

Outward bound



By Óli Olsen

The sixth Torshavn Marathon was run in absolutely perfect conditions; calm, 12°C and partially overcast. All runners set off together from SMS, the local shopping centre, at 13.00. After a 5km lap around the town the 3,000 healthrunners headed directly to the finish, while the 30 marathoners and 90 half marathoners went out on a hilly and very scenic traffic free route. Due to a strong media campaign participation was good, and the streets of Torshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands, were crowded with spectators as the spirit and joy of the event were unprecedented.

The Faroe Islands are situated at 62 degrees North in the North Atlantic Ocean, almost equidistant from Iceland, Norway and Scotland. Torshavn is right at the centre of the archipelago. Compared to other countries summer is cool (averaging 11C), but winter is mild averaging several degrees above zero. This is mainly due to the warm Gulf Stream, which flows around our coasts.

The Vikings occupied the islands more than 1000 years ago during their famous voyages to the West. The Faroese are mainly descended from the Norwegian Vikings and for many centuries

were part of the Norwegian empire, but for the the last few hundred years the Faroe Islands have been under the Danish Crown. During Second World War, when the Germans occupied Denmark the British came to the Faroe Islands.

There are 18 islands, which are home to 48,000 people. One island is unpopulated and two have only one family each. The main islands are linked together with tunnels, and modern ferries serve the smaller ones. 70,000 sheep graze in the mountains and their wind-dried meat is one of our specialities. The farmers rear cattle and the local dairy produces milk products for local consumption. Potatoes and vegetables are grown. Almost all of our exports, however, consists of fish and fish products. The Faroe Islands have a very modern and a highly developed fishing fleet which operates in deep and shallow waters.

Although an extremely small nation, the Faroe Islands have managed to keep their ancient language alive. It shares the same origins as Icelandic and derives from the Old Norse spoken by the Vikings. Elsewhere, like on Shetland and Orkney, the local "Norn" has succumbed to English. Dedicated people in Iceland and on the Faroe Islands, and their pure language

There are **18 islands**, which are home to 48,000 people. One island is **unpopulated** and two have only one family each.

'politics' allow us still to communicate in our own language. Everybody speaks and understands Danish - and most of them English as well. Foreign connections are also excellent with Atlantic Airways operating daily flights to the Scandinavian countries, and a big and modern ferry, the "Norrøna," serves on the North Atlantic routes

On race day Faroese runners were honoured by a visit from the English marathon legend, Ron Hill, who also ran in the half marathon to claim the Faroe Islands as his 100th racing country. Everbody was very pleased to experience this great man, who gave an interesting talk about his running career. Extracts from his training diary convinced everybody that we were listening to an astonishing high-mileage runner. He was the first British runner (and second ever) to go under 2 hours 10 minutes in the Marathon.

Before the start, the Mayor of Torshavn, Heðin Mortensen, emphasised the importance of

exercise for the human body, and as the disco rhythms sounded the big crowd were led into a warm up routine by an instructor. The Minister of Public Health, Hans Pauli Støm, started the race.

Cecil Weihe, a local front runner who missed last year's marathon due to a horse riding accident, was in the line up after having won four marathons in a row. En route we senior runners discussed his chances this year, but as the leaders came back past us well before we reached the turning point in the picturesque village of Kalbak, Cecil was not there. It was the 10km runner and marathon debutant Sam Vang who led, with Andrias Hansen chasing him. Johan Havn was third, and behind him Cecil Weihe emerged. Last year's winner, Borgar Biskupstø was fifth, and at this stage, at around 27km, they all looked great.

At around 35km, in tackling the 'Hills Of No Mercy,' Hansen really pushed hard, and became the eventual winner only seconds

outside the course record. His brother, Eirikur Hansen, made a terrific debut marathon in just over 3 hours.

Friðunn Steinberg, a paraglider and midwife from Klaksvík, won the women's race, repeating her victory of the previous year. Our running pack met the women shortly after they turned, and at that point they still looked strong, waved and even smiled a bit. The course record holder, Rigmor Arge (3:16 from 2006) didn't compete this year, as she now lives in Norway and recently ran a new personal best marathon in Copenhagen.

After being injured for almost two decades, the local marathon hero Absalon Hansen is fit again. Twenty years ago he ran his marathon best of 2:27 in a continental race, and the year after won the Marathon in the Island Games that were held in the Faroe Islands, recording 2:35. Although now 48, he's still a brilliant runner and finished second in this year's half marathon.

At the age 59, and with a long running career behind me, I ran into trouble at this year's race. After coming through all the beautiful scenery in perfect conditions, and on schedule for 3:30, my legs started to hurt around 33km. With 3km to go I had to stop to stretch, but somehow managed to get going again. Twenty minutes behind



schedule I crossed the finish line, and actually qualified for gold in the super veteran's group (55+). Harry Hansen, 70, picked up the silver.

The seventh edition of Torshavn Marathon will be held on 6 September 2009, and we are really looking forward to welcoming foreign as well as local runners.

RESULT

MEN:

1	Andrias HANSEN	FAR	2:49:54
2	Sam VANG	FAR	2:53:07
3	Johan HAVN	FAR	2:54:51
4	Cecil WEIHE	FAR	2:55:11
5	Borgar BISKOPSTO	FAR	2:57:56
6	Siguro B JUSTINUSSEN	FAR	3:01:38
7	Eirikur HANSEN	FAR	3:02:55
8	Andrass JOENSEN	FAR	3:18:33
9	Pauli JOHANNENSEN	FAR	3:18:36
10	Josvein HERUP	FAR	3:20:16

WOMEN:

1	Friðunn STEINBERG	FAR	4:03:26
2	Ingrid B PATURSSON	FAR	4:09:29
3	Lydia GARDAR	FAR	4:17:55
4	Birita LASSEN	FAR	4:22:46
5	Karin K PETERSEN	FAR	4:34:57

HALF MARATHON:

MEN:

1	Regin ZACHARIASEN	FAR	1:22:49
2	Absalon HANSEN	FAR	1:27:56
3	Jonhard LARSEN	FAR	1:28:37

WOMEN:

1	Ann THOMSEN	FAR	1:49:19
2	Kristiana SAMUELSON	FAR	1:53:21
3	Kstrin Rubek NIELSEN	FAR	1:56:06

RACE CONTACT DETAILS

TORSHAVN MARATHON SEPTEMBER

Robert Vilhelmsen

Box 3004, FO-100 Torshavn

Tel: 298 230240

Email: post@torshavnmarathon.com

Inet: www.torshavnmarathon.com

Full race contact listings start on page ??