



# Setting an example

Brcko is a small town with big ambitions. Lying on the Croatian border in the far north of Bosnia, it is home to a mixed population of 50,000 people. The town administration stands apart from both the Bosnia-Herzegovina Federation and the Republika Srpska. These two political entities, alongside the Brcko district, cover the territory under the national Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite the campaigns of ethnic cleansing that made Bosnia a byword for tragedy Serbs, Croats and Muslims - groups defined more by religion than ethnicity - continue to live alongside each other, and in Brcko are managing to work together for the benefit of all. One of their projects, stated back in 1997, is the Vidovdan 10km race. Partly because of the race's inclusive nature it is a significant event, setting an example that other towns and organisations aspire to follow.

Vidovdan is the name of the national holiday "The day of Visions" which coincides with the anniversary of the battle against the Turks back in 14th century that temporarily halted their progress towards the centre of Europe. In Serbia, the significance of the ancient battle, and its celebration, has inspired and demonstrated fervently nationalist sentiment of a sort which tore the federal state of Yugoslavia apart. In Bosnia, it is just a matter of the historical record - much like the Battle of Hastings or the Boston Tea Party.

The perspective comes from looking to the future rather than back to the past. New building abounds in and outside the town, testifying to local prosperity and enterprise. Most of it is low-rise, indicating personal rather than institutional investment.

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focus on children's races: 5000 kids participate in 10 age groups, ranging from 7 to 17 years, and running over distances from 100m-850m. Each age group has both a girls' and a boys' race and attracts hundreds of eager entrants. The eagerness of some of the youngest made managing the start of the dash down the birch-fringed finish straight a difficult operation. When the signal was given some fairly flew off the front line, while others stumbled in their haste. Some jogged it easily, while the very youngest - unofficial entrants - tottered or were carried to the finish line.

As age groups ascended so did the race distance, until the under 18s ran almost a complete lap of the senior course, around the triangular town park. The crowds had been gathering on this attractive green space dotted with oak, beech, birch and acacia trees since proceedings had started with parachutists descending bearing the flags of AIMS, of the event and of the race sponsor.

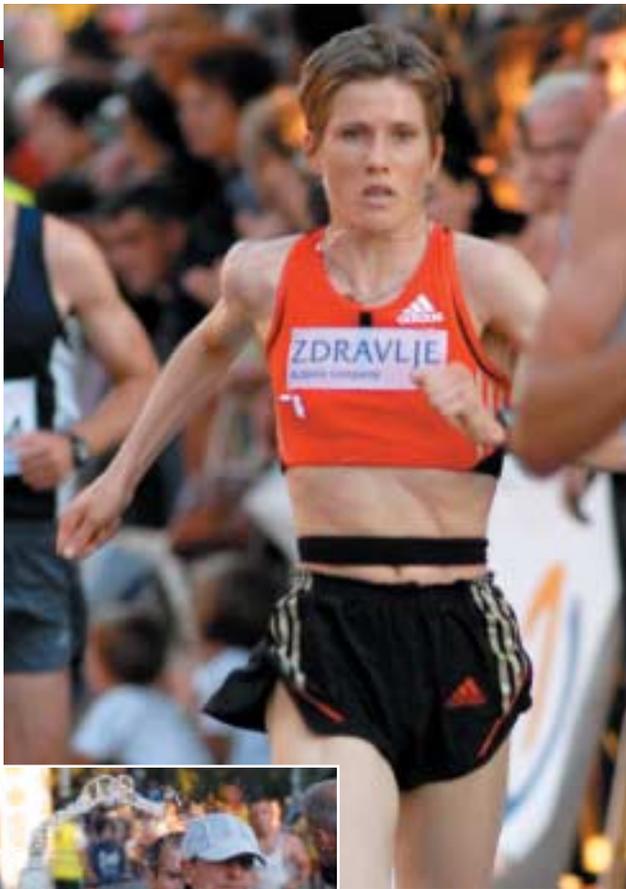
For the past 24 hours eyes had been turned upward towards the clouds for other reasons, as the seasonal hot weather had broken with a torrential downpour the previous evening and race day dawned overcast. By late afternoon the clouds had dispersed and the sun was pleasantly warm. While athletes warmed up in the evening sun the crowds were treated to a curtain-raising event where local women raced 100m with shopping trolleys. It was the only one of the 12 races which was not accompanied by a lead vehicle and two police motorcycle outriders.

The 10km event was set off at 19.40 with a total field of only about 250. Among these were invited foreign runners from Croatia, Serbia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Kenya and Ethiopia, although most runners are locals of varying abilities, and many among them are lapped several times during the course of the 11-lap race.

The start line lies conveniently at the broadest part of the 920m-lap course, where the course bends away from beside the park through a back road of the town fronted with orange-pantiled houses, private gardens, and a few local businesses. Within 300m the road bends back to rejoin the Park, and the course then runs along the other two sides of the triangular green. After passing through the finish line to complete their first lap a group of eight had emerged at the front of the men's race. Olivera Jevtic, Serbia's world-class runner and course record holder, made a fast start and led from Cathy Mutwa by several seconds.

After three laps Tewodros Shiferaw began to string out the lead group, which was now down to five runners. A lap later, Shiferaw had opened up a gap of four seconds,





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**RESULT**

**MEN:**

1	Tewodros SHIFERAW	ETH	29:30
2	Dariusz KRUCZKOWSKI	POL	30:02
3	Rafat WOJCIK	POL	30:03
4	Panez OCHAL	POL	30:23
5	Tamas TOTH	HUN	30:28
6	Tamas KOVACS	HUN	30:35
7	Senaid HASIC	BIH	31:06
8	Velimir BOJOVIC	SRB	31:08
9	Djuro KODZO	BIH	31:21
10	Sasa STOLIC	SRB	31:24

**WOMEN:**

1	Olivera JEVTIC	SRB	32:08
2	Ana SUBOTIC	SRB	33:34
3	Lucija KIMANI	BIH	33:41
4	Cathy MUTWA	KEN	34:44
5	Ida KOVACS	HUN	35:47
6	Meneleva CHEPELEVA	MDV	35:55
7	Dorota USTIANOWSKA	POL	36:36
8	Snezana KOSTIC	SRB	36:48
9	Katalin FARKAS	HUN	36:56
10	Marija VRAJIC	CRO	37:03

which then continued to grow until the end of the race. Olivera Jevtic already looked like an assured winner, as with each lap her relentless even pace drew her ever further ahead. Behind her, Mutwa faded and the top female Bosnian runner, Lucija Kimani, came through. Kimani was born in Kenya but married a Bosnian runner and has lived in and competed for Bosnia over the last two years. She held second place for most of the race but Serbia's Ana Subotic caught her and eased ahead in the final stages.

As with the children's races, the presentations followed promptly after the race itself, and the crowds remained in the park to applaud the participants who had provided the evening's entertainment. The senior

race is the centrepiece of the festival of races, but it is not the main point of the proceedings. Borislav Djurdjevic, race founder, says "it is to support the children's races. They can see what their races are part of, and what the sport is all about. It sets them an example."

Not just them, but the whole country, as the race is broadcast live on national television from nine fixed camera positions which capture the action in every detail. Though the action is impressive, it is the general spectacle which is important. In this young country striving to find its place in the world, the Vidovdan races are becoming part of its identity and something of which its citizens can be proud.

**RACE CONTACT DETAILS**

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*Full race contact listings start on page 70*

