

# Economic strength through marathon stamina

By Grzegorz Rogowski, in cooperation with Ilona Berezowska

**In early September every year, for the last 23 years, a small health resort in Malopolska has been a meeting point for many of the world's most important politicians, economists, businessmen, scientists and journalists. During debates about the contemporary world, they search for methods of overcoming its problems. The Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdroj, has also been of interest for runners over the last four years. Why?**



**B**ecause the biggest running event in Poland and this part of Europe starts immediately after the Economic Forum. It is no coincidence that the two are connected - both the Economic Forum and the Running Festival were initiated by the same man, Zygmunt Berdychowski. Previously an anti-communist activist, he was imprisoned by the former regime, and became a Member of Parliament in democratic Poland. Currently he is a councillor of the Provincial Assembly of Malopolska and the head of the Programme Council of the Institute for Eastern Studies in Warsaw. In private life he is a passionate mountain climber and a great fan of running.

"The concept of the Running Festival was born in 2006 after I ran in the New York City Marathon. I thought that Poland should also have such a big event," remembers Berdychowski, who is known for his passionate and determined commitment to developing the event. The first edition of the Festival was attended by roughly 1000 runners; the second by nearly 3000; the third by more than 4000. This year there were more than 6000 runners. Such a rapid increase in participation has not been previously seen by any running event in Poland, Berdychowski observes.



What attracts Polish and foreign runners to Krynica-Zdroj in such numbers is the comprehensive and varied character of the races which make up the event. The 4th Running Festival, held from 6-8 September this year, included nearly 30 different competitions. It began with a 300m children's race,

*Continued on page 35*







# Running Festival of the Economic Forum, Poland

Continued from page 33

then a Fancy Dress Run over 999m, where the winners were not those first over the finish line, but the ones who had the most impressive costumes. Middle-distance races followed, such as TAURON's Lifetime Ten, whose route descends throughout its length, and ending with the Iron Run, taking place in stages, and the ultramarathon "7 Valleys Run" over distances of 36km, 66km and 100 km, along the mountain routes of Beskid Sadecki.

The Koral Marathon has been a showcase competition of the Festival since its first edition. The route has remained the same: runners begin at Krynica's Promenade, passing through Powroznik, Muszyna, Zlocie, Jastrzebik, and back through Muszyna and Powroznik, finishing in Krynica to the



applause of thousands of participants in the other Running Festival events that take place in parallel.

It is not easy. The course descends from the 10th kilometre, but later there are two difficult ascents, with the toughest one towards Tylicz. The highest point of the route, at 698m, comes in the 39th kilometre, while the lowest is 558m. The Koral Marathon is regarded as the most difficult road marathon in Poland. "What counts here is how much stamina you have in the end, how you balance your strength," - wrote Anna Pawlowska-Pojawa, Polish journalist, blogger and participant in last year's Koral Marathon.

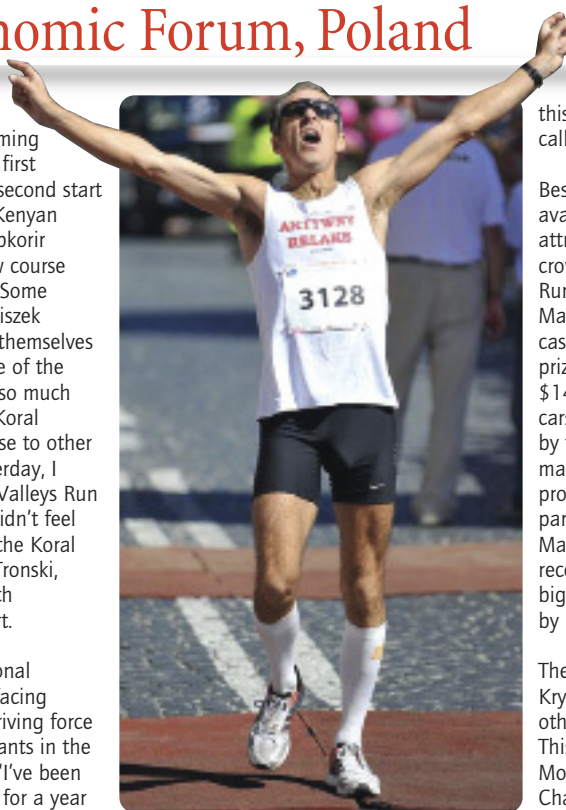
The challenge paradoxically attracts hundreds and even thousands of runners from throughout Poland and the world. They include both professionals,

