

7 MARATHONS
7 CONTINENTS
7 DAYS

Dr. Thomas TAUT

RUNNING BEYOND BORDERS



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EXTREME SPORT MEETS TOP SPORT



Austria's sportswoman and -man of 2019: Vanessa Herzog and Marcel Hirscher

»He doesn't look that extreme, does he?«

In *SPORTaktiv*, Austria's biggest magazine covering active sports, the report about my sporty trip around the world started with this particular statement. That was a bit disappointing for me at first sight. The editor in chief was obviously surprised by my appearance regardless of all of his years of experience.

Right at the start of my key note speeches I almost always experience the same amazement, sometimes followed by the bewildered question: „This is - you?!” Their expectations and my reality are colliding nearly at the speed of light. Oh yes, I had to become used to look into so many disappointed eyes right at the start of my presentations.

»Nobody on the street would believe, what Thomas Taut from Vienna, Austria has achieved.«

To run seven full marathons on seven continents within seven (consecutive) days is a mighty challenge, indeed. But exactly how is one capable of accomplishing this task actually supposed to look like? Well, personally I would expect winners: well trained sportsmen, athletic from head to toe, young and strong, powerful and fast, lean and successful. As is for instance the couple in the first picture:

Vanessa Herzog and Marcel Hirscher, Austria's sportswoman and -man of 2019.

Yes, I am pretty sure they could both make it after some specific training. And then comes my appearance, as an extreme athlete. Old, slightly obese - at least in comparison -, plagued by allergic asthma. But it is ME who has conquered the World Marathon Challenge and no one else from Austria! Oh, I see. Those impressions do not fit together and this discrepancy matters. It is therefore important right at the start to overcome any such prejudices and to open your hearts to me. Only after having heard or read my story in full you will be able to expand your own imaginations. And you, too, will become able to realize and utilize a lot more of your inner powers.

I may tell here not from my previous achievements as a nuclear physicist, not from my several other former professions and not from gardening, my second biggest passion. These are not the reasons why you grabbed this book for the first time. No, this writing is all about my side activities as a hobby-jogger like million others!

I am of limited talents in all kinds of sport, unfortunately. But I am in with all my body and soul.

I have started running as late as at the age of 35 years. But I had soon developed big visions.

I have never won a race. But also never quit one. I have adopted the motto: „**Not fast - not last!**“ (originally from Heather Brian, also part of the WMC 2018)

I have never been a top athlete. But I have been following the road all the way to extreme sport.

And with this new self-confidence I want to answer the above question: „This is - you?!“ now with „Yes, this is me. You do not have to be perfect to accomplish the unthinkable. And believe me, there are still several more challenges left on my bucket list!“

The IT nerds use to say: „It’s not a bug, it’s a feature!“ Yes, I may be old, small and slower than previously. But despite my age of 53 years I have been rising up to the same level as Vanessa and Marcel, Austria’s top sportswoman and - man of the year 2019!



Top and Extreme Sport are meeting on the very same book shelf

Vanessa Herzog, the world champion in speed skating, can be booked for key note speeches on the very same platform as I (*Sports.Selection*). And my first book has been published by the very same company (*egoth*) as the biography of Marcel Hirscher, the eight times skiing world cup champion, winner of several titles at Olympic games and world championships. Both our books stand close together and compete there for the attention of interested readers.

Do you want to know how this development was possible? What it took? How it all began? But also which personalities I got to know on the way? Which lessons I have learned? And how much it enriched my life?

Let yourself be taken onto a round-the-world trip into the incredible. Enter new personal galaxies which no human being has ever laid eyes upon before. When particles collide almost at the speed of light, enormous amounts of energy are released, and sometimes completely new and unknown elements appear. Watch out, what is possible for you, if you just believe in yourself strongly enough.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

»Fish swim, birds fly, humans run.«
(Emil Zatopek)

Today's hangover
& unproductive
day at work is
proudly sponsored
by
Australia Day
2016

FORTUNE OF WAR

The day it had all begun – Australia Day on January 26th, 2016

It was my friend Steven, who lifted my runner's career onto the next level. On this wonderful and sunny summer morning in January 2016 in Sydney, Australia I had come back from my training a bit earlier. After the daily coastal run from Coogee Beach to Bondi Beach and back I was just enjoying breakfast, when Steven entered our rented apartment. Without greeting he stormed past me, obviously in deep thoughts. After having browsed the internet for several minutes, he called for our wives and me: „You got to check this out!“ And here they were, these three magic words that had never released me since:



Of all people in the world Steven must just have met James Alderson on the beach. And his t-shirt had displayed the three magic words: World Marathon Challenge. One out of almost 9 million Austrians has met the only one of 25 million Australians who was bound to fly to the WMC 2016 only two weeks later! But as you are certainly aware of: There are no coincidences; some things just have to happen ...

