



PRESS RELEASE
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Defending Champions Wanjiru, Degefa Return to Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon

Reigning champions Daniel Wanjiru of Kenya and Worknesh Degefa of Ethiopia are back to defend their crowns, but each promises to face strong challenges from a field deep with fast and experienced contenders at the Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon on April 2. The men's race will feature six athletes who have broken the one-hour barrier and another nine who have run sub-1:01. On the women's side, the field includes six runners with a personal best under 1:10.

The Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon marks the start of the RunCzech Running League 2016, which features a total of seven high-quality races throughout the Czech Republic. Among those is the Volkswagen Prague Marathon on May 8.

For the first time, the RunCzech Running League races will all carry an IAAF Gold Label, the highest award given to long distance races by the sport's global governing body. In 2016, there are 35 cities that have received the IAAF Gold Road Race Label, and a total of 43 labels awarded by IAAF. With three Gold Labels, Prague is the most decorated city in road racing, and with seven Gold Labels, the Czech Republic has more than any country in the world.

"The Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon is the first race of RunCzech Running League 2016, and we are very proud that for the first time in history all seven RunCzech races are awarded the IAAF Gold Race Label," Carlo Capalbo, the President of the RunCzech Organizing Committee, said when introducing the elite start list for the upcoming race. "The Czech Republic is the number one country in the world according to the number of races with the highest award a race organizer can receive."

Wanjiru returns to Prague after a surprising victory in 2015, when he clocked 59:51 to defeat, among others, fellow Kenyans Peter Kirui, the 2014 Birell Grand Prix 10-K champion, and Geoffrey Ronoh, the 2014 Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon winner. Kirui is back to challenge Wanjiru, however all three must also contend with Abraham Cheroben, the fastest half marathoner in the world in 2014. Cheroben's PR of 58:48 is only one second off the race record of 58:47 set in 2012 by Ethiopia's Atsedu Tsegay.

Much like Wanjiru, Degefa was a revelation in overcoming a stacked field in winning last year's Prague Half. With headliner Edna Kiplagat unable to race due to a visa issue, and Lucy Kabuu a non-factor on a windy day, Degefa stormed to a one-minute victory in 67:14. After



her win, Degefa went on to finish in the top three in her final four half marathons of 2015. The 25-year-old appears to be in fine form, judging by her seventh-place finish in the Ras Al-Khaimah Half Marathon in 67:32 on Feb 12 and her victory in Roma-Ostia Half Marathon with PR 1:07:08 on March 13.

This year, Degefa will face a field of stiff international competition, including Kenyans Isabella Ochichi, who was third in the 2013 Prague Half, and Violah Jepchumba, who will be running her third career marathon having won her first two, in Remich in 2014 and in Udine in 2015. Another top challenger figures to be Sara Moreira of Portugal, who last year clocked a personal-best 69:18 in a second-place finish at the Lisbon Half and also finished runner-up in the Volkswagen Prague Marathon, in a PR 2:24:49, and fourth in the TCS New York City Marathon.

Other international women's challengers include Susan Partridge of Great Britain, who owns a 70:32 PR in 29 career half marathons; Alessandra Aguilar of Spain, who has a PR of 70:36 and ran 72:02 in Santa Pola in January; and Misato Horie of Japan, whose PR of 70:26 should have her in the mix.

The Czech faithful will have strong athletes to cheer for in both the men's and women's races. Jan Kreisinger is the class of the Czech men with his PR of 63:38, but Jiri Homolac (65:41) and Milan Kocourek (65:47) promise to be hot on his heels. In the women's race, look for Eva Vrabцова, the Czech Republic representative in cross-country skiing and a great runner. At the last year's Mattoni Ústí nad Labem Half Marathon she finished with the time 1:12:11 and took second place in Czech historical ranking. Her Czech competitor, Anezka Drahotova, unfortunately will not appear at the start line because of injury.

"We are extremely happy that both winners of the last year's Prague Half Marathon edition, Daniel Wanjiru and Worknesh Degefa, will come up to the start line of this race also this year" Capalbo said. "I'm also looking forward to the performances of Czech athletes, both men and women."

Main contenders with personal bests

Men:

Abraham Cheroben	KEN	0:58:48
Peter Kirui	KEN	0:59:22
Kenneth Ketter	KEN	0:59:48





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Daniel Chebii	KEN	0:59:49
Daniel Wanjiru	KEN	0:59:51
Abraham Kipyatich	KEN	1:00:03
Aduгна Takele	ETH	1:00:15
Josphat Kiptis	KEN	1:00:21
Nobert Kigen	KEN	1:00:32
Tebalu Zawude	ETH	1:00:33
Felix Kandie	KEN	1:00:42
Bernard Bett	KEN	1:00:43
Barselius Kipyego	KEN	1:00:46
Javier Guerra	ESP	1:02:22
Jan Kreisinger	CZE	1:03:38
Jiří Homoláč	CZE	1:05:41
Milan Kocourek	CZE	1:05:47
Vít Pavlišta	CZE	1:05:58

Women:

Worknesh Degefa	ETH	1:07:08
Isabella Ochichi	KEN	1:08:38
Joyciline Jepkosgei	KEN	1:09:09
Sara Moreira	POR	1:09:18
Violah Jepchumba	KEN	1:09:29
Afera Godfay	ETH	1:09:51
Misato Horie	JPN	1:10:26





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Susan Partridge	GBR	1:10:32
Risper Chebet	KEN	1:10:43
Gladys Yator	KEN	1:10:46
Alessandra Aguilar	SPA	1:10:56
Lucy Karimi	KEN	1:11:23
Katerina Kowalska	POL	1:11:27
Eva Vrabcová	CZE	1:12:11
Petra Kamínková	CZE	1:12:17
Ivana Sekyrová	CZE	1:14:06

Further information can be found online: www.runczech.com

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

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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>



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