

Towering heights



By Roger Zwahlen

The Kleine Scheidegg towers 1534m above the Swiss town of Interlaken. Runners in the Jungfrau Marathon have 42195m of distance in which to make the ascent. On average this is only a climb of 36m every kilometre, or a gradient of 1 in 27.5 - but nothing about this race is average. The sting is in the tail. It is technically a difficult course to run. The first 25km are on a relatively flat section of road and the serious mountain climb comes in the last 17km. The early leaders in the race rarely figure on the podium. Mountain climbing is serious work, and the winners invariably do their work here.

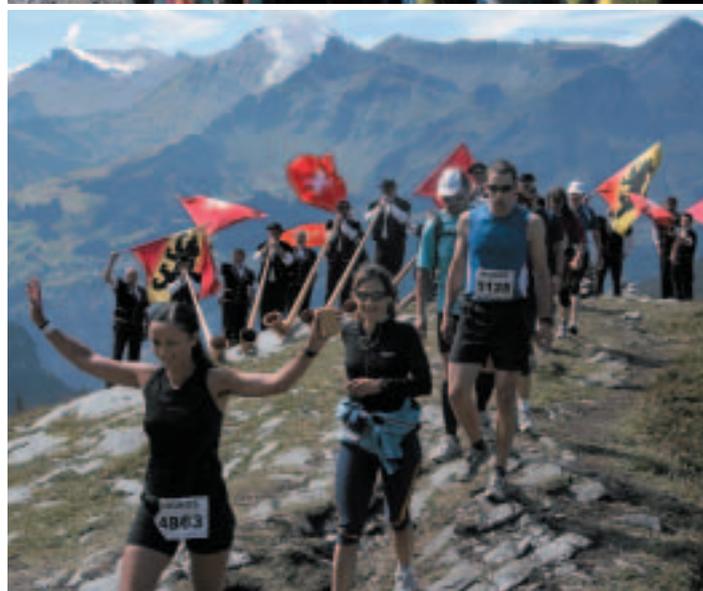
So it was in this year's race. After 19km Valeriu Vlas of Moldova and Russia's Sergej Kaledine were contesting the lead, about a kilometre ahead of the chasing group. And chase they did; it was from this group that the medal winners emerged. Shortly into the climb New Zealand's Jonathan Wyatt took the lead and at 30km he was one minute ahead of Hermann Achmüller from Italy. Achmüller was in turn another minute in front of another Italian from the Tyrol, Gerd Frick.

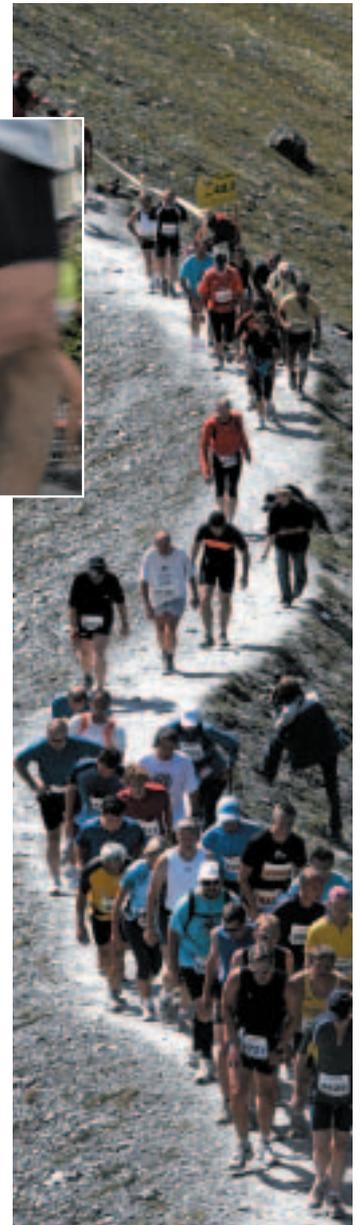
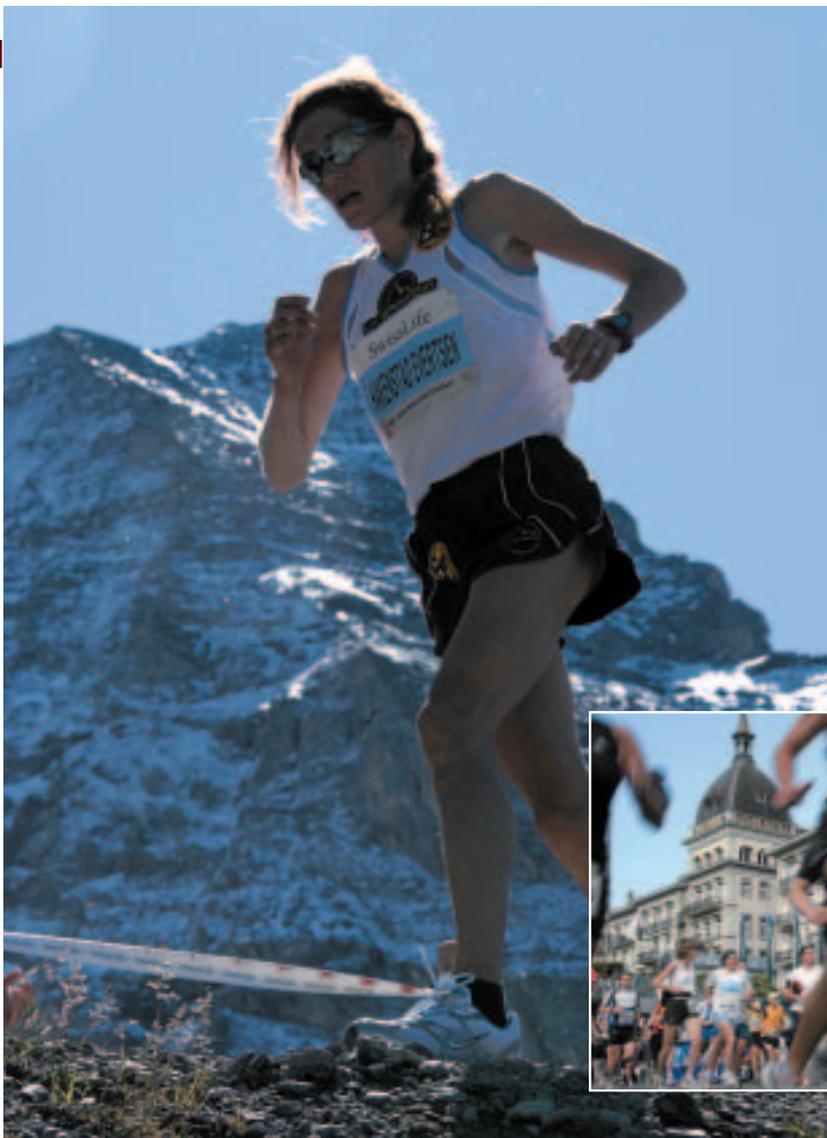
These three continued the ascent as strongly as they had started it, and finished in the same order. The race incorporated the 4th World Long-Distance Mountain Running Championship and through this win Wyatt became the first runner to win both short distance (World Trophy) and long distance (Challenge) titles.