At first there was a pure lack of understanding:

„This is completely impossible!“ „How does that work?“
„This is totally nuts! “

seven (!!!!!!!) marathons

on seven (!!!!!!!) continents

within seven (!!!!!!!) consecutive days

Completely out of the question! Ticked off and forgotten.

And then nothing more happened for a very long time.

Until my application ten months later on November 23rd, 2016.

THE WORLD MARATHON CHALLENGE (WMC)

»An idea that does not sound absolutely crazy at the beginning is not worth pursuing it further!«

(Albert Einstein)



The route of our high-speed journey around the world

Hi Thomas,

Many thanks for your application for the 2018 World Marathon Challenge.

I am happy to say there's a place available at the moment if you want to proceed.

I've put the relevant bank details below to secure your place. Welcome to the race!

FYI, I'll be in Antarctica for the next few days organising the Antarctic Ice Marathon

Best wishes, Richard (Donovan from Galway, Ireland)

These days I do no longer recall exactly, which thought processes actually have lead me to this step. But it must have been circling around the two basic questions:

1. Is it worth it?
2. Can I do it?

Maybe my good physical condition at that time had played an important role. In October 2016 I had run my marathons number 34 in Chicago, Illinois und number 35 in Venice, Italy within mere two weeks und had finished them in - for my conditions excellent - four hours. There were still two more races to go until the Challenge: the extremely laborious Karwendel-Ultra (52km) and the Medoc marathon. But who has been there knows that the last one is not (only) about sports. A big fun, but this is a story for another book ...

Albert Einstein, maybe the world's most famous physicist, had many - at least at first sight - quite absurd ideas, but he followed those theories consequently through to the end and delivered excellent results in his particular areas. As did Richard Donovan (born in 1966), who had founded his company *Global Running Adventures* in order to establish the world's most difficult marathons as yearly events for everybody:

- the world's northernmost directly at the North Pole (*North Pole-Marathon*)
- the world's southernmost on the Antarctic continent (*Antarctica Ice-Marathon & 100km Ultra run*)
- the world's highest - measured as average altitude throughout the race - in the Atacama desert in Chile (*Volcano-Marathon*)

And the World Marathon Challenge (WMC) as ultimate quest:

- Richard had been running it himself for the first time in 2009.
- In 2012 he finished the seven marathons in less than five days (!).
- As of the year 2015, the WMC is a yearly event open to the public.

Important information for all readers with ecological conscience: All greenhouse gas emissions of those marathon journeys are overcompensated by forest plantations!

In addition, Richard Donovan had been running a marathon directly at the South Pole (2002), then across North America (2015), across Europe (2016) and through South America (2017).

Originally the course of the World Marathon Challenge had been starting on the Antarctic Peninsula, then going over Santiago de Chile/South America, Miami/North America, Madrid/Europe, Marrakech/Africa, and Dubai/Asia to the grand finale in Sydney/Australia. The very first year - the participants had been flying in the tourist class back then - yielded 10 finishers, 9 men and one woman. From Continental Europe came one Frenchman and the only lady from Finland. The average finisher times varied between fantastic 3:21h (David Gething, HKG) and 5:59h. And ALL OF THEM had made it!

On the same route in 2016 some more people finished, a total number of fifteen. Eleven men and four women reached the high target. I would meet three of them in 2018, but more of that later. This time one man and one woman from Germany participated from Continental Europe. The finisher times in the second year of this series lay between 3:32h (Daniel Cartica, USA) and 6:29h. Becca Pizzi from Boston, Massachusetts won the ladies' competition with an average time of 3:55h. And again ALL OF THEM had made it!

Only in 2017 - again on the same route - the first participants were not able to finish all seven. Out of the 33 competitors that had started in Antarctica, only two had not been able to cross the finish line in Sydney. Michael Wardian (USA) had delivered an unprecedented record:

constant 2:37h-2:54h in each of the races, on average 2:45h per marathon, seven days in a row!!!

After the races until 2020, the WMC records now stand at:

Fastest time men:

Michael Wardian (USA): 2:45:57

(Thomas Taut (AUT): 5:16:38

Fastest time women:

Kristina Shou Madsen (DNK) 3:25:57

Fastest duration man:

Richard Donovan (IRL): 4d 22h 3min

(Thomas Taut (AUT): 6d 8h 55min)

Fastest duration women:

Becca Pizzi (USA): 6d 7h 58min

Oldest man:

Dan Little (USA): 76 years

(Thomas Taut (AUT): 54 years)

Oldest woman:

Gloria Lau (SIN): 67 years