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## STUBAI ULTRATRAIL – URBAN2GLACIER

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Neustift im Stubaital, 02.07.2017: press release: Austria's Philipp Brugger wins first Stubai Ultratrail.

**The first edition of the Stubai Ultratrail lived up to its motto "urban2glacier" this weekend as almost 500 runners from 20 countries took on the unique course up onto the Jochdohle on the Stubai Glacier at 3,150 metres above sea level. Sensational trails, stunning views and – at least in the morning – bright sunshine accompanied the athletes on their odyssey into the Stubai Alps. In temperatures just above freezing it was Austria's Philipp Brugger who won the men's race in 8:28.07.9 hours ahead of Germany's Daniel Kraus (8:31.53.4 hours). Rounding out the podium in third was another Austrian, Roman Kessler from Innsbruck, who crossed the finish line in a time of 8:32.01.6 hours. The women's race was won by the favourite, Natalia Tomasiak from Poland, who completed the 62.5 kilometres in 9:27.33.2 hours – more than an hour faster than second-placed Verena Melzer from Germany (10:30.56.0 hours) and Marie-Luise Mühlhuber from Austria (10:41.18.3). All the runners taking part in the 62.5km event with 5,116 vertical metres of ascent and 2,554 of descent agreed that the Stubai Ultratrail is up there with the very best trailruns when it comes to both difficulty and scenery.**

Despite changing weather conditions – rain to start with, followed by sunshine in the morning and thick mist with fresh snow in the afternoon – there were only happy, if exhausted, faces at the finish line on the Stubai Glacier. Due to the fog and snowfall the finish line for both the Ultratrail and the Basictrail was moved at 13:00 from the Jochdohle ridge 1.5 kilometres and 250 vertical metres down the mountain to the Eisgrat cable car station. "The first edition of the Stubai Ultratrail was a big success and exceeded all our expectations, despite the weather," said Roland Volderauer, head of the Stubai Tirol Tourism Board. "The start in Innsbruck and the emotional arrival at the finish on the Stubai Glacier were the best moments for me. There was also a great positive atmosphere throughout the event." This good vibe was enjoyed by all the athletes, who were visibly motivated by the support they received from fans who had got up early to cheer on the runners in the night and early morning. There was also plenty of support for the runners as they made their way through the towns on the route, from Innsbruck to Telfes and Neustift.

Many fans had gathered in the regional capital of Tyrol to send the runners on their way at 1:00am. As the start gun went in front of Innsbruck's theatre it was German runner Basti Lexa who took an early lead. The 27-year-old from Team Scott Austria reached the first refreshment station at Stephansbrücke bridge 25 seconds ahead of Josef Vogt, who would later go on to finish seventh. A further five seconds behind was Philipp Brugger. Among the other runners at the front of the race was Anton Philipp, the reigning German trailrunning champion in the Masters age category, who reached the refreshment station together with his running partner Seppi Neuhauser just 40 seconds after Lexa – despite losing valuable time as the result of a fall Philipp suffered only 4 kilometres into the race.

At the second refreshment station in Telfes it was still Lexa leading the field, though his advantage on the eventual winner Philipp Brugger has almost completely disappeared. On the section from Telfs up to the Schlicker Alm and the Starkenburger Hütte hut, including the climb to the Sennjoch ridge and the downhill from the Starkenburger Hütte hut, Brugger pushed on to create the gap which would be enough to secure him victory. He reached the village of Neustift after 3:52.04 hours, followed by Josef Vogt in 4:04.13.6 hours and Daniel Kraus – who had made a cautious start – in 4:11.23.4 hours.

