



PRESS RELEASE
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British Olympian Callum Hawkins at the Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon

British Olympian Callum Hawkins will lead a group of seven men chasing the sub-60 barrier and while Ethiopia's Worknesh Degefa has her sights set on a course record during the eighth edition of the Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon on June 24.

The Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon is the fifth of seven races in the RunCzech Running League. All seven races have been awarded IAAF Gold Labels, giving the country the most top-level road races in the world. Since 2014, the Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon has hosted three world record holders in Kenyans Wilson Kipsang, Dennis Kimetto and Mary Keitany, as well as world champions Stephen Kiprotich of Uganda and Edna Kiplagat of Kenya.

The city of Olomouc, home to six UNESCO world heritage sites, is situated 288 kilometers (179 miles) southeast of the Czech capital of Prague. This largest running event in the picturesque winemaking region of Moravia will see 6200 runners embark from historic Horni Square at sunset on a charming race course that will take them through lush green parks and on quaint roads before a number of stunning examples of Baroque architecture. Other 3500 participants will join the non-competitive Family Run.

On race day, runners will be hoping for the same mild weather that produces the region's dry Moravian wines. Last year, however, temperatures soared to 32C (90F), significantly slowing the winning efforts of TCS New York City Marathon champions Stanley Biwott and Mary Keitany, so weather will be worth monitoring. Particularly for Hawkins, who will be looking to build on his ninth-place finish at the Rio Olympics and what has been a remarkable start to 2017 as he prepares to represent Great Britain at the IAAF World Championships marathon in London this summer.

In January, the 24-year-old Scot became the first British runner to defeat Sir Mo Farah in any race at the Great Edinburgh International Cross-Country meet. A month later, he won the Kagawa Marugame International half marathon in Japan in a PR 60-flat, breaking the Scottish record of 62:28 set by Allister Hutton in the 1987 Great North Run.

Hawkins' stiffest competition figures to come from two Kenyans with sub-60 PRs, Simon Cheprot and Kenneth Keter.

Cheprot, 23, opened his season with a third-place finish in 62:10 at the Barcelona Granollers Half Marathon in February, and last month clocked a personal-best of 42:51 in a third-place effort at the Le Puy-En-Velay 15Km race. He clocked his PR of 59:20 at the 2013 Roma-Ostia Half Marathon.



MATTONI OLOMOUC HALF MARATHON

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Keter, 20, is an emerging talent out of Kenya. The RunCzech Racing athlete clocked his PR of 59:48 as a pacemaker in last year's Venlo Half Marathon. Earlier this year, he paced the Ras Al-Khaimah through 10K in 27:52 before finishing the race eighth in 61:05.

In addition to Hawkins, Cheprot and Keter, there are three other Kenyans with PRs in realistic reach of Geoffrey Ronoh's course record of 60:17. Felix Kandie ran 60:04 in a sixth-place finish at the Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon last year, and is coming off a PR of 2:06:03 in a runner-up finish at the Seoul Marathon in March. Josphat Kiptis won Olomouc in 2015 in 60:21 and is coming off a PR 43:41 in the Le Puy-En-Velay 15Km. Festus Talam, who set out to pace the 2016 Eindhoven Marathon and wound up winning in 2:06:26, ran 60:56 – the lone sub-61 of his career – in a second-place finish in Verbania in 2015.

The Czech contingent will be led by 27-year-old Jiří Homoláč, who showed remarkable fitness at the Sportisimo Prague Half Marathon in April, when he clocked a personal-best 63:23. His en route times of 29:40 for 10Km, 44:46 for 15Km and 60:04 for 20Km were also all PBs.

Degefa is hoping to add to what has already been an incredible year for women on the roads. The 26-year-old, who ran her personal-best of 66:14 in a runner-up finish in Prague last spring, has had a strong 2017. After opening with a victory in Dubai in 2:22:36, she finished third at the Istanbul Half Marathon in April in 68:55 and second at the TCS Bengaluru 10Km in May in 32:00.

