



PRESS RELEASE

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Gilbert Kirwa and Andrea Mayr take the ,Vienna Debut Marathon'

Kenya's Gilbert Kirwa and Austria's Andrea Mayr were the winners in the unique debutants only race at the Vienna City Marathon. 23 year-old Kirwa took the race with a fine 2:08:21 in warm weather conditions with temperatures climbing to around 20° Celsius in the sun. Ethiopia's Dereje Debele Tulu was second in 2:09:08 and Joseph Maregu (Kenya) took third with 2:09:25. With Degefa Abebe Negewo (Ethiopia) running 2:09:52 it was the first time in the history of the Vienna City Marathon that the first four runners clocked sub 2:10 times – and this despite the fact that there were only debutants in the elite fields. Additionally there were two more runners, who came in sub 2:11.

Andrea Mayr wrote Austrian athletics history by becoming only the second national women's winner of the race and additionally breaking the Austrian marathon record in her debut race. The 29 year-old clocked 2:30:43 to beat Ethiopians Derbe-Godana Gebissa (2:31:31) and Hayato-Zeineba Hasso (2:34:01). Andrea Mayr improved the national record from Eva-Maria Gradwohl (2:30:51 in 2008) by eight seconds.

Including other running events 29,054 athletes from 100 nations had entered the 26th Vienna City Marathon, a record number of 350,000 spectators lined the streets of the capital. The Vienna City Marathon is an IAAF Silver Label Road Race.

"I am very happy with this debut victory and with my time. The spectators helped me a lot. It was a great race in a great city," said Gilbert Kirwa. The 23 year-old had been in the big leading group right from the start. They passed 10 k in 30:17 and then reached the half marathon in 64:17 minutes, which was slightly slower than planned. But the pace was picked up before the 25 k mark and soon after that more and more runners lost contact to the leaders. Among them was the most prominent athlete in the field: Reuben Kosgei, Kenya's Olympic Steeplechase Champion from Sydney 2000, later dropped out of his debut marathon. In contrast to the other favourites he had not run a single road race before the Vienna City Marathon.

At 30 k (1:30:40) the two leading pacemakers Allan Ndiwa and Wilson Kiprotich (both Kenya) dropped out and a duel between Gilbert Kirwa and Degefa Abebe Negewo (Ethiopia) developed with Joseph Maregu (Kenya) just a couple of strides behind. But when Kirwa further increased the pace he started opening a decisive gap soon after the 36 k point.

At the finish next to the Vienna Hofburg Gilbert Kirwa was timed with 2:08:21, which was the third fastest in the history of the event. Only last year's winner Abel Kirui (Kenya/2:07:38) and Morocco's Lahoucine Mrikik (2:08:20 in 2006) have run faster in Vienna. Kirwa was well ahead of Ethiopia's Dereje Debele Tulu (2:09:08), Joseph Maregu (2:09:25) and Degefa Abebe Negewo (2:09:52)

"After this debut I want to run 2:04 in the future," said Gilbert Kirwa, who has only been out of Kenya for the second time in his career. The 23 year-old is a training partner of world-class marathon runner Jason Mbote (Kenya/2:07:37). Both live in Embu, which is roughly a two hour drive from Nairobi. "They are training together for one and a half years now," explained their manager Gerard van de Veen. As the Dutch explained it was Mbote who had suggested bringing Kirwa as his pacemaker to the Seoul Marathon a year ago. "He then did well and paced the leaders for 33 kilometres," said van de Veen. In that race Mbote finished second with 2:07:37. "Originally Gilbert did not plan to run his marathon debut already this spring. At the beginning of the year he had asked me if I could find him some shorter road races. But then he changed his mind and said he wanted to go for a marathon. So with Vienna staging a debutants' race that fitted well," recalls van de Veen.

Former steeplechaser Günther Weidlinger ran an encouraging debut in Vienna. But in the end he was unlucky, because he missed the Austrian record by just 17 seconds. Weidlinger finished ninth with 2:12:39, which is the fastest debut time of an Austrian runner ever. "I was well in time for the record for a long time, but the final two kilometres really killed me. I could not run any more. To finish ninth is okay for me, though I am disappointed to have missed the record," said Günther Weidlinger. "But I am looking forward to my next marathon races."

Meanwhile mountain running specialist Andrea Mayr has achieved a perfect transformation to the marathon in Vienna. Clocking 2:30:43 the 29 year-old was well ahead of the Ethiopians Derbe-Godana Gebissa (2:31:31), Hayato-Zeineba Hasso (2:34:01) and Tiruwork Mekonnen (2:34:07). With her winning time she was eight seconds faster than the previous Austrian record holder Eva-Maria Gradwohl, who had run 2:30:51 in Linz in 2008. Andrea Mayr is the first Austrian women's winner of the Vienna City Marathon since 1987 (Carina Lilge-Leutner).

Andrea Mayr surprisingly took control of the women's race early on. Tiruwork Mekonnen had originally asked for a 2:25 pace, but soon after the start she decided to go for a more careful approach and ran a couple of metres behind the Austrian. The two time winner of the World Mountain Running Trophy, who holds the national records in the Steeplechase and the half marathon, soon started building a big lead. When Andrea Mayr reached the half way point in 1:14:47 she was already more than a minute ahead of the Ethiopian trio with Gebissa, Hasso and Mekonnen.

At 30 k the crowd favourite Mayr, who lives in Vienna and got tremendous support, had increased her lead to more than 90 seconds. Having started the race despite a problem with her left foot – she had suffered a stress fracture a good five weeks ago and additionally developed an Achilles tendon problem – the Austrian had a difficult section between 36 and 40 km. "When I looked at my watch with three kilometres to go I thought I would not be able to break the national record. I felt a bit sad, but said to myself you are still in the lead

and you can win the race. When I checked my watch again at 42 k I saw that I had 50 seconds left – so I gave everything I had to get the record,” Andrea Mayr said after finishing. “It was an unbelievable race for me. I am so thankful that I could achieve this despite the foot problem,” said Andrea Mayr.

Results, Men:

1. Gilbert Kirwa	KEN	2:08:21
2. Dereje Debele Tulu	ETH	2:09:08
3. Joseph Maregu	KEN	2:08:25
4. Degefa Abebe Negewo	ETH	2:09:52
5. Mohamed El-Hachimi	MAR	2:10:24
6. Jafred Chirchir	KEN	2:10:42
7. Getu Fekete	ETH	2:11:42
8. Pedro Nimo Del-Oro	ESP	2:12:10
9. Günther Weidlinger	AUT	2:12:39
10. Maswai Kiptanui	KEN	2:13:25

Women:

1. Andrea Mayr	AUT	2:30:43
2. Derbe-Godana Gebissa	ETH	2:31:31
3. Hayato-Zeineba Hasso	ETH	2:34:01
4. Tiruwork Mekonnen	ETH	2:34:07
5. Olga Kalenarova-Ochal	UKR	2:35:25
6. Esther Muthuku	KEN	2:39:22

Text: Jörg Wenig. More information about the Vienna City Marathon: www.vienna-marathon.com

PRESS CONTACT: Mr. Andreas Maier, phone +43 650 350 14 88, e-mail: andreas.maier@vienna-marathon.com