

Tekele and Jepkoech conquer the elements and the course to take the wins in Usti nad Labem

Adugna Takele of Ethiopia and Correti Jepkoech of Kenya took top honors at the Mattoni Usti nad Labem Half Marathon despite strong rain and slippery streets. Their winning times of 1:00:45 and 1:09:35 respectively were only seconds over the race records (1:00:38 and 1:09:07) despite the very trying conditions. Rain at the start made the streets difficult to negotiate the many turns on the course and several times runners in the lead pack almost fell. Even stronger rainfall later as the men approached the fifteen kilometer split assured the existing race records would stand for at least another year.

A lead group of eight men from Kenya, Ethiopia, Japan, and Uganda ran together for the first half of the race with Festus Talam of Kenya and Geoffrey Kusuro of Uganda sharing much of the effort up front. Nicholas Bor and Richard Mengich of Kenya along with Takele, Azmeraw Bekele, and Atsedu Tsegay of Ethiopia made up the rest of the lead group. A 14:09 split at 5 kilometers meant they were on a sub one hour pace. By 10 kilometers the pace had slipped to 28:30, or 14:21 for the second 5 km which meant they were now running just over a one hour pace but Masamichi Ysuda was unable to maintain contact. The small hills and strong rain before 15 km again took their toll, and the pace slipped further to 43:08 or 14:38 for the interval, and they were now down to five runners with the Ethiopian national record holder Atsedu Tsegay and RunCzech Racing's Nicholas Bor losing contact with the leaders. Soon The final 3 km became a war of attrition as first Bekele and then Kusuro, found themselves unable to match Takele's surges. After many trips to RunCzech events in recent years Takele finally put it all together and he raced to the victory in a very impressive time considering the conditions. Bekele finished 13 seconds back in second and Kusuro kept the Kenyans off the podium for the first time in Usti with his finish some 6 seconds further back.

The women's race was slightly less complicated with four of the Kenyan women who competed last week in Prague forming a lead pack along with the Ethiopian teenager Kumeshi Sichala. The group went through 5 km in 16:07 well inside race record pace. By 10 km the winner of the Birell Prague Grand Prix, Jepkoech had opened a 20 second lead over her compatriots, Helah Kiprop, Esther Ndiema, and Flomena Chepchirchir while Sichala dropped some 41 seconds further back. From there Jepkoech continued to open the gap back to her country women and, although she was noticeably struggling during the final 3 or 4 kilometers she managed to win by more than a minute over second place Helah Kiprop who finished in 1:10:48 just edging Flomena Chepchirchir in 1:10:51.

The Czech athletes were led by Milan Kocourek who finished 12th overall in 1:05:47 and Ivana Sekyrova, 9th in 1:19:18.

The Mattoni Usti and Labem Half Marathon is an IAAF Silver Label Road Race with over 5000 people participating in this year's event. It was the final race of the 2014 RunCzech Running League in the Czech



Republic. The season will wrap up with the RunCzech Guest Race the TCS New York City Marathon on November 2, 2014. Registration is now open for the 2015 RunCzech events.

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