The women's race developed in a similar way. During the climb Anita Hakenstad Evertsen from Norway left the early leaders behind to eventually win by a margin of eight minutes - within two minutes of the course record.

There were 4200 other runners, from a total of 50 different countries, who followed them up the mountain. Cheering them on, 20,000 spectators enjoyed this feast of endurance running amid some of the finest scenery that Switzerland has to offer. The sun shone brilliantly and the North Face of the Eiger and the snow-covered massif of the Jungfrau towered above.

The race started at 09.00 in front of the famous Grand Hotel Viktoria-Jungfrau, from where runners could enjoy a first impression of the great view over the grandiose mountains





RESULT

MEN:			
1	Jonathan WYATT	NZL	2:55:33
2	Hermann ACHMULLER	ITA	2:58:36
3	Gerd FRICK	ITA	3:02:42
4	Ranulfo SANCHEZ	MEX	3:05:57
5	Galen BURRELL	USA	3:11:06
6	Serguej KALEDINE	RUS	3:11:29
7	Marc LAUENSTEIN	GER	3:13:42
8	Zac FREUDENBURG		3:14:58
9	Serhiy OKSENIUK		3:15:29
10	Urs JENZER		3:15:48

WOMEN:			
1	Anita E HAKENSTAD	NOR	3:23:06
2	Elena KALEDINA	RUS	3:31:16
3	Jeanna MALKOVA	RUS	3:36:44
4	Anja CARLSOHN	GER	3:36:59
5	Claudia LANDOLT	GER	3:37:59
6	Elizabeth HAWKER	GBR	3:40:01
7	Corinne ZELLER	GER	3:41:13
8	Marie-Luce ROMANENS		3:42:51
9	Britta MULLER		3:45:23
10	Daniela WYSS		3:46:28

of the Jungfrau region. Runners complete one lap through the town, and thousands of spectators shout their encouragement, creating a certain euphoria for all participants. In the village of Bönigen, after 7km, a fantastic view opens up over the Lake of Brienz. The villages of Wilderswil (10km), Gsteigwiler and Zweilütschinen (15km) pass by as runners follow the course of the river Lütschine. In all these villages along the route people turn out in large numbers to savour the atmosphere.

The gentle ascent continues up to Lauterbrunnen, at the halfway point and an altitude of 810m, where thousands of spectators make for a unique ambience.

Alongside the famous Staubbach-Waterfall the race continues with five flat kilometres through the Lauterbrunnen Valley. Then, at 26km, the mountain running starts.

This is where you would appreciate that this race has to be run with the head as well as the heart. Those who don't find the right balance between patience and the competitive instinct will surely suffer during the second part of the race.

The climb up to Wengen is serpentine, with 26 hairpin turns that demand full concentration and unrelenting effort. Shortly before Wengen is reached, at 1285m, you pass the 30km point. Decorated houses, bands playing music and a cheering audience give runners a surge of adrenaline – and much needed motivation for what still awaits. Climbing higher you run through thinning forests and mountain pastures. At times you find yourself on Lauberhorn, the worlds longest FIS ski-run - but unfortunately you have to go up instead of down. At 39km you reach the tree line and the rocky path is strewn with stones.

You arrive at the culmination, the moraine, a rocky, straight path at the foot of Eiger Glacier. One runner after the other reaches the 40km mark, the highest point in the race at 2205m. From here you can already see the finishing line at the Kleine Scheidegg. And after having reached the finish you are repaid for your efforts with a marvellous view of the three most famous Bernese mountains: the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau.

The entry fee of 75 euros includes a warm shower, a massage, a technical finisher's t-shirt, a medal,

rail transport back to Interlaken and transportation of one piece of luggage from the start to the finish. Not only that, but also having the mountain rescue service on standby.

The Jungfrau-Marathon is a challenging run for epicure-athletes. Changing landscapes accompany you on the run: lakes, glaciers, mountain rivers and pastures, villages and rock faces. For supporters, who can follow large parts in the Jungfrau train, it is also an unforgettable experience.

Try it out next year on 6 September 2008. Online are applications available from 12 November 2007 at www.jungfrau-marathon.ch. The number of entries is limited to 4,000.

RACE CONTACT DETAILS

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Full race contact listings start on page ??