



PRESS RELEASE
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The question posed to Kenya's Kenneth Keter of RunCzech Racing was straightforward

With race conditions expected to be uncomfortably hot and humid, did he think breaking the one hour barrier for the first time in the eight-year history of the race was possible?

"Yes," the 20-year-old with a 59:48 PR said directly.

His answer drew laughter from the assembled media at the pre-race press conference, he and his fellow elite athletes are each remaining cautiously optimistic for strong performances in Saturday night's Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon, where the temperature is anticipated to be 30C/86F at the start.

"We will have to see how the pace is going," Rose Chelimo of Bahrain said. "If conditions are good, I am sure the pace will be favorable. But it all depends on the conditions."

While temperatures are expected to be cooler than last year's blistering conditions that strung out the fields early and saw the men's and women's races dissolve into solo efforts by Stanley Biwott and Mary Keitany prior to 10K, it is unlikely that the weather will be conducive for an attack on the course record book.

Geoffrey Ronoh established the men's record of 60:17 in 2014 and Keitany lowered the women's mark to 66:38 the following year.

"In assembling the elite fields, we have a goal to beat the course records," elite athlete coordinator Jana Moberly said. "This, of course, if weather permitting and the weather is not looking too optimistic for us tomorrow.

"In the men's race, we will probably be aiming for 61 minutes because we might see temperatures around or slightly over 30 degrees. Under these circumstances, we cannot expect brilliant performances. We want to make sure the runners are safe and sound."

To ensure the health and well-being of the expected 6,200 runners (and other 3,500 at dm family run), several additional precautions have been put in place to combat the heat and humidity.

"We have added 15 new medical stations along the course to make sure all of our runners are safe," said race coordinator Tomas Mirovsky, who urged runners to begin hydrating early in the day. "We had also added seven sprinkling fountains where runners can go to cool off, and a new aid station at the 3K point. There will also be additional water stations with approximately 30,000 liters of water along the course."

The athletes have all mentally braced themselves for the challenging conditions and are focusing on putting forth their top efforts possible.

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MATTONI OLOMOUC HALF MARATHON

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Chelimo is quite familiar with the course in Olomouc, having finished second to Keitany here in 2015, a performance she deemed a success. While she is uncertain about the conditions, she is looking forward to another strong individual challenge, this time from Ethiopian Worknesh Degefa, winner of January's Standard Chartered Dubai Marathon in 2:22:36 and owner of a half marathon PB of 66:14 from the 2016 Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon.

"Mary Keitany was tough," Chelimo said. "I tried to go with her that day but I couldn't keep up so I ran my own pace. It was a success that I managed to second place. I think I can again compete successfully if the weather is good. I hope, maybe, to improve upon how I finished last time."

For Scotland's Callum Hawkins, this will be his third half marathon of the year and final test before representing Great Britain in the marathon at the World Championships in London. Hawkins ran his PB of 60 flat in Marugame, Japan in February and is coming off an impressive runner-up finish in the New York City Half in March when he ran 60:08.

"I am using this as a tune-up for the World Championships in London, so I have been training at home and just putting in the miles," Hawkins, who finished 9th in the marathon at the 2016 Olympics, said. "Luckily, where I train has been a little bit humid with a little bit of tree cover and a lot of grass, but nowhere near the temperature here. But, I managed it in Rio, so hopefully I can manage it here as well."

Ahead of the Olympics, Hawkins said a training stint in Mallorca, where the temps were over 30C, as well as competing in the European Championships helped prepare him for the conditions he faced in the marathon there. He added that his approach tomorrow will be the same as it was in Rio, to race and not worry about time at all.

Like Hawkins, RunCzech Racing athlete Eva Vrabcová-Nývltová experienced the heat and humidity in Rio, where she finished 26th in the women's marathon in 2:33:51. Competing under extreme conditions is nothing new for the 31-year-old, who has also represented the Czech Republic in three Winter Olympics as a cross-country skier.

"For me, it will be very important to start drinking from the morning to stay hydrated," Vrabcová-Nývltová, who is coming off an eighth-place finish in the NYRR Mini-10K said. "But, because I have experience competing in weather that is 30 degrees below zero, I am pretty happy to experience conditions of plus 30 degrees."

Czech compatriot Jiří Homoláč is hoping to build upon a strong early spring, which saw him return from a two-month altitude training stint in Kenya to set PRs for 10K (29:40), 15K (44:46) and 20K (60:04) en route to a PB of 63:23 in the Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon on April 1, and then run 2:18:43 in the Vienna City Marathon three weeks later. But on May 20, he labored to a 17th-place finish at the Mattoni Karlovy Vary Half in 68:34.

"In Karlovy Vary, I had a hay fever problem that I did not count on," Homoláč said. "But the allergy is gone and I have prepared very well for this race. We will see how it goes."

The Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon is the fifth of the seven IAAF Gold Label events in the RunCzech Running League, which makes the Czech Republic the most such decorated country in the world. **The race will be broadcast live at 18:50 CET online on www.runczech.com.**

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