



Press release
17 September

Rain Stops; Kipyego And Jepchirchir Reign

Kenyan Athletes Capture The Mattoni Usti nad Labem Half Marathon Victories

When an incessant, day-long rain – which threatened to spoil the 6th annual Mattoni Usti nad Labem Half Marathon – magically subsided just prior to the race start, several dozen of the world’s top professional road racers – along with another 3600 intrepid runners – suddenly knew the emerging weather – damp, windless conditions and a cooling temperature of 16 degrees Celsius [62 degrees Fahrenheit] could permit some special performances in the finale of the 2016 RunCzech Running League. Several such performances – including a clocking under the mythical one hour barrier – did occur.

With the crack of the starter’s pistol, the field of elite men – which featured four athletes with half marathon PB’s under an hour – got right after it. RunCzech Racing athlete Abraham Kipyatich – last weekend’s surprise winner of the Birell Prague Grand Prix 10K in a world-leading 27:40 – wasted no time. In the pacer’s role for this contest, the Kenyan runner went right to the front to lay down an ambitious race cadence targeted for a sub-60:00 finish. An early lead pack of nearly a dozen racers was soon whittled down to 4 athletes: Peter Kwemoi, favorite Barselius Kipyego, RunCzech Racing athlete Geoffrey Kipyego, and Adugna Takele – all following Kipyatich’s pace-setting which had the covey on sub-60 minute race record pace. At 9K, Barselius – antsy to go – threw down a move that only Kipyatich could cover as the duo broke away. Past 12K – in the solitude of the Spolchemie manufacturing facility – Barselius put the race away with a strong surge that the Grand Prix 10K champion could not answer. With his advantage growing with every stride, the Kenyan leader breezed by 15K in 42:01 and sailed on to score an unthreatened win. For the 23 year old victor, his winning time of 59:15 was a personal best, elevated the new champion from #6 to #4 on the world leader board, and destroyed Philemon Limo’s 2013 race record by a whopping 83 seconds. Kipyego’s winning clocking renders the Usti nad Labem course as the fastest RunCzech regional course and the second fastest half marathon track in the RunCzech Running League, trailing only the half marathon course in Prague. In the race for the other podium positions, a heady charge over the final kilometers allowed Takele [61:31] to pass a slowing Kipyatich for 2nd while the pace-setter [61:40] was able to hold on for 3rd. Peter Kwemoi finished 4th in 61:45.

With reigning IAAF world half marathon champion Peres Jepchirchir sporting seasonal half marathon marks over 3 minutes faster than any other woman in the field, the women’s race was expected to be a wire-to-wire solo performance by the 22 year old Kenyan. The world champion didn’t break away from the gun – but she probably could have. Initially running conservatively behind the pacesetter, Jepchirchir passed 5K in 15:53 while being closely shadowed by countrywoman Lucy Cheruiyot and Ethiopia’s Afera Godfay. At 9 kilometers, Jepchirchir made the decisive move. And



Prague International Marathon, spol. s r.o.
Františka Křížka 11, 170 00 Praha 7, Czech Republic
Tel: +420 224 919 209 Email: info@runczech.com



just like that the race was over – most surely the world champion would go on to win. But some excitement remained. Just before the 18K marker, the Kenyan leader’s shoe was wriggling loose. Concerned the shoe might fall off on its own, Jepchirchir stopped, yanked off the shoe, and spent precious seconds adjusting her laces before resuming her race against the clock. The defending champion was clinging on to race record pace, but would this brief interlude prevent her from eclipsing the record she set last year? It would. Although charging hard down toward the finish, the Kenyan athlete crossed the line in 67:24 – missing her course record by 7 seconds. Cheruiyot would finish 2nd in 68:17, Godfay 3rd in 68:32 – massive personal best for both athletes.

Turning in performances inspired by national pride, Jiri Homolac [65:41 – a new Czech race record by 6 seconds] and Ivana Sekyrova [77:40] were the first nationals to cross the downtown finish line in Mírové Square.

In the post-race press conference, the jubilant winners shared their thoughts. Questions to the women’s champion centered on her unfortunate shoe incident and her near-miss at a new race record. “I had to fix my shoe before it fell off,” explained the two-time champion who is building toward her October 30th marathon debut in the Frankfurt. The men’s champion was asked to explain why – in final kilometers when his lead was nearing two minutes – would he repeatedly glance back. “I was tired,” he retorted with a laugh.

Carlo Capalbo – founder and CEO of the RunCzech Running League – was pleased with today’s race – annually the largest sporting event held in Usti nad Labem. “Today was an exciting conclusion to yet another successful RunCzech racing series,” exclaimed Capalbo, who also serves as the newly-appointed chairman of the IAAF Road Running Commission. “We are already looking forward to great competition and yet another outstanding season when the 2017 edition of the RunCzech Running League resumes next April.” The RunCzech Running League – which attracted 82,000 runners for its 7-race series and saw 10 race records broken over this season – presents the only road race series in the world in which not only the series itself, but also every race within the series, has earned the IAAF Gold Label distinction – the federation’s highest ranking.

With another successful season of the RunCzech Running League now in the books, reflections of the superior performances that highlighted this year’s 7-race series are combined with anticipation of classic confrontations that could emerge in next year’s RunCzech competitions. To be sure, Viola Jepchumba’s stunning performance in the Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon and her near world-record 10K road victory last week in the Birell Prague Grand Prix 10K will not soon be forgotten. The same can be said for the impressive win rung up today by Peres Jepchirchir in the Mattoni Usti nad Labem Half Marathon. Ah, but next year. In the coming months, many will dream of a classic matchup of Jepchirchir versus Jepchumba – the reigning world champion versus this year’s half marathon world leader in a 2017 showdown. That’s the heavyweight title fight that everyone wants to see. *Dave Hunter*





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Should you require more information or photographs in print quality please contact:

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

Tadeáš Mahel

PR & Media

mob: +420 608 641 603, tel: 233 015 021

Františka Křížka 461/11, 170 00 Praha 7

email: mahel@pim.cz

Note: The attached photographs can be used only in connection to this press release and mentioning the source: RunCzech.

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



Prague International Marathon, spol. s r.o.
Františka Křížka 11, 170 00 Praha 7, Czech Republic
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