

Marathon Win in Rauchwart | teesche.com

Tim Teege

Training works!



Spoiler alert

I came to southeastern Austria to run a marathon in [2016](#), [2018](#), and now in 2019. The event creator [Jürgen Penthor](#), his family, and some friends of his have become friends of mine as well. It's lovely to have this unlikely connection to the tiny village of Rauchwart, not far from the Hungarian border.

Last year I ran the race as part of a 3 marathons in 2 weeks challenge. It was the first of the three, so I took it easy and finished in 3:47 hours. But standing there with the kids after finishing, I realized that my personal best time of 3:26 hours would have been enough that day to come in second place. A spark of motivation ignited in my mind.

A year later, now, I am four weeks into another experiment which is completely new to me. It's called "training" and I'm surprised by its effectiveness. In order to try for a new personal best of around 3:15 hours, I started a popular and tough [training plan by the late Peter Greif](#) (German). I'll write about what that's like in a separate post. So far I can definitely state that it's tougher than most but seems to create results.

That plan takes a total of 8 weeks, at the end of which I'll be running Frankfurt Marathon to see if it worked. After being halfway there, Mister Greif suggests you do a training race. The training race should be done 15 to 25 minutes slower than the final record breaking marathon race, which would mean 3:30 to 3:40 hours for me. Sounds absolutely possible. Luckily, this year's [Rauchwart Marathon](#) happened to fall exactly

on the right date, so I signed up. Jürgen was a bit confused because he knew about my Frankfurt plans, but not about me following the Peter Greif plan. He told me that he knows there are just a handful of runners among the signed up 27 who are able to run a 3:30 hours marathon this time. He knows most of them and researched the others. So I thought there would be a realistic chance to even win this one.

As the date falls outside of school holidays this year, I had to go alone. Flight to Vienna on Saturday afternoon, pasta and relaxing hotel room sleep without noisy kids, early Sunday morning drive down to Rauchwart in one and a half hours, done.



My rental car with the licence plate of the Satan himself

Perfect conditions, just like last year. Around 20 degrees, sunny, completely still lake. There would be a bit of wind later, but not much of it.

A good day to try and win a marathon.



Volunteers helping to set everything up next to the completely flat lake



Marathon group selfie – just one lady is among the starters



Jürgen and his twin brother Harald holding a short speech



Rauchwart's mayor Michaela Raber shooting off the gun, causing everyone to start their GPS watches and then maybe also start running

Running a Race from the Front

I think I've never before lead a race straight at the beginning. But running my goal

pace of 5:00 minutes per kilometer inevitably led to just that. Early on, three others joined me at the front and we switched places around but kept the pace a bit under those 5 minutes. I felt fine.



A few hundred meters in



After a few kilometers I realized I could be part of this leading group for a sustained amount of time

Johannes, who was next to me right at the start, was the first to fall behind a few dozen meters.



Three left, Reinhard, Georg, and me

This was an interesting situation. Obviously there's a bit of a rivalry and competitiveness happening as everyone's trying to see how fast the others are willing to go at this point. Surely the goal is to go as slow as possible without creating a gap between you and the others, losing them. On the other hand, you won't win it by just following the fastest one.

So I took the lead from time to time, increasing the pace to quite a bit under 5 minutes now because I felt like it, taking the two harsh and short ramps of the course in a speedy way and looked how the other two would react.

There wasn't a lot of talking. Reinhard asked me if I wanted to win this today, to which I replied that I'm just planning to finish within 3:30 hours, that's it. He said that would be a good finishing time for him as well.

During the fourth of nine laps of 4.7 kilometers each, Georg dropped behind. The gap between him and us two at the front increased rapidly. We did the fourth lap in an average of 4:40 minutes per kilometer – really fast and close to my planned Frankfurt pace. It just felt right. I think I did all the things well this time. Sleep, nutrition, even a short warm-up before the race. Conditions were still perfect with just a hint of wind.

Towards the end of the fourth lap, Reinhard started to run towards the front. We came by his 15 year old daughter who was running the half marathon event and got lapped by us right now. Shortly afterwards I felt I could run even faster. Heart rate was good and healthy, breathing slow and steady, it's all as it's supposed to be.

