



MEDIA-RELEASE VIENNA CITY MARATHON

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Haile beats Paula in OMV Champions Race

Henry Sugut runs Austrian allcomer record with 2:06:58 while Fate Tola defends her title.

Henry Sugut won the 29th edition of the Vienna City Marathon, clocking an Austrian allcomer record of 2:06:58. The 26 year-old Kenyan produced the best result of the day. In the women's race Fate Tola (Ethiopia) defended her title in a time of 2:26:39. In the much anticipated OMV Champions Race Haile Gebrselassie clearly beat Paula Radcliffe. In fine but partly windy weather conditions the organisers of the Vienna City Marathon registered a record total of 36,157 runners. The Vienna City Marathon is an IAAF Gold Label Race.

The British world marathon record holder Paula Radcliffe got a 7:52 minutes head start in the half marathon chase race against Ethiopia's superstar Haile Gebrselassie. The advantage was based on the personal best times of the two athletes (those times counted that were run on courses eligible for records). Radcliffe and Gebrselassie had two runners each going into the race with them.

When Haile Gebrselassie started the chase he quickly closed the gap significantly. At the 9 k point the advantage of Paula Radcliffe had been cut to 3:42 minutes. And in the following five kilometres Haile closed in even more. Already after 15.3 k he then overtook Paula Radcliffe, who had suffered of a bronchitis in the past two weeks and was clearly not at her best. "I shouted at her to hurry up," said Haile Gebrselassie, who waved his hand when passing, trying to drive her on. But then the Ethiopian was soon out of sight and crossed the line in 60:52 minutes. Paula Radcliffe visibly struggled and could only manage 72:03, which means the actual time difference was 11:11 minutes.

"Clearly Paula has been ill, otherwise she would not have run so slow. I had expected that I could perhaps catch her around the 20 k mark. She had a bad day today, but this can happen. For me it was a nice race in tremendous atmosphere. I enjoyed it although I had hoped to run a bit faster," said Haile Gebrselassie.

"It was not good at all for me. I had hoped for a time of around 69 minutes, but already after six, seven kilometres my legs felt very heavy," said Paula Radcliffe, who apologised to the organisers for not being able to do better. "There is nothing to say sorry for – Paula still put on a great show," said Race Director Wolfgang Konrad. "I don't know at this point what the reason is, it might be the bronchitis. This was supposed to be a test for the Olympic marathon, but in the end it was no test," added Paula Radcliffe.

While the OMV Champions Race drew a lot of attention the performance of the day clearly came in the men's marathon. Here Henry Sugut clocked the first sub 2:07 time in the history of the race and a personal best. He significantly improved the course record set by the current World Champion Abel Kirui (Kenya) in 2008 with 2:07:38.

Henry Sugut, who had won the Vienna City Marathon already in 2010, finished in 2:06:58. The 26 year-old is the first man to repeat a victory in Vienna since 1992. Regarding the depth of the elite results Vienna saw the best marathon in the history of the event. Behind Sugut two Kenyans ran inside 2:08 and another two finished inside 2:09. Gilbert Yegon (2:07:38), defending champion John Kiprotich (2:07:44), Gilbert Kirwa (2:08:09) and Willy Kibor (2:08:32) took the places behind Henry Sugut. Poland's Artur Kozłowski was the best non-Kenyan runner. He finished eighth with 2:10:58.

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After a more conservative first half with a split time of 64:18 minutes the pace was picked up afterwards. At the 30 k mark (1:30:19) Sugut, Kiprotich, Kirwa, Yegon and Kibor formed the leading group. The decisive moment came around the 38 k mark, when Sugut, who had entered the race with a personal best of 2:08:21, left behind Yegon and Kiprotich. "It was my aim to run sub 2:08, now I even achieved a sub 2:07. So I am very happy. What really helped me running so fast was the strong opposition," said Henry Sugut.

In the women's race Fate Tola (Ethiopia) was in the lead from the start. The 24 year-old, who is a training partner of Germany's marathon record holder Irina Mikitenko and lives in Germany, clocked 2:26:39. The defending champion, who had run her personal best in Vienna last year with 2:26:21, ran an even pace throughout.

When Fate Tola passed the half way mark in 73:17 she had built a lead of 49 seconds. Running next to each other for the whole race Olga Glock (Russia) and Helalia Johannes (Namibia) followed in 74:06. At 30 k it looked as if the chasing pair could still have a chance of catching Tola, because they had reduced the gap to 18 seconds. But at 35 k (2:01:19) Fate Tola, who speaks some German, had increased her advantage to 30 seconds again. In a close fight for second place Olga Glock finished in 2:27:18 two seconds ahead of Helalia Johannes.

"To come back as the defending champion and win again means a lot to me," said Fate Tola, who had trained with Irina Mikitenko in Albuquerque (USA) recently. "When I saw that Irina ran well in a German 10 k race last week that was a good sign for me." Next year Fate Tola could become the first woman to win the Vienna City Marathon three times in a row.

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