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Berkel, Keat Defend Titles At Challenge Copenhagen

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Both Australia's Tim Berkel and Rebekah Keat held up their ends of the title-defending bargain by repeating wins at today's Challenge Copenhagen. The Denmark race—an iron-distance course showcasing everything from the coastline of the Baltic Sea to the Danish countryside to the historic buildings of the capital—is only in its second year.

Coming off the bike, Berkel was about 15 minutes down from leader (and bike whiz) Bjorn Andersson and had to serve a four-minute penalty. "I got a penalty and thought my day was over," Berkel says. "I really went out hard on the run—I was really frustrated so I just pounded myself down and tried to smack the frustratin off of me."

Mile by mile, he reeled Andersson in and started to lead after the half-marathon point. But then came Denmark's own Jimmy Johnsen, a speedy runner who could stir up the podium. "I knew that I was one of the best runners there," Berkel said. "It was great with Jimmy, he caught me with about 7K to go, then I caught him with 2K to go. He attacked and I attacked. I'm just so happy. I've never defending a title before. And racing in this city is just...awesome."



Click here to view a photo gallery of the race.

In the women's race, Keat was the one to be chased—a nice change from running after the unstoppable Chrissie Wellington at Challenge Roth in July. She shined with an 8:52 finish (about two minutes faster than her last year's time), which she partially attributes to fellow Team TBB member Jodie Swallow.

"If it wasn't for Jodie Swallow on the bike, my time wouldn't have been as quick. She rode amazing." Unfortunately Swallow has been dealing with a plantar fascia tear and opted out of the marathon after about 1K of running in agony. Keat continued on to run a blazing fast 2:56 marathon, she says one of her best.

"This marathon run split was one of the best I've ever had," Keat says. "Usually I fade the last 10K, but my coach [Brett Sutton] said, 'no, your legs will be there, your legs will be there.' And the run was there today and I'm so happy to be back running at my best." Next up, Keat will race on American soil at Rev3 Cedar Point September 11.

Second-place finisher Asa Lundstrom of Denmark was ecstatic when crossing the line, finishing in 9:35:31, with third-place Ina Schuecker coming in at 9:38:31.

Last year, spectators were estimated to be upwards of 120,000. Both leaders mentioned the support on the four-loop run course having a big effect on their marathons. "The crowd...I didn't think it could be any better than last year," Keat says. "But this year just topped it off. That's the best crowd I've ever had at any race."

Men's Top Five

1. Tim Berkel (AUS) 8:11:15
2. Jimmy Johnsen (DEN) 8:11:50
3. Dejan Patricevic (CRO) 8:12:18
4. Mads Vittrup-Pedersen (DEN) 8:13:21
5. Esben Hovgaard (DEN) 8:21:07

Women's Top Five

1. Rebekah Keat (AUS) 8:52:42
2. Asa Lundstrom (DEN) 9:35:31
3. Ina Schuecker (GER) 9:38:15
4. Karina Ottosen (DEN) 9:42:59
5. Helene Pallesen (DEN) 9:45:54