Reinhard, next to me, was breathing heavier, though. I noticed that and thought he might be falling behind soon, too.



And he did

After 19 kilometers, I'm leading.

Just 23 to go, keeping the pace to close the deal, right?



It's easy to get arrogant if you see no one behind you on long stretches like these

I'm thinking I'll just keep the pace and see how far it will take me. The first goal is still to just finish in 3:30 hours, which I think is totally possible for me at this point.

Lap 5 I do at the same pace of 4:40 min/km (still twenty seconds per kilometer faster than necessary for the 3:30 hours), coming through the half marathon mark after 1:40 hours. Quite a bunch of minutes to spare.



It's lonely at the front

Whenever I come by the aid station, Harald sees me and announces over the PA that I'm the current leader, leading the people to clap for me. Aid station, water and iso. Playing it safe here. As no one's behind me, I could just take my time and even have a break. But I decide against that, because this is a training race and I would like to get the best possible training effect out of this. So it's just downing those drinks in seconds and straight back to the pace.

Lap 6 in 22:31 minutes (4:47 min/km average), lap 7 in 4:52 min/km, lap 8 in 4:58. Yes, I'm getting slower now. It's not that I struggle, I just think to myself that everything below 5 minutes is fine because that was the plan. No point in destroying myself today. Or on any given day, for that matter. And the lack of motivation from behind isn't helping me to keep the faster pace from the earlier laps.

So I just do my thing, enjoying the course, greeting the runners, looking at the watch to keep the steady pace, and run.

Until during the final lap I suddenly see a helicopter coming down for a landing. A rare thing in this remote area.



That's not looking good

Turns out, Reinhard, the guy who was the last one to let me go, collapsed after 36 kilometers. A few paramedics were already surrounding him, pumping oxygen and saline solution into him and closely monitoring him. Jürgen has also used a car to come to this place and help out. I stop to see if I can do anything, but they have it all under control of course.

I can't help but think of my first ever race win, the [Te Houtaewa ultra](#), where nearly the same thing happened and the second fastest guy (me being the fastest) collapsed and had to be brought into the hospital. It's a weird coincidence, and I wonder if this happens a lot more often than I previously thought, because only at the front you might get to witness these things happening. Not sure, though.

Anyways, Reinhard was okay and got a free helicopter ride, so I've been told. He even managed to jokingly ask if he would be allowed to finish his remaining 6 kilometers later.

Still, this makes me wonder how these things can happen at all. It must have been a nutritional problem again, probably not enough salt intake during the race. But why wouldn't you realize you're about to collapse? Not notice some sort of headache or uneasiness right before it? Why isn't it possible for these people to stop and collect their thoughts and first take care of their bodies? It's beyond me and I would really like to find out.

Jürgen told me to go and win this race, so I continued. Again, leaving a collapsed competitor behind.

5:06 min/km average for this last lap due to this break and a bit of fatigue as well.



Sonja, Jürgen's wife, greets and congratulates me



3:24:09 is the finishing time and my new personal best



Not like this did nothing to my body, so an ice-cold foot bath in the lake is the absolute best right now

Four minutes later, second place shows up. Johannes, with a strong 3:28. Third place, Thomas, comes in quite a bit later at 3:48. Just five runners will be under 4 hours in the end, 21 finishing in total.

Success!

That training race worked out quite well. With an average of 4:50 min/km I was well within the plan and even managed to sneak over the finishing line in first place. Could be worse. [Here's the Strava analytics](#).

Jürgen comes back, I get congratulated by a lot of people, both familiar and strange faces, we hang out and talk about cool other races. Because that's what we like to do. As well as have some beer – Jürgen brought some ice-cold Gössers over.



Perfectly timed photo of us three



René is also here, I met him last year and then coincidentally, at the [Brussels marathon, my EU finale](#) – he also has lots of race recommendations for me

Shower, smoothie, and then it's time for the prize giving. Mayor Raber is back and congratulates us top three runners of today and I get to stand on top of a podium for the first time in my life. Not too bad!



I'll be back next year



Medal and custom race number



And even a little trophy