

45th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon: A day of records - Dreams fulfilled

The 45th edition of the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon went down in history: new course records were set by four-time winner Janine Meyer and Jack Burke. The Canadian dedicated his third victory to his girlfriend Melanie, to whom he proposed after crossing the finish line. And she said yes! The best Austrian finisher was Melanie Geiger from Vorarlberg, who took a great third place.

4,271 cycling enthusiasts from 38 different countries took on the 45th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon. The 227-kilometer course covering 5,500 altitude meters and four alpine passes, led from Sölden via Kühtai, Brenner Pass, Jaufen Pass and Timmelsjoch back to the finish line in Sölden. What began as a mere adventure in 1982 has long since become a legend, characterized by top-class athletic performances, outstanding emotions and unique personal stories. The Ötztaler Cycle Marathon's continued growth is also evident in the women's field: more than 431 women participated in the marathon this year, representing over 10% of the total starting field for the first time.

Tension in the leading group

No less than eight former winners tackled the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon this year. But the legend isn't just about record times and victories, but above all about those who - after many hours on the saddle - make their own personal dream come true. "The true heroes, however, are all the dreamers who cross the finish line many hours after the fastest riders. They are what makes the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon so legendary. This year, we had 26 participants who had already competed more than 20 times. A standout among them was Martin Strobl at 81 years old, a Tirolean living in Graz, who completed his 36th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon," said OC heads Heike Klotz and Dominic Kuen with delight.

Federspiel takes a big risk

In the men's race, the first steep climb up to Kühtai proved decisive as around 15 riders, including all the top favorites, broke away. Together they crossed Brenner Pass and in the foothills of Jaufen Pass, two-time winner Jack Burke and former WorldTour pro Toni Palzer left the group behind. Palzer couldn't keep up with Burke's high pace and crossed the pass height just over a minute later. Last year's winner Daniel Federspiel, started the downhill stretch to St. Leonhard two minutes behind. With a daring downhill ride, "Feder" caught up again with Toni Palzer, then they tackled Timmelsjoch Pass together just under a minute behind Burke.

The best day of Jack Burke's life

Last year, Jack Burke attacked on Jaufen Pass but was ultimately caught by Daniel Federspiel on Timmelsjoch. This exact scenario was almost the same in today's race - with Federspiel just a few meters behind Burke. But the Canadian native left nothing to chance and upped the pace once again. Riding solo, he crossed Timmelsjoch at 2,474 m and cruised down to an unchallenged third victory. And he did so with a phenomenal marathon course record of 6:29:21.2. This significantly undercut the previous best time held by Mathias Nothegger from Vorarlberg (6:47:02.3 hours). The top six men all beat Notheggers' record, demonstrating just how fast the race was today.

The Canadian's marriage proposal

The crowd of spectators in the finish area marveled at the performances of the top riders, but even more so at Jack Burke's spontaneous marriage proposal to his girlfriend. He wore the ring under his jersey: "I had been planning the proposal since February and only a few friends knew about it. I wanted to win this race for my Melanie. Now I am standing here in Sölden as a three-time winner of the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon - even with a record time. This is the best day of my life." Daniel Federspiel also celebrated his second-place finish: "Jack was just too strong today. I got dangerously close to him on Timmelsjoch, but then I had nothing left in the tank." Third place went to former World Cup rider and Ötztal native Miguel Brugger, who felt like a winner at the finish line.

Toni Palzer celebrating a successful cycle marathon debut

Behind former Italian winner Stefano Cecchini, former WorldTour pro Toni Palzer finished in fifth place: "It was so brutal, the guys were so fast. I attacked just before Jaufen Pass and only Jack went with me. I paid dearly for that attack." When asked if he will return to Sölden: "I have got a taste for it. I will definitely race in Sölden again. The atmosphere along the course was fabulous." Behind Italy's Lucio Pierantozzi, East Tyrolean Alban Lakata finished seventh.

