

## **RAPTUROUS HALF MARATHON PREMIERE ON THE COLONNADE. WANJIRU TRIUMPHS AFTER LONG FINISH**

Yesterday saw the Karlovy Vary Colonnade undergo its rite of passage to become a fully-fledged RunCzech race host. It was a fantastic race premiere for the Mattoni Karlovy Vary Half Marathon boasting an excellent turn-out of 1 500 enthusiastic runners with a further 600 participants join the 3 km Mattoni Family Run held earlier on in the day. In what was to be a truly captivating finish, victory ultimately went to the hot favourite from Kenya, Daniel Wanjiru who managed to condense the race into a mere 1:03:02. When it came to the women, 16-year old Mame Feyisa from Ethiopia triumphed with a time of 1:12:47.

A satisfied Wanjiru who spends a great deal of time training in the Austrian Alps revealed: “The course involved both inclines as well as downhill stretches, but I’m experienced in running hills. I really enjoyed it,” He went on to comment on his almost two hundred meter sprint at the end along the banks of the River Teplá: “I started to believe it as I approached the finish line.”

It wasn’t until this point that he was able to break away from 20 year old Ethiopian newcomer to the half marathon course. Even after the race, the brave Fekru Feyisa wasn’t prepared to let go of his chance at victory: “If the last stretch had been shorter, I would have been able to beat him. So far my experience has been limited to steeplechase, cross-country and 10 km runs and I had no idea what to expect from such a long course.” The battle for third place was also left to the final sprint, with Moroccan runner, Abdelmajid El Hissouf finally securing himself the last spot on the podium.

Feyisa’s sister triumphed bringing further glory to the family collection. “I’m really pleased, I really liked it here, the city as well as the race,” the slightly-built young girl revealed modestly. Behind her in second place was fellow compatriot Fasika Metafriya followed by the mother to a four-year old back home in Ukraine, Olga Kotovska.

The first Czech to cross the finish was Ondřej Fejfar, occupying sixth place overall and emerging as the fastest European. “I was planning on starting off slower and sticking with a group. But in the end I ran alone. I had it worked out for a personal record (editor’s note: in the end he missed out on this by four seconds) but the last four kilometres were tough going. The only thing driving me forward was the finish..., in the end I was slightly slower, we had to contend with the hills and cobblestones.”

Regular local rivals Ivana Sekyrová hailing from the nearby town of Sokolov and Petra Kamínková led an interesting duel for the best Czech female position with Ivana ultimately

knocking Petra off the top podium spot. It's amazing to think how she fits it all in. On Friday, just one day before the race she managed to pick up the European Veteran Champion title at a 10 km run in the town of Úpice following this with a relay race together with Metelková a Dubnová where she contributed to the group secure itself a cross-country Gold over 3 x 2 km on Saturday morning. With barely any time to recuperate, she jumped in her car and headed straight to Karlovy Vary.

"I put in a fair performance, there have definitely been worse, and despite the bends and hills, the course wasn't bad. You could stick to a pace. With Petra (Kamínková), we agreed beforehand that we'd put on a fight for the people and it worked out pretty well. We maintained a pace of under 1:19, then at around the seventeenth kilometre I managed to speed up and stay like that right up until the finish," she explained. Hana Randáková from Slavia Prague emerged third with a time of 1:30:01.

The running celebration saw a range of personalities flock to the Spa Capital. In charge of starting the race alongside City Mayor of Karlovy Vary, Petr Bursík was three-time Olympic medallist, Lukáš Bauer who subsequently stayed on to watch the race with his whole family. He wasn't able to take part on this occasion due to having undergone foot surgery to remove a growth. "I managed to fit in a two and a half hour bike ride this morning, it was snowing over there in Boží Dar," he revealed grinning.

Local onlookers had the fortune of seeing a truly euphoric City Mayor of Karlovy Vary, Petr Kulhánek cross the finish line. Only two weeks after completing the marathon in Prague (3:33) he managed to improve his half marathon personal record finishing in 1:35. "Unbelievable and amazing, great," he commented. "The atmosphere and the people put me in the right frame of mind which was why I was able to run really well. I wasn't expecting it at all." Meanwhile former hockey goalie, Lukáš Mensator completed the race in 1:48:18

The RunCzech Running League heads to South Bohemia in two weeks time on 8<sup>th</sup> June for the Mattoni České Budějovice Half Marathon. Fans will have another chance to check out Karlovy Vary winner, Daniel Wanjiru whose sights will be set on beating Daniel Chebii's fantastic result of 59:49 from last year which emerged as the twelfth best time of the year.

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