



POST RACE PRESS RELEASE

The 21st Nestlé's Fitness Malta International Challenge Marathon, a full A.I.M.S. member and the only A.I.M.S race with such a unique three stage exact marathon distance, came to a very successful conclusion late last November with another double Maltese win. In fact, a repeat of 2005 with Malta's Jonathan Balzan and Carmen Hili, both from the St. Patrick's Athletics Club. This also completed a record for both runners and for the "Challenge" as both runners won their 5th title each. Only beaten by Welshman, Dale Rixon who in 1992, '93, '94, '97, '98 & 1999, won 6 "Challenge" & is our record holder.

This year's "self imposed" cap of 150 runners (100 from Malta and 50 from overseas) was reached many weeks before the race started. At one time this number went up to 160 but the organisers for the first time in 21 years, experienced an unprecedented amount of cancellations due to injury so continued to replace runners with late comers. The final number that collected their "bib" at the race HQ, The Dolmen Resort Hotel, with the intention of running was 143 with 136 toeing the line for stage 1 seeing another 7 canceling for one reason or another.

Stage 1 went to Malta's old capital, started on the 25th November with the traditional 11.195km route from Mdina out to the Dingli cliffs, past the 5km Kristal Water feeding station and back to Rabat. Prior to the start the weather was very bad with heavy rain and high wind but remarkably for the 13.00 hours start, this cleared away and for the duration of the 1 hour, 45 minute time limit, the runners had very good conditions. Jonathan (38' 22") and Carmen (45' 36") both won this stage with Johann Galea (39' 19") and Marisa Muscat (47' 35") both in second place, followed by four time Challenge winner (1991, 2000, 2001 & 2003), David Mansbridge (39' 27") and Ramona Engerer (50' 40") in third place. The finish line with the races Powerade feeding station, with plenty of nice goodies from Nestle Fitness cereal bars, Twistees, Mini Bites, Raysun nuts and raisins, Nestlé's Belte ice tea, Kristal water, Powerade and a banana where a welcome sight for the 136 finishers. Regular visitor to Malta and "Challenge" runner, Antonette Rendle, backed up all the competitors, finishing within the time limit with a 1 hour, 33' 37", still 11' 23" within the time limit.

Stage 2 saw the Challenge move south to the seaside resort of Birzebbuga & its traditional short stage of just 6km. The start at 12.00 hours saw 133 runners toe the line, a reduction of 3 runners. One of the reasons that this A.I.M.S. race is unique is not only because it measured as an exact marathon of 42.195km but also the three stages are all very different in both distance & terrain. Because of this, both the middle distance runners & the long distance runners find themselves merging together with some strong on one day & others strong on other days and plenty of "mind games" going on between them.

The weather today was close to perfect, a little sun but with some cloud so as not to be too hot and very little wind for this 3km up and 3km down, "saucepan style" anti clockwise circular course.

First home was again Jonathan Balzan in 20' 04" and Carmen Hili with 23' 25" making it "two in a row" for these very experienced "Challenge" runners. Both second places remained the same as the day before but 3rd place in the male section changed with one of Malta's real up and coming youngster, Simon Spiteri finishing in a very respectable 20' 51", just 47" behind 1st place of stage 2.

In the male team event, already St. Patrick's were showing their strength with solid grouping of their "A" team of Jonathan, Simon, Matthew Cutajar and Jimmy Sacco. Followed very closely by Pembroke Athleta and Mellieha A.C. In the female category, St. Patrick's A.C. was already "running away" with it, followed by Mellieha and the Ladies Running Club.

This year we welcomed the participation of Nathan Farrugia and his wife Deirdre. Nathan was given a complimentary entry as the race organisers felt that his devotion as CEO to the Children's Charity, Inspire, would help raise those well needed funds for this Charity. Nathan recently completed a World record by running 27 Marathons in 27 different European Countries in 27 consecutive days, a remarkable feat which is still bringing in those very worth while needed funds. His wife Deirdre, a Maltese Olympiad and track sprint national record holder wanted to run a Marathon, paced by her

husband so decided also to run the Challenge. They both finished in a very respectable time of 3hrs 50' 13" and we are pleased to say that more money will be forthcoming from this joint effort that the MCM is proud to be part of.

Stage 3 got off to a very bright 07.00 hours start at the Wignacourt Tower in St. Paul's Bay with very calm conditions and a beautiful sunrise. Today's time limit is 4 hours & 15 mins, a total overall of 7 hours. With Balzan's lead of 91 secs on 2nd place Galea, 132 secs on 3rd place Spiteri and 163 secs on the experienced Mansbridge, all Jonathan had to do was pace out with these three and effectively cover any "break away". This break away came but not from the challengers, it was Jonathan him self that took the initiative with his amazing hill climbs which saw his opposition left in his wake at the infamous Pembroke climb at 10km. Balzan never had to look back, opening the lead by every kilometer finishing in a time of 2hrs 28' 21", 3 mins 35" ahead of second place Johann and 5 mins 23" ahead of the evergreen 47 year old Mansbridge. Young 19 year old and up coming distance runner, Simon Spiteri came home in a remarkable 2hrs 37' 21" to finish in 4th place. Jonathan himself was extremely pleased with this year's time as he was carrying a small injury but still managed to shave 67 secs off his winning time in 2010.

