

The History of the GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON

The story of the GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON reflects the history of the German capital – from the cold war to reunification. The events leading up to today's event could really only have happened in this city. Its predecessors came from East and West Berlin. While the "Berliner Friedenslauf" (Berlin Peace Run) was East Germany's showcase running event and the biggest annual race in the country, the Half Marathon in West Berlin had a much more local character. It was staged by sports club SC Charlottenburg and was a test race for the runners a couple of weeks before the BERLIN-MARATHON. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 the two races merged together and in September 1990 the first edition of the new BERLIN HALF MARATHON was started.

Back in the 80s a number of major city marathon races developed in the west, especially in the US and Great Britain. In West Berlin the "25 km de Berlin", which were staged by the French allied forces, became the first major city road race in Germany in May 1981. A marathon race in Frankfurt was next and then the BERLIN-MARATHON moved to the city centre in autumn 1981. Runners in East Germany noticed the development of road running in the West and tried to establish a road race in East Berlin.

In autumn 1981 the Lichtenberg Marathon was staged in East Berlin. While this event had 466 entries things then changed quickly. The government of the German Democratic Republic changed their view and suddenly supported a major city road race in the centre of the capital. This of course had to be dedicated to peace. Instead of the Lichtenberg Marathon the first "Berliner Friedenslauf" (Berlin Peace Run) took place in 1982. The race from East Berlin's district Lichtenberg had merged into the new event. Races included a marathon, a 20k race and some shorter events but no half marathon.

When the International Olympic Committee (IOC) met in East Berlin in 1985 the race was moved to a Thursday to impress the international delegation. IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch was the starter of the "Friedenslauf". It was claimed by the government that 70,000 runners competed. However this was very likely a big exaggeration by the socialist regime.

In September 1984 the first BERLIN HALF MARATHON took place in West Berlin on a route along the Grunewald forest. It was organized by SC Charlottenburg, the club that also was in charge of a number of other big road races in the city, among them the BERLIN MARATHON. Between 1,350 and 1,800 runners competed in this event during the 80s.

After the wall came down in November 1989 and the political system of the GDR collapsed the state support for the "Berliner Friedenslauf" vanished. Former organizer Stefan Senkel had to quickly find a way to save the race. He found a partner in Horst Milde, the chief organizer of the BERLIN-MARATHON, who initiated most of the major races still staged by SCC EVENTS today. The organizing team of SC Charlottenburg – almost all of them working voluntarily at that time - jumped in and the two events merged together. It was quickly agreed that the main distance of the new event had to be the half marathon.

On 1st September 1990 the new BERLIN HALF MARATHON was started with 4,999 runners. The SC

Charlottenburg staged the BERLIN-MARATHON just a few weeks later, which was a challenging situation regarding the organization of two major races within a month. That was the main reason why it was then decided to move the BERLIN HALF MARATHON to spring from 1992 onwards. In the same year the international athletics federation IAAF decided to introduce World Half Marathon Championships, which gave the event another boost. However the BERLIN HALF MARATHON struggled in its development. Entry numbers went down and in 1996 and 1997 there were less than 3,000 runners. Despite this the two men in charge at that time, Horst Milde and Christoph Kopp, stood firm and continued with the race. They always saw the chance to develop this event into a major international half marathon. And they did succeed.

There were 7,000 runners in 2000 and more than 10,000 for the first time just a year later. Over 20,000 entries were registered in 2007, over 25,000 in 2011 and more than 30,000 for the first time in 2013. In 2019 a record number of 28,471 runners finished the race, which boosted a new attractive finish area next to the Brandenburg Gate.

In terms of elite racing the BERLIN HALF MARATHON developed nicely as well. Two European records were broken in Germany's biggest and fastest half marathon: In 1993 Germany's Carsten Eich clocked 60:34 to take the race. This time still stands as the German record today. In 2001 Fabián Roncero won with 59:52. The Spaniard became the first European to achieve a sub one hour time in the half marathon.

The current two course records are world-class times: In 2018 Eric Kiptanui clocked 58:42 while in 2022 fellow-Kenyan Sheila Kiprotich Chepkirui improved the mark to 65:02.

38th BERLIN HALF MARATHON 2018: Newcomer Erick Kiptanui breaks course record

Kenya's newcomer Erick Kiptanui was regarded as the favourite before the start of the BERLIN HALF MARATHON. While his victory was not a major surprise his performance was stunning, unexpected and sensational. Erick Kiptanui clocked a course record of 58:42 in the Berlin Half Marathon, equalling the fastest time in the world this year. Running only his third race in Europe and winning for the third time, Kiptanui moved to equal fifth in the all-time performances for the distance. His impressive running on Berlin's fast course left him just 19 seconds short of the then world record.