There will be four women with personal-bests under 69 minutes looking to take Degefa down. Leading that charge will be Ethiopian Netsanet Gudeta, who won the Valencia Half Marathon in 2015 in 67:31. The 26-year-old appears to be fit judging by her victory in the Ottawa 10Km on May 27 in a personal-best 31:35.

Then there is Rose Chelimo, a 27-year-old who switched national allegiance from Kenya to Bahrain in 2015, who clocked a RB of 2:21:51 in finishing second in the BAA Boston Marathon in April and is coming off another PR on the track of 31:37:81 from a 10,000m race in Baku on May 20.

Lucy Cheruiyot had a rough start to the year – she ran sick during the Prague Half in April and suffered a hamstring spasm in the Birmingham 10K – but showed signs of coming around in May, when she won the Eldoret Half Marathon in May.

It has been seven years since Christelle Daunay of France clocked her PR of 68:34, but she had a Top 10 finish in Lisbon (72:03) in March, and in May showed signs of solid speed with a pair of sub-4:29 1500m victories on the track and a runner-up finish in the Manchester 10Km in 33:08. She is no stranger to success in the Czech Republic having won Mattoni Karlovy Vary Half Marathon in 2014.

The top Czech in the women's field will be Eva Vrabcová-Nývltová, who in 2016 became the eighth athlete ever to compete in cross-country skiing at the Winter Olympics and also compete in an athletics event at the Summer Olympics. The three-time winter Olympian finished 26th in the marathon in Rio, running 2:33:51.

Vrabcová-Nývltová, who ran her PR of 71:06 in Prague last year, has had a solid spring, winning the Napoli City Half Marathon in 71:54 and finishing 11th in Prague in 71:45. The 31-year-old will be coming off an eighth-place finish in the NYRR New York Mini 10-K in 33:18.

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"The start list for the 2017 edition of the Mattoni Olomouc Half Marathon with many European and other international athletes, along with great African and top Czech runners, reflects our desire to increase the competitive mix in road racing," said Carlo Capalbo, President of the RunCzech Organizing Committee and Chair of the IAAF Road Running Commission.

"With the RunCzech Racing initiative we are moving to provide opportunities which will help broaden the sport at the professional level as shown by RunCzech Racing athlete Eva Vrabcová-Nývltová, who finished eighth overall out of over 8,400 women in the NYRR Mini 10K last week. While all of our IAAF Gold Label races and other events are welcoming recreational runners the chance to realize that 'ALL RUNNERS ARE BEAUTIFUL.'"

Men's Elite Field		
Name	Country	Half Marathon PR
Simon Cheprot	KEN	59:20
Kenneth Keter	KEN	59:48
Callum Hawkins	GBR	60:00
Felix Kandie	KEN	60:04
Josphat Kiptis	KEN	60:21
Festus Talam	KEN	60:56
Amos Kurgat	KEN	61:56
Philimon Maritim	KEN	61:56
Javier Guerra	ESP	62:22
Paulo Roberto Paula	BRA	62:30
Jiří Homoláč	CZE	63:23
Yared Shegumo	POL	63:45
Oleksandr Sitkovskyy	UKR	63:49
Roman Romanenko	UKR	65:50
Pavel Dymák	CZE	66:25
Ondřej Fejfar	CZE	67:13

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Robert Míč	CZE	68:09
David Vaš	CZE	68:13
Martin Kučera	CZE	68:38
Arturo Ginosa	ITA	69:58
Vedic Cheruiyot	KEN	PACE
Boniface Kongin	KEN	PACE
Vasyl Matviychuk	UKR	PACE
Women's Elite Field		
Name	Country	Half Marathon PR
Worknesh Degefa	ETH	66:14
Netsanet Gudeta	ETH	67:31
Rose Chelimo	BRN	68:08
Lucy Cheruiyot	KEN	68:17
Christelle Daunay	FRA	68:34
Polline Njeri	KEN	69:06
Eva Vrabcová-Nývltová	CZE	71:06
Winny Jepkorir	KEN	71:27
Petra Kamínková	KEN	72:12
Sonia Samuels	GBR	72:36
Olga Skrypak	UKR	73:09
Tereza Lajdová	CZE	77:56
Marcela Joglová	CZE	81:51

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