



PRESS RELEASE

5 April 2014

Joyce Chepkirui, Peter Kirui dominate Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon victories

PRAGUE (5-Apr) – Kenyans Joyce Chepkirui and Peter Kirui had their own ideas about how to attack the Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon course.

Both plans worked to perfection, and were no match for the competition.

Bent on making a run into the history books, Chepkirui set off on a solo jaunt right from the starting gun, winding her way through the Czech capital faster than any woman ever has, finishing in 1 hour, six minutes, 19 seconds.

The 25-year-old's time bettered the event record of 1:06:48 set last year by Gladys Cheron and ranks as the fifth fastest time in history on record eligible courses. Chepkirui became the 18th runner in history to break 1:07 for the half marathon.

"I finished with my best time, but my tactic was to run under 66," Chepkirui said. "I am very happy to have run my PB and the event record."

In the men's race, Kirui waited until his body responded to make a move that no one would counter just passed the midway point and wound up winning in 59:22, improving by 17 seconds his personal best time from his win in the 2011 New York City Half Marathon.

"At the beginning, the race was difficult," Kirui said. "But once my body started to feel better I was able to push the pace and use my own tactics to win the race."

The women's race was over practically before it began.

At the pre-race press conference here on Thursday, Chepkirui was staunch in her belief that she could run 66 minutes and, provided everything broke perfectly, even challenge the world record of 1:05:12 set in Barcelona on Feb. 16 by her training partner Florence Kiplagat. Over the last two days, no other runner mentioned a goal time faster than 68 minutes.

With her husband, Erick Kibet, pacing her, Chepkirui blasted through the first five kilometers in 15:16, which put her under world record pace and into the lead by 24 seconds. Jan Kreisinger, the top Czech male finisher (18th in 1:06:12) in the race, said afterward that his goal of staying with Chepkirui and Kibet throughout almost blew up from the start.



"The first part of the race was quite quick as Joyce and her pacemaker were running very fast," Kreisinger said through an interpreter. "Sometimes, it was difficult just keeping up with them. It wasn't until the eighth kilometer that they slowed down to a more reasonable tempo for me."

By 10-K, Chepkirui led Kenya's Emily Chebet, the eventual runner-up in 1:08:28, and Ethiopia's Wude Ayalew, who placed third in 1:09:23, by 51 seconds, and her split of 30:56 was an unworldly 13 seconds faster than Kiplagat's during her world-record run.

"The first 5-K was pretty fast and by 10-K I was feeling the fatigue," Chebet, who was running just her third half marathon, said. "I have not run a lot of half marathons so I am not used to running that pace for long distance. I have run mostly track and cross-country."

Chepkirui's torrid pace cooled some over the next five kilometers, which she covered in 15:53, knocking her projected finish to just a shade over 1:06 but ballooning her lead to 1:27. But at 17-K, a large blister she developed on her right foot while running in the World's Best 10-K in San Juan on Feb. 23 opened up and the pain naturally slowed her even more. By the last kilometer of the course, which features an incline, a surface switch from tarmac to cobblestone, and a couple turns, she was basically spent.

"The last kilometer was very tough because there was some pain and some fatigue for me," Chepkirui said. "From the start until about 15-K, I was comfortable with the pace. It was the last kilometer that was really tough. But I tried."

In the men's race, Kirui said that he felt decent physically given constraints made to his training program due to his recently-completed schooling at the Kenyan Police Academy in Nairobi. Riding the bus to the start this morning, he said he was nowhere near ready to run 58 minutes but felt good enough for a PB.

But when the race began, Kirui's body was slow to get going. At one point in the opening five kilometers, Kirui rounded a corner and briefly surged ahead of the two pacemakers in an oddly-timed burst to try and jumpstart things. It wasn't until about halfway in, that he felt like he could race the clock.

"From five kilometers, my body felt just good," Kirui said. "The pace was good and I was comfortable. But reaching 10 kilometers, my body was excellent. Around eight kilometers is about when I started to think about running with my tactics."

As the lead pack approached the tunnel near the Vitavska metro station, approximately 13.5 kilometers into the race, Kirui made his decisive kick. He stepped on the gas heading downhill to break open up a 15-meter gap on the field. Kirui continued to push the pace and





hit the 15-kilometer split in 42:01 and with a 15-second lead over Nicholas Kipkemboi, Mosinet Geremew, Henry Kiplagat, and Daniel Wanjiru.

"I started pushing at 13-K and kept it going through 15-K," Kirui said. "Around 18 kilometers, I looked back and I could still see one of my friends so I knew I had to keep pushing through the end. By 20 kilometers, I realized I would be the winner and would run a PB."

