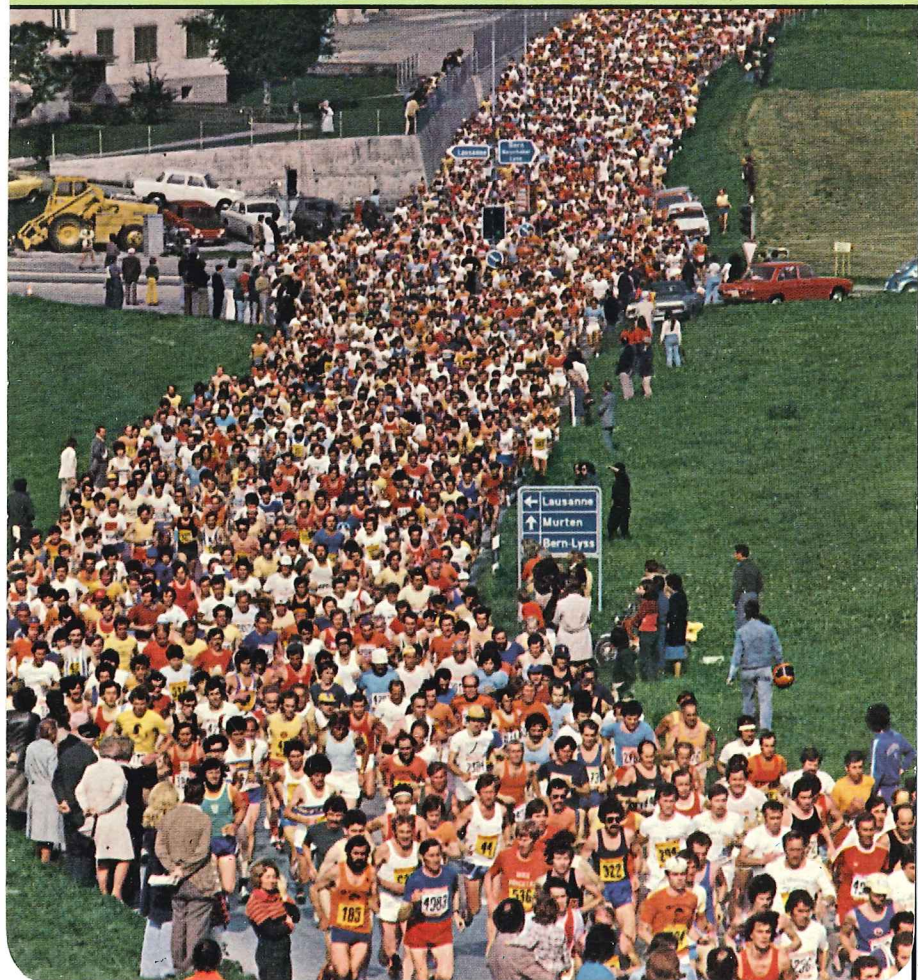


Track and Field



The Morat to Fribourg Race



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The Swiss Marathon

In 1476, a Swiss soldier ran from Morat to Fribourg to bring the good news of the victory over Charles the Bold. Like the famous soldier at Marathon, the Swiss runner subsequently died of exhaustion. Leaving aside the legend, the Morat to Fribourg race is to Swiss athletics what the marathon is to the olympic games: a very popular event.

Morat and Fribourg, whose crenellated walls are the remaining sign of an historic past, are two towns situated in western Switzerland. On June 22, 1930, a Sunday, and the anniversary of the battle of Morat, an unknown and unassuming painter-sculptor from Berne called Adolf Flückiger, whose sole passion was sport, decided to repeat his ancestor's exploit. When he arrived under the commemorative lime-tree planted in 1476 in Fribourg, he was astonished to be greeted by dignitaries of the local council. Among those present was Beda Hefti, a civil engineer and founding member of both the Fribourg Athletic Club and of the Ski Club. Three years later he organized the first Morat-Fribourg race which was to become a classic, and enjoy a

spectacular success: 14 runners took part in 1933, but by 1976 there were over 6,000!

What is extraordinary about the Morat-Fribourg race is that apart from a few hundred prize-winning and professional athletes, most of the runners—who pay to take part—are completely unknown. And, of course, tens of thousands of spectators gather along the route every first Sunday in October. Today, the race is beginning to suffer from its popularity; it is not possible to send off 6,000 athletes over a course without meeting seemingly insuperable problems, particularly at the start.

In 1977, the different categories started separately, and for the first time, women were admitted.

MORAT-FRIBOURG

Asphalt road 16.4 km long, undulating and winding

Werner Doessegger, "Mr Morat-Fribourg", several times champion and Swiss middle-distance record holder, has won this race 9 times, beating his own record on several occasions; best performance: 50:50 (1972)

Present record: 50:46.5 by Markus Ryffel in 1976

The Swiss marathon draws around 6,000 competitors every year