Women's field on track of records

The 2026 Ötztaler Cycle Marathon also set new standards for women: for the very first time, more than 400 women took part in the race. At the same time, their share rose to over ten percent this year. Two new record highs that underscore the strong development of the women's field in recent years.

Janine Meyer unbeatable – fourth victory in a row!

As in the past three years, German Janine Meyer dominated the race right from the start. Not even a crash in Innsbruck, where she collided with her teammate, could stop her. The Cologne native, currently the undisputed star of the international cycle marathon scene, kept her fellow Germans Julia Jedelhauser and Eva Schien at bay throughout the marathon. As the crowning achievement of a fantastic performance, the 48-year-old even beat her own course record from last year by 7 minutes, finishing in 7:15:46.2: "It was pretty fast at the beginning. I thought I was going to lose out towards the end. It was a really tough day. No one believes me, but I focus on each climb, not on the overall time. Four course records and four wins, it's truly incredible!"

Vorarlberg's Melanie Geiger finishes as best Austrian

Germany's Eva Schien held second place throughout the marathon and maintained that position to the finish line after 7:28:10.3 hours. On Timmelsjoch Pass, Melanie Geiger - mother of two children and architectural drafter from Vorarlberg - managed to make a podium finish thanks to a spirited performance! She overtook German Julia Jedelhauser who had been in third place for much of the race. "I almost can't believe it, I was so overwhelmed that I cried at the finish line. My family's support is phenomenal. Without their support, it wouldn't be possible at all," Geiger exclaimed in Sölden.

When top athletes become dreamers themselves

Even well-known names from international sports took on the challenge. Among them were several former world-class skiers, including Werner Heel, Manfred Mölgg and Florian Scheiber. Scheiber tackled the "Ötztaler" for the third time and is now the coach of the Norwegian Alpine Ski World Cup team. Former German professional cyclist Jörg Ludewig and reigning Ultra-cycling World Champion Lukas Kaufmann also participated again. Among the celebrities, South Tyrolean

Manfred Mölgg once again posted the best time, finishing in 7:25:48.0 hours and placing 89th overall! "Again, it was so tough and difficult. Today I actually shed a few tears in Sölden. I'm absolutely satisfied," said Mölgg.

A dream with international appeal

In 2026, cycling enthusiasts from 38 nations took on the challenge, including participants traveling from as far afield as Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa and the USA. Over 25,000 applications for just over 4,000 starting places prove the international appeal of the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon and its great importance as a tourism driver for the region.

1,300 people: a shared responsibility

More than 1,300 highly motivated volunteers support the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon, many of them dedicated to the cause with tremendous personal commitment. They all ensure the safety along the marathon course, staff the refreshment stations, coordinate the race and together create the unique atmosphere that defines the ÖRM.

This sense of community and cooperation also reflects the social and environmental responsibility that the Ötztaler Cycle Marathon embraces. As a partner of Green Events Austria, the event focuses on waste reduction, reusable systems, regional partners, e-mobility and public transportation. The unique Bike4Help Prologue is also part of this commitment as its net proceeds support families in need within Tirol. This year, € 6,500 was raised, bringing the total donations over the past seven years to € 35,000.

Sölden in the grip of cycling sports

From Friday onwards, everything in Sölden revolved around cycling sports. The charity Bike4Help Prologue kicked off the race weekend, while the "Ötztaler Sattelfest" Bike Expo showcased the latest trends in the cycling world. Saturday's events also included the ÖRM Live Podcast and the Riders' Briefing, before the 45th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon was the undisputed sporting highlight on Sunday.

The next dream is already waiting

After the 45th Ötztaler Cycle Marathon, Heike Klotz and Dominic Kuen look back on the event proudly - and are already looking ahead: "A heartfelt thank you goes to our Dream Team of over 1,300 dedicated volunteers, our loyal sponsors and all our partners, the supportive authorities in Austria and Italy as well as the understanding local population along the route. They all contribute to ensuring that the Ötztaler legend continues to grow stronger year after year - once again at the 2027 Ötztaler Cycle Marathon taking place on 29 August 2027."