Over the final six kilometers, Geremew surged up into second place in 59:54 and Wanjiru, who is no relation to but hails from the same village as the late Olympic record holder Sammy Wanjiru, finished third in 59:59. Geremew and Wanjiru became the 113th and 114th runners in history to break one hour in the half marathon.

"Up through 10-K, we were running a really good pace," Wanjiru said. "I was just trying to listen to my body and run with that feeling. Around 13-K, I recognized that I could run my personal-best today and tried to push, but Kirui was too far in front."

The race also provided a glimpse into the future of road racing in the Czech Republic.

On Thursday, Carlo Capalbo, president of the organizing committee, formally announced the RunCzech Racing initiative in which 15 developing athletes from Kenya and Ethiopia will be hosted by the organization in Prague. During select blocks of the year, these runners live in the heart of the city while training for their upcoming races in the Czech Republic and Europe. During this time they will also interact with local runners through jointly scheduled runs and other events.

"The mission of RunCzech Racing is to connect people through sport," Capalbo said. "We want to strengthen the relationship between the professional and recreational runners through workshops, social events, clinics and training at the Running Mall."

Three of the first four male members of the RunCzech Racing team had excellent showings in their Prague Half debuts. Nicholas Bor of Kenya finished eighth in 1:01:25, Million Feysa of Ethiopia was ninth in 1:01:26, and Benson Motto of Kenya was 17th in 1:05:30.

Another member of the project, 18-year-old Anežka Drahotová, shaved four minutes off her personal best in finishing 11th overall and first among Czech women in 1:14:25, a new junior national record. For point of comparison, the fastest half marathon ever recorded by a girl her age is 1:08:21, which Valentine Kipketer of Kenya clocked in Lille, France three years ago.

"This was an optimal race for me," Drahotová said. "The pacer was great in that he kept the tempo down for the first 10 kilometers so I didn't burn out and have my strength lacking at the finish."



What makes Drahotová's time, which moved her within three minutes of the Czech national record of 1:11:02 set in 1994 by Alena Peterková, is that she is not a full time runner. Her primary discipline is the racewalk, in which she is the reigning European junior champion and finished seventh at the 2013 World Championships. Additionally, she is an international-level cyclist.

Drahotová's main focus now is the IAAF World Race Walking Cup next month in Taicang, China, but she isn't ruling out the possibility of more running.

"The record of 1:11:02 is still far away, I have to admit, but I am very happy about the result today," Drahotová said. "But I think in the future, this time can be improved and beaten. The question about the direction of my future right now is really open."

RESULTS

Men

1. Peter Kirui, KEN, 59:22
2. Mosinet Geremew, ETH, 59:54
3. Daniel Wanjiru, KEN, 59:59
4. Nicholas Kipkemboi, KEN, 1:00:11
5. Henry Kiplagat, KEN, 1:00:24
6. Bernard Bett, KEN, 1:00:47
7. Evans Kiplagat, KEN, 1:00:55
8. Nicholas Bor, KEN, 1:01:25
9. Million Feysa, ETH, 1:01:26
10. Hunegnaw Mesfin, ETH, 1:01:50

WOMEN

1. Joyce Chepkirui, KEN, 1:06:19
2. Emily Chebet, KEN, 1:08:28
3. Wude Ayalew, ETH, 1:09:23
4. Esther Chemtai, KEN, 1:09:49
5. Afera Godfay, ETH, 1:09:52
6. Waganesh Mekasha, ETH, 1:10:23
7. Betelhem Moges, ETH, 1:10:37
8. Bouchra Ghezielle, FRA, 1:11:04
9. Firehiwot Dado, ETH, 1:11:15
10. Natalya Popkova, RUS, 1:13:58



RUN.CZECH

By Joe Battaglia for RunCzech

Please Note: You may use the attached photos online only in conjunction with this press release and with the following credit: www.photorun.net.

For more information please contact:

Prague International Marathon, spol. s r.o. / Tempo Team Prague s.r.o.

Zdenka Pecková
PR & Media
tel: +420 777 537 981

Tomáš Nohejl
RunCzech Media
tel: +420 773 407 114

Františka Křížka 461/11, 170 00 Prague 7
email: pr@runczech.com

Notes for editors: <http://www.runczech.com/en/for-the-media/notes-for-editors/index.shtml>



Františka Křížka 11, 170 00 Praha 7, Czech Republic
Tel: +420 224 919 209 Email: info@runczech.com
www.runczech.com