

NEWS RELEASE: GUTENBERG MAINZ HALF MARATHON ON SUNDAY

Samuel Fitwi and Domenika Mayer eye records in Mainz but face strong rivals

German top marathon runners Samuel Fitwi and Domenika Mayer hope to break records at Sunday's Gutenberg Half Marathon Mainz. They are not only targeting their personal bests but eye the course records as well. However the two reigning national marathon champions will face strong rivals. There could be thrilling races at Germany's upcoming half marathon.

The Gutenberg Mainz Half Marathon was re-structured last year with a new organising team in place. Mainly known as a marathon event before the classic distance was dropped and the focus is now very much on the half marathon. Organisers registered 8,500 half marathon runners for Sunday's race. Adding events at shorter distances the total is 13,700 athletes.

"Focussing on the half marathon was the right decision. We think that it will be possible to have over 10,000 runners in the future, but we want to do it step by step," said Race Director Jo Schindler, who also organises the Mainova Frankfurt Marathon in October with his team. "The half marathon is an important event for the city of Mainz. The switch from the marathon to the half marathon cost me a couple of sleepless nights last year, but everything the organiser promised did materialize - we are really happy with the development of the race," said Günter Beck the mayor of Mainz.

With course records of 61:01 and 69:26 the Gutenberg Half Marathon Mainz established itself as the second-fastest German half marathon race behind Berlin last year. "We are planning a 60:30 pace for the men and the women will also be going for a course record," said Philipp Kopp, who is the elite field coordinator.

Samuel Fitwi and Domenika Mayer showed fine form at the beginning of April with their victories at the German Marathon Championships in Hannover. "I trained very well recently and I am in good shape. My goal is to achieve a very good place and a personal best. I plan to go with the 60:30 pace," said 29 year-old Samuel Fitwi, who finished an excellent fifth in the half marathon at last year's European Championships in Rome. He also achieved his current best time of 61:17 in that race. In the marathon Fitwi is the national record holder with 2:04:56.

Samuel Fitwi's strongest rival could be Joshua Kithuku. The 19 year-old Kenyan won a half marathon in Eldoret, Kenya, last year in 60:37 - a very strong time in high altitude. If he is in top form he will surely challenge Samuel Fitwi. Two more Africans are on the start list with personal bests of sub 62:00: Ethiopia's Hersuato Mamiyo and Calistus Kitoo of Kenya have run 61:07 and 61:39 respectively.

Domenika Mayer, who has a 69:46 PB from Warsaw last year, leads the women's start list. However her PB does not reflect her full potential over this distance. "I want to bring my half marathon PB in line with my other personal records on Sunday," said the 34-year-old, who has a 2:23:47 personal best in the marathon. „I got back into training well after the Hanover Marathon, I am healthy and fit. I hope that the others will also want to run fast on Sunday and that we will form a strong group," said Domenika Mayer.

The number two on the start list is Belgium's Hanne Verbruggen. She has a PB of 70:01 and was third in Mainz a year ago. While Esther Chemtai, the World Junior Cross Country Championships' bronze medallist from 2010, has run 70:17 so far a debutant could produce a surprise: Fellow-Kenyan Rency Kogo recently won the 10k race in Paderborn, Germany, with a personal best of 31:56.

More information is available online at: www.halbmarathon-mainz.de

Please note: The attached photo, showing Samuel Fitwi, Jo Schindler and Domenika Mayer by the river Rhine in Mainz, can be used only in conjunction with this press release. Credit: Norbert Wilhelmi