The female race was a little less competitive, with 4 time winner (2002, 2003, 2004 & 2005) and vastly improving with age, Carmen Hili (40 yrs) having a second stage lead of 3 mins 31 secs over 2009 female winner, 43 year old, Marisa Muscat and a huge 5 mins 46 secs over Romona Engerer (36 yrs). It must be said however, that the death of Ramona's father on the Friday of stage 1 and his subsequent funeral on Saturday of stage 2 must have been a disadvantage to her. However, her dad always supported her and would wish her not to miss this Challenge. So remarkably, she did the 3 days to finish 3rd overall.

Meanwhile, Carmen knew exactly what to do & finished stage 3 in 1 hrs 46' 08" to complete the full distance in a life time best of 2 hrs 55 mins 09 secs, beating ALL her previous wins by 78 seconds off the 2004 win, 7 years later and 7 years older. Second place saw a repeat of day 1 and 2 with Muscat completing the course in 3 hrs 05 mins 12 secs. This another remarkable feat as she has her father in hospital with cancer but still managed to shave 15 secs off her 2009 winning time of 3 hrs 05' 27".

St. Patrick's A. C. double and a repeat of 2005, both with improved times on 2010 (JB) and all time (CH), well done Jonathan and Carmen.

The male veteran record still remains intact with Mansbridge's 2 hrs 25' 16" in 2004 aged 40. The female record is still intact from 1997 and held by Catherine Mijovic of England in 2 hrs 42' 52" aged 36.

Another incredible runner to finish in 3 hrs 13 secs. Mr. Bionic" himself, Nicky Farrugia (51yrs). Nicky has done many ultra events. In 1985 he became the World Record holder, Sicily to Malta – 90km swim, 15 Ironmen, many local swims to and around Gozo. He has been training for the Mother of all triathlons, London to Dover run, swim the Channel and then cycle to Paris but his 3 attempts have been aborted due to bad weather conditions in the Channel. He still hopes to achieve this. His list is endless

In the team event, again St. Patrick's A. C. walked off with both male and female awards. Male team made up of Balzan, Spiteri, Cutajar & Sacco & female team comprising of Hili, Muscat & Daniela Cumbo.

Our thanks go to Scouts groups of Hamrun Lyceum, Msida, Pembroke and Zebbug and all the friends and family of Barry and Isabelle Whitmore

Also the support of the St. John Ambulance who have always been available for this event every year.

We would like to pay a special thanks to the four directly involved Councils for their continued support, the Councils of Rabat, Birzebugga, St. Paul's Bay and Valletta. These councils are very important to the success of the event as the three stages start and / or finish under these councils jurisdiction.

We also must not underestimate the importance; the dedication and respect the Police have for this event, in particular the Traffic Division and District Police. A special thanks to A.C. Raymond Zammit of Division and Spt. Martin Bayliss of Traffic

This year we dedicated the "Challenge" to the late John Walsh and his wife and previous four time "Challenge" winner, Carol Walsh. John, rest in peace, we all miss you. Carol, we are all here for you when you want

On Monday evening, the 28th November at the Dolmen Resort Hotel, a very extensive Prize Award Ceremony took place where Euro 7,700 in cash and Hilly and Ron Hill sports vouchers were on offer

along with 75 Trophies. These were presented by the Product Manager, Melania Pellicano and Founder, President and Race Director, Barry M. Whitmore with the entire presentation photographed by Weddings in Malta, Isabelle Mizzi photography.

RESULTS – 21st Nestle Fitness Malta International Challenge Marathon

MALE

1 st Jonathan Balzan	2 hr 28' 21"
2 nd Johann Galea	2 hr 31' 56"
3 rd David Mansbridge	2 hr 33' 44"
4 th Simon Spiteri	2 hr 37' 21"
5 th Joseph Abdilla	2 hr 38' 24"
6 th Matthew Cutajar	2 hr 41' 46"
7 th Rodney Cassar	2 hr 43' 45"
8 th Antoine Abela	2 hr 43' 59"
9 th Jimmy Sacco	2 hr 45' 51"
10 th Aaron Mifsud	2 hr 45' 52"

FEMALE

1 st Carmen Hili	2hrs 55' 09"
2 nd Marisa Muscat	3 hr 05' 12"
3 rd Ramona Engerer	3 hr 15' 08"
4 th Silvana Camilleri	3 hr 18' 38"
5 th Mireille Bonnici Kind	3 hr 23' 58"
6 th Marthese Mercieca	3 hr 25' 08"
7 th Charmaine Mifsud	3 hr 26' 39"
8 th Mary Grace Demicoli	3 hr 28' 11"
9 th Elaine Mifsud	3 hr 34' 45"
10 th Anja van Vliet	3 hr 38' 53"

This year was represented by 12 overseas countries with the largest number coming from The Netherlands followed by England. Other runners came from Australia, Austria, Germany, Guernsey, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Sweden, USA and Wales

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Winning Ways UK	Official race equipment supplier

Barry M. Whitmore
 Founder, President and Race Director
 Malta International Challenge Marathon

The next two Nestlé's Fitness Malta International Challenge Marathon will take place as follows:
 22nd on 23, 24 & 25 November 2012 23rd on 22, 23 & 24 November 2013

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