Ethiopia's Melat Kejeta, who already lived in Germany for some time and later received German citizenship, took the women's race in sunny but windy conditions with a fine 69:04.

A race record of 25,001 runners finished the 38th edition of the biggest and highest quality German half marathon. They were cheered on by around 250,000 spectators.

39th GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON 2019: Sifan Hassan produces amazing performance at Brandenburg Gate

Sifan Hassan produced the highlight of the 39th edition of the GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON with a world-class performance. The Dutch runner smashed the course record, clocking 65:45 at the new finish at Brandenburg Gate. While Sifan Hassan dominated the women's race spectators witnessed a thrilling sprint finish in the men's event: William Wanjiku was the winner with 61:00. He continued Kenya's success story in this race. There were fine performances from the leading German runners: Richard Ringer

ran a debut time of 62:10 for seventh place while Fabienne Amrhein took sixth place with a personal best of 71:39. The new start and finish area on the Straße des 17. Juni – almost identical to the position of the start and finish lines of the BMW BERLIN-MARATHON – turned out to be a great success for Germany's biggest half marathon. The whole event gained more prestige with entry and finishing figures increasing significantly. Organisers registered a record number of 35,551 entries from 116 nations. In the half marathon a record 28,670 runners finished the race.

2020: Due to the Corona pandemic the GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON had to be cancelled.

40th GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON 2021: Joyciline Jepkosgei smashes course record, Felix Kipkoech runs world lead

Joyciline Jepkosgei took the GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON with a spectacular course record of 65:16. The 27 year-old Kenyan smashed the mark of Dutch double Olympic Champion Sifan Hassan, who had won the race with 65:45 in 2019. Second-placed Kenyan Nancy Meto was just five seconds behind, improving her PB by more than three minutes. With 65:21 she was also inside the former course record. With six runners finishing inside 69 minutes this was by far the best ever women's half marathon on German soil. Kenya's Felix Kipkoech clocked a world leading time of 58:57 in partly windy but otherwise good conditions. The 23 year-old improved his own world lead by 38 seconds. Fellow Kenyans Josphat Tanui and Philemon Kiplimo followed in second and third with 59:40 and 59:54 respectively. The 40th edition of the race was finally allowed to go ahead in August under strict hygiene regulations. 13,290 runners finished on a day when Berlin celebrated the return of a major running event after the pause caused by the pandemic.

41st GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON 2022: Sheila Kiprotich Chepkirui makes it three course records in three years

Sheila Kiprotich Chepkirui produced the performance of the day, breaking the course record of the 41st GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON. Despite very cold conditions with almost freezing temperatures at the start she clocked a world-class time of 65:02. At that time it was the 18th fastest half marathon time ever run by a woman. Fellow-Kenyans Joyce Chepkemoi and Irene Kimais took second and third with 65:50 and 66:34 respectively. For the first time in the history of the race three women broke 67 minutes. Additionally it was the third time in a row that the women's course record was broken. The men's race was also dominated by the Kenyans, who took all podium places. Alex Kibet was the winner with 58:55, missing the course record by just 13 seconds. He clocked the second fastest time ever run in Berlin. Joshua

Belet was second in 59:53 while pre-race favourite Abel Kipchumba finished third with 59:58. Organisers registered a total of 32,267 half marathon runners from 121 nations. A record number of 95 athletes achieved finishing times of sub 70:00.



Sheila Kiprotich Chepkirui clocked a course record finishing in 65:02 minutes.

42. GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON 2023: Eilish McColgan smashes British record

Smashing the British record Eilish McColgan took the GENERALI BERLIN HALF MARATHON with 65:43. This also remained the European lead for 2023 and the Scot became the fourth fastest European half marathon runner ever. The 32 year-old improved her own national record time of 66:26 by 43 seconds. The fastest runner on the start list became the winner: Sebastian Sawe of Kenya finished in a strong 59:00 minutes. Samuel Fitwi was the best German with a personal best of 61:44 in 9th place while Deborah Schöneborn, who competes for Marathon Team Berlin, took 12th position in 72:12. There were slightly over 26,000 finishers.

While 34 men broke 65:00 minutes there was a total of over 100 runners who ran sub 70:00. 25 women finished sub 1:15 and 67 sub 1:20. All these are record marks for the race and show at the same time the impact of the new carbon running shoes.

