Scandinavian summers

It is no accident that Scandinavian marathons are all held during the summer. At 60 degrees North the clear sun and long hours of daylight generate a special atmosphere. At this year’s Helsinki City Marathon it again proved so as Finland’s largest marathon more than met the expectations of runners.

The new route received good feedback from runners. During the event 4800 runners took to the streets of Helsinki with 1000 of them coming from 59 other countries. Markku Haverinen, race director and Recreational Sports Manager at the Finnish Amateur Athletic Association, thought that from the organisers’ point of view it could have been the best ever. He was also pleased with the growing number of participants in the kids Chiquita Mini-marathon and with the popularity of the new Perskindol Helsinki Street Run, a 17-kilometre race that was inaugurated this year. There were 7500 participants spread over all events.

“We were anxious to receive feedback on the new HCM route” said Haverinen. “Based on the comments I heard at the finish line runners were positive and many were happy with the large number of spectators. Judging by the results the new route may well be faster than the old one: more runners finished the race in under three hours or under four hours compared to previous years.”

Runners’ wishes were central in planning the new course for the Marathon which celebrated its 35th birthday this year. The new scenic two-lap course is faster and keeps close to the city centre.

Everyone runs in the same direction the whole time which makes running smoother and safer. The number of showers and service points has been doubled. The pedestrianised street Baana that splits the Helsinki city centre and the Töölönlahti Bay area were both lined with spectators cheering the runners on. Haverinen’s only reservation was that “at certain points the route could have been marked more clearly but all minor flaws like this will be corrected next year. I want to thank the runners for their valuable feedback.”

Every year, more and more runners from other countries discover the appeal of the Helsinki City Marathon. One of the international participants, Damian Quiroga from Argentina’s second city Cordoba, admired the beauty of the city.

“All attractions are within a walking distance and the city centre is small and cozy. I liked the
variety of the route: we ran in the city centre, along the shoreline and in the cool woods of the park. There were more hills than I’m used to but I liked the race nonetheless.”

Sanna Norokorpi who lives in Milan could not stop smiling after the finish line:

“My marathon went really well. After all the problems I encountered, I am happy that I was able to finish. I like the new route better than the old one. Mentally I found it easier to run the same lap twice instead of running only one big lap. The atmosphere and spectators along the route were exceptional.

For Henrik Sinisalo and Iiris Reikonen, a young couple living in Helsinki, HCM was their first marathon.

“Our target was to finish the race in under five hours and to run the whole distance. We met our target although the final 10km felt pretty tough. It was well organised — at least from the point of view of first-timers. Before the marathon I swore I’d never run again after the race but I might have to eat my words” said Henrik.