

# Watching the clock

Zurich Marathon, Switzerland. 4 April 2005

## Result

MEN:			
1	Stanley LELEITO	KEN	2:10:16
2	Eric NZIOKI	KEN	2:10:33
3	Bayo AMNAAY	TAN	2:10:44
4	Viktor ROTHLIN	SUI	2:10:59
5	Dmitry BURMAKIN	RUS	2:11:19
6	Joseph KADON	KEN	2:11:21
7	Eticha TESFAYE	ETH	2:13:23
8	Dmytro OSADCHY	UKR	2:13:33
9	Peter MUSIOKI	KEN	2:14:00
10	Phillip MUIA	KEN	2:15:06
WOMEN:			
1	Claudia OBERLIN	SUI	2:34:38
2	Tsige WORKU	ETH	2:38:35
3	Emebet ABOSSA	ETH	2:39:01
4	Angeline JOLY	SUI	2:39:24
5	Sisay Arsede MEASO	ETH	2:40:44
6	Dorota USTIANOWSKA	POL	2:40:51
7	Valentina POLTAVSKA	UKR	2:42:40
8	Reneta ANTROIPIK		2:44:59
9	Luzia SCHMID	GER	2:47:36
10	Radka CHURANOVA	CZE	2:48:28

### By Klaus Duwe

Everyone knows that things go like clockwork in Switzerland. Like travelling to the Zurich Marathon, for example. The international airport is only 11km from the city, and punctiliously timed trains reach there in 15 minutes. Emerging from the station into Bahnhofstrasse visitors are soon greeted by Europe's biggest clock – the 8.7m diameter face which adorns the tower of St Peter's Church. Along with the clock, the Zurich skyline is dominated by the towers of the Grossmünster and the Fraumünster.

Past the watch and jewelry shops, at the other end of the Bahnhofstrasse, lies Lake Zurich. The marathon starts from a few kilometres down on the west side of the Lake, at Landiwiese. Timing is all-important. The 08.30 start and the five-hour time limit, at the city government's request, minimise the time for which streets have to be closed.

But it's easy to get to the start by train. From the Wollishofen station I just walk through the underpass and I'm there. It's a beautiful Sunday morning, a bit chilly, but the sun is out and it should warm up soon. There's the usual excited atmosphere of a marathon start.

I want to run under four hours, and the conditions are perfect. I turn in my clothes bag and make my way to my starting block. The speaker keeps us up to date on what's going on up ahead where the elite runners are getting ready. Last year, the Swiss runner Viktor Röthlin won and became a national hero.

The start gun is fired and the main field is starting to move. Four minutes later I am crossing the timing mat. We run along the

north shore of Lake Zurich, over the Quai Bridge and to the east shore, which is also called the Gold Coast because of the impressive villas on the lakeside. After 5 km the field spreads out, runners find their individual rhythms, and we come across the first refreshment stand. We follow the main road along the lake, which is blocked off to traffic. The scenery is unbelievably beautiful: stunning estates on the left side, the lake on the right side, and snow-covered mountains in front of us. The sun is shining and there isn't a cloud in the sky. I am happy to be here.

A rock band is playing in Zollikon and several hundred people line the street, cheering us on, applauding and having fun. Over the next 9 km we hear disco and carnival band music, and thousands of people cheering. I have no problem keeping up a good speed in this atmosphere. I check my watch: 57 minutes for

the first 10 km. Not bad.

The same mood continues over the next few kilometres: a cheering audience, music that lifts up my legs and wonderful views of the other side of the lake and the Alps. The course along the Gold Coast is out-and-back. I should be able to see the top runners coming towards me any moment now. And there they are: five or six runners in a close group. I can see Viktor Röthlin among them, and then they're gone. A rare sight, fantastic! I am almost a third through my race, at 14 km, and my time is 1:19 hours, which is within my personal time limit.

We reach Meilen at km 15, the highlight of this part of the course. A rock band plays and spectators stand close to the road, cheering frantically. I am convinced that I have the largest fan club in Zurich - other than Viktor Röthlin. I am wearing a T-shirt with my name on it and everyone is cheering me on: "Run, Klaus", "Klaus, hopp, hopp, hopp", "You can do it, Klaus!". My fellow runners give me strange looks and I am embarrassed to receive so much applause.

After a short rise the turning point is marked by a tent roof built over the road. Again, roaring spirits and lots of noise. Then we run downhill, and back past the rock band as we leave the city.

We reach the half-marathon marker, and the field on the opposite side of the road is thinning out. I see the sweep car behind the last runner. The atmosphere is still booming. We're almost two-thirds through, 28 km. My time is 2:39 hours, still within my personal limit. But my legs are starting to ache. I will have to choose between trying to beat four hours and finishing the race smiling. My legs are easily convinced. I stop watching the clock and the pressure is gone.

As we return towards Zurich

centre we run back and forth along Bellerive Street a few times. Soon I am not sure anymore whether the runners on the lane next to me are ahead of me or behind me. Then the course leads through grassy open space along the lake, along the River Limmat and over the Rudolf-Brun Bridge into the centre of the city. Many spectators line the road and greet us with applause.

Of course, we also run along the Bahnhofstrasse. The street has become a European centre for finance, economy, elegance, exclusiveness, quality and diversity. Practically all visitors to Zurich take a quick stroll on the Bahnhofstrasse, and during the marathon it is quicker still. We reach a sharp right turn and are running on the Mythenquai into the last 2km. The road is lined on both sides with enthusiastic spectators. Their applause carries me through the last stretch and under the finish gantry. What a day, what an experience. Thank you, Zurich!

I receive the finisher medal, turn in the free chip and in return receive a finisher T-shirt and a bag with an energy bar and water. I pick up my clothes and cross over to the other side of the street on the foot bridge. I stop for a moment and watch the smiling faces of the runners who are just crossing the finish line. I am happy with them and for them. The lakeshore is a big camp. I lie in the sun, stretch my legs and try not to think of the long drive home.

