



Press release

About 3400 runners weave their way through the Kocher valley

21st ebm-papst marathon a big attraction on Saturday and Sunday – 10,000 spectators at venue and along route

It's an impressive sight every year when the starter's gun fires for the various events at the ebm-papst marathon and the long chain of runners passes by between the sports center and the festival grounds in Niedernhall. All told, about 3400 people ran through the Kocher valley on Saturday and Sunday in the 21st edition of the event, which was organized by the "Polzeisportverein Hohenlohe" (a regional sports club) and ebm-papst. Participants again included numerous foreign runners from countries such as Finland, England, France, Gabon, Iraq, Sweden and Italy. At the festival grounds and along the route, about 10,000 guests viewed the spectacle, which has become the largest sports event. "We are delighted that the event was once again so well-received," commented ebm-papst's Press Officer Hauke Hannig. "It's important to us that everybody have fun and reach the finish line healthy. And we had good luck with the weather again this year."

It was actually a bit too warm. The high temperatures on Saturday afternoon discouraged several people from taking part in the Nordic walking event, but there were still nearly 300 participants at the start of the race, which was held without timing on two routes with different lengths. "It was a good route, but it was too bad that so many sections were paved. But that makes it faster," said Bernd Gronbach of Michelfeld. Due to flood damage, the Nordic walking route had to be changed this year. "It went a bit uphill this year, but that wasn't so bad."

On Sunday the emphasis was on speed, at least for the more ambitious runners. For the marathon, the focus was also on the new route. "It got a little harder, but I liked it," said the winner, Kay-Uwe Müller from TSG Schwäbisch Hall, who finished his fourth marathon victory at Niedernhall with a time of 2:34:51. That was nearly ten minutes faster than the second-place finisher, Martin Schwab of Adelshofen, who ran for Fit mit Würth in 2:44:19. "There was more happening on the course than in previous years," said Müller. "The organization has always been tops, and to their credit, the organizers were responsive to the runners' desire for a new route." Now there are more altitude changes, but the runners are compensated for that with a great view of the Kocher valley. "The panorama is super," said the third-place finisher, Simon Rist of Heilbronn. "But the climbs are really tough." Eva Müller of Nittendorf, women's winner with a time of 3:17:06, also praised the view, saying "But it's pretty strenuous. Now it's more of a cross-country race, but I knew what to expect. And even though it's a big event, it's still like a family outing."

Thorsten Siegl of Bietigheim found that the mood on the route was better, especially as hopped in Forchtenberg. "If you view it as practice as I do, it's pretty good," he said.

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Whereas Müller ran a lonely race in the marathon, things were much closer in the half-marathon. Steffen Burkert of Munich was in the lead nearly the entire time. But he was overtaken shortly before the finish by Michael Chalupsky (Team Erdinger Alkoholfrei, Neckargemünd, 1:14:36). Burkert finished in 1:15:18 and was followed by Jens Müller (ebm-papst, Künzelsau, 1:15:48), who is in the middle of preparing for the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii. Chalupsky praised the conditions, saying “It was great, perfect for running.”

Bettina Englisch of Brackenheim (TSG Heilbronn) won the half-marathon for the third straight time. “I didn’t sleep much the night before since I was at my cousin’s wedding,” she laughed. “But because of that, I went into the race without any big expectations.” She stayed loose through the finish and even ran one of her best times in Niedernhall, 1:21:54. Franziska Fallmann (LG Schefflenztal, 1:32:35) placed second. Bettina Englisch’s speed is no wonder; she is preparing for the German marathon championship in Frankfurt, where she and her team from TSG Heilbronn are definitely hoping to win. Her teammate Veronica Hähnle-Pohl won the 10-kilometer race. “I’m glad she decided to run in the 10 kilometers. Otherwise I probably would have finished second,” said Englisch. Like Englisch, Pohl was also satisfied; she finished in 37:30, a course record. Theresa Klett (TSV Crailsheim) set the previous record of 37:47 in 2012. “The course is really nice,” she said. “This was my first time here. After a baby break, she is in the process of intensifying her training.

Christian Strauch was fastest among the men. He is no stranger in Niedernhall. “I was hoping for more,” he said of his time of 32:50. “That was well over my best time here. Somehow I couldn’t find a consistent speed and also felt a headwind. But I don’t want to complain about it. It’s always really nice here, a great event.”

In the end, very few entrants were trying for top times. For most of them, the feeling that comes from running together, of overcoming a challenge, was what mattered. “It’s just fun to run with the crowd,” said Timmy Sarantoudis of Niedernhall. “It gives you a push.”

There were no surprises in the handcycle race. Course record holder Thorsten Purschke won again this year. As expected, Fabian Dieterle (SSF Heilbronn/Böblingen) was the fastest inline skater, and Lena Bender (SSF Heilbronn/Filderstadt) was the first woman to finish.

For more information and results lists, visit ebmpapst-Marathon.de

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