in Berlin, Akaba even discussed where she might make her move to go after a medal. However, Akaba was dismal 31st in 2:37:43. One of the reasons of her disastrous

performance was dehydration. Furthermore, perhaps, untimely injury to her right foot in early August which forced her to change her training schedule for about a week may have caught up with her. Her second marathon was quite a learning experience, she says. Akaba also says that she learned how hard the marathon can be.

Although Akaba was disappointing 26th at 2009 World Half Marathon Championships in Birmingham, she was rounding into shape in subsequent month. In both Chiba Ekiden in November and All JPN Corporate team Women's Ekiden in December, Akaba recorded the stage best.

Akaba returned to Osaka, the venue of her marathon debut, for her third marathon. Her training was going well until the final over-distance work out two weeks before the race. Unfortunately, Akaba hurt her left knee during the final 30Km run and had to miss some workout in the final two weeks leading up to the race. She was determined to start the race, however, and did everything she could to be ready for the race. She ran aggressively from the start and pushed the pace with each 5Km lap time of around 16:40 until 26Km. However, in the steep downhill, her injury finally caught up with her. She drifted back from the lead pack. Although she kept on going for a while, Shuhei finally stopped her before 39Km. Four days after dropping out of Osaka, Akaba resumed her training, in Christchurch, New Zealand. For her last tune up race for upcoming London marathon, Akaba ran Matsue Ladies half marathon on March 21. Before the race Akaba said, "I hope to crack 70 minutes, but with such a strong wind, it might not be possible. With about a half of the course marred with strong headwind, Akaba finished second in somewhat disappointing time of 1:11:09. After two disappointing marathons, Akaba is looking for redemption in London.