enthusiasts and casual runners aiming to complete their first marathon. In his second start in Krynica-Zdroj, Kenyan Biwot Wycliffe Kipkorir established a new course record (2:23:53). Some people, like Franciszek Tronski, immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the Running Festival so much that besides the Koral Marathon, they rise to other challenges: "Yesterday, I completed the 7 Valleys Run over 36km, so I didn't feel entirely fresh for the Koral Marathon," said Tronski, after finishing with superhuman effort.

Overcoming personal weaknesses and facing adversity is the driving force for many participants in the Koral Marathon. "I've been running regularly for a year and a half," said Lukasz Petrus, one of 524 finishers. "I decided to run the Koral Marathon because I like the combination of running and mountains. The route was beautiful, but also demanding. Marathons taught me discipline and also how to overcome all difficulties if I really want to do something."

Runners reaching the finish line expressed appreciation: "Organization along the route could be an example for the biggest races," wrote Anna Pawlowska-Pojawa. "You can tell that people working in the competition office are also runners". She pointed to precise marking of the route; the location of refreshment points with water, isotonic drinks and food; the involvement of the organizer and volunteers as well as fans, who greeted the runners at the route with loud applause; and the availability of regenerative meals, showers and massage.

Similar conditions prevailed at other competitions of the Festival, although Berdychowski honestly admitted that the scale of the event generates unavoidable problems. Even so, there were none



this year that could be called serious.

Besides the range of available distances, attractive routes and crowds of competitors, the Running Festival and Koral Marathon also feature big cash prizes. This year total prize value reached \$140,000, including two cars. One of them, funded by the title sponsor of the marathon (an ice cream producer) was won by a participant in the Koral Marathon. The race winner received \$2000, one of the biggest cash prizes offered by Polish marathons.

The Running Festival in Krynica-Zdroj offers many other running attractions. This year, the World Mountain Running Championships, taking place on the slopes of Jaworzyna Krynicka Mountain, was the jewel in the crown. The field of 329 runners came from 39 countries, and was watched by participants and fans of the Running Festival. The best results were achieved by Italians, and the famous "Il Canto degli Italiani" was heard three times on Krynica's promenade.

The 5th Running Festival of the Economic Forum in Krynica-Zdroj will be held from 5-7 September 2014. Registration will open soon. Competing in the Koral Marathon, or any other competition of the Festival, surrounded by the picturesque Beskid Sadecki Mountains and pure air, you will be left with unforgettable impressions and emotions. ■

## Result

### MEN:

1	Wycliffe BIWOTT	KEN	2:23:53
2	Taras SALO	UKR	2:24:21
3	Kamil SIERACKI	POL	2:34:44
4	Rafal CZARNECKI	POL	2:38:08
5	Grzegorz CYCZ	POL	2:39:13
6	Kacper PIECH	POL	2:41:53
7	Miroslav POLED	POL	2:57:43
8	Michal ZDUNEK	POL	2:57:51
9	Arkadiusz BUCZYOSKI	POL	2:59:46
10	Lukasz MACHLOWSKI	POL	2:59:48

### WOMEN:

1	Daniela CIRLAN	ROU	2:54:52
2	Hellen KIMUTAI	KEN	2:55:28
3	Krystina KUTA	POL	2:58:42
4	Emilia ZIELIOSKA	POL	3:08:43
5	Anna SKALSKA	POL	3:23:29
6	Maria KAWIORSKA	POL	3:27:21
7	Anna BALOSAK	POL	3:28:20
8	Agata TEKIELI	POL	3:31:48
9	Izabela KOMAR	POL	3:32:48
10	Beata POKRZYWIOSKA	POL	3:37:09