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The next section of the Stubai Ultratrail took the runners along a number of challenging trails leading through breathtaking landscape. After passing the Doadler Alm hut and climbing to Ranalt it was time to take on the Wild Water Trail along the banks of the Ruetz river all the way to the Tschangelair Alm hut. The final points of reference down in the valley were the Grawa Alm hut and the Mutterbergalm cable car station, where the brutal ascent up onto the glacier began. After passing the Dresdner Hütte hut, the adventure continued along the new alpine trail over snow and ice past the Eisgrat cable car station towards the finish line on the Eisjoch ridge. The fastest times on the second section of the course were posted by 32-year-old Daniel Kraus from Farchant near Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany and Innsbruck's Roman Kessler. Though Kraus managed to cut Philipp Brugger's lead from almost 19 minutes to just 3:46 minutes, he was unable to reel in the Austrian before the finish line.

"I feel great, but I am also really tired. It was a hard race, for me especially between kilometres 45 and 55. I felt a bit better again towards the end, despite the snow and the cold. I am really happy to have won here in my home region. That means a lot to me," commented the runner from Innsbruck after arriving at the finish next to the Jochdohle, Austria's highest restaurant.

Despite missing out on the win by just four minutes after 62.8 kilometres of racing, Daniel Kraus was more than pleased with his second place: "It was a beautiful course but one which was hard to judge before the race. I started slowly on purpose to make sure that I had enough energy left at the end. I am really happy that everything went so well." The final few kilometres of snow and ice turned into a fascinating battle between the Kraus and Roman Kessler, who reached the finish line just eight seconds behind the German. "I didn't expect to finish third. After 30 kilometres I had very bad cramp. The toughest part for me was the downhill from the Starkenburger Hütte hut," said Kessler.

Despite Anton Philipp's early fall, the duo of Philipp/Neuhauser put in an impressive performance to finish fifth overall and first in the category Master Men: "We are a team and we wanted to finish as a team. We had agreed on that before the start, especially as we are preparing for the GORE-TEX® Transalpine Run. Anton's fall just 4 kilometres in made us even more determined to stick together."

Another strong local runner was Andi Stern, who finished second in the category Senior Master Men. "Finishing on the podium here in Tyrol makes the first edition of the Stubai Ultratrail – which I have been involved in behind the scenes from the very start – even more special," he commented.

In the women's race it was the up-and-coming trailrunning star from Poland Natalia Tomasiak who lived up to her reputation as favourite going into the event. The athlete from Team Salomon Suunto Poland, who finished fifth in the overall standings of the 2016 World Cup Skyrunning Extreme, set a fast pace right from the start and reached the finish in a time of 9:27.33.2 hours. "I am really happy. I can't believe I finished first – that is just crazy. The nature here is incredible and very different to what we have back home in Poland. One thing's for sure: I will be back next year to defend my title," smiled the 30-year-old from Cracow. Second place went to Verena Melzer from Sonthofen in Bavaria (10:30.56.0 hours) with Marie-Luise Mühlhuber from the village of Völs near Innsbruck third in a time of 10:41.18.3 hours. "It is a great course but really tough as well. The section from Neustift was particularly hard for me, and the final climb through the snow and ice was crazy," said Verena Melzer.

The Stubai Basictrail course, which started in the village of Neustift, had to be shortened due to the poor weather. The finish line was moved 1.5 kilometres and 220 vertical metres down the mountain to the Eisgrat cable car station. Quickest off the start line was Alexander Grigo (Villingen-Schwenningen), who was the first runner to reach the Dresdner Hütte hut. However, the German was unable to hold the pace and eventually fell away to finish fifth.

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After 27.1 kilometres it was David Wallmann from Austria who crossed the finish line first in a time of 3:09.38.6 hours. "Top conditions and a surprising amount of support and good vibes along the course," said the winner. Hot on his heels were fellow Austrian David Denifl (3:18.31.3 hours) and Italy's Christian Moser (3:19.03.4 hours).

"Sport brings people together and is one of the core values of Innsbruck and the Stubai Valley. The Stubai Ultratrail embodies all that and shows how close we are to each other by creating a bridge from the urban setting of Innsbruck to the snow and ice of the Stubai Glacier – urban2glacier. It has been a fantastic event which we look forward to repeating again in the future," concluded Sepp Rettenbacher, chairman of the Stubai Tirol Tourism Board.

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