**Kuopio Swimrun Race Report**

**Kuopio, Finland**

**13th of July, 2024**

What do you expect from Finland? Vastness, lakes, and few people? Yes, you will not be disappointed!

Kuopio SwimRun stands out due to its proximity to the large city of Kuopio, where the trails begin right in the city and within a few meters, you find yourself in the wilderness with endless trail options. We had fantastic weather on race day. At the start of the ultradistance event in the morning, the temperature was 17°C and warmed up to 24°C. Thanks to the predominantly shaded trails, this was no problem.

The course is technically demanding but also has some rolling sections where you can really push the pace. The challenging part is the big hill, which has to be conquered three times, including the start section, and of course, the nearly 11 km of swimming. This course demands a complete athlete.

The perfect terrain for the 1st Ultra World Championships, attracting participants from various nations. The race started at 6 AM with transportation to the start; waking up at 4 AM was no problem since the sun was already shining and it never gets completely dark here. The race briefing was concise and precise, leading to the start of a 1700 m swim. Organizer Sampo Hyppölä personally showed the way with a rowboat.

The course marking is the best in SwimRun. The evening before at 6 PM, everything was still unmarked. Every turn was announced 50 meters ahead and clearly marked on trees. Yes, there are plenty of trees here to attach markers to, but the markers were also visible multiple times. The swim exits were clearly marked and almost always directly visible. A unique feature was the GPS tracker, making it easy for supporters to see where the athletes were.

Sampo and his team were extremely dedicated, mixing their own isotonic drinks based on their racing experience. The aid stations were friendly, helpful, and well-informed. Even for supporters, the day was very varied, and the hours flew by.

The diverse landscape with great views, beautiful lakes, and trail sections was also a pleasure for supporters, covering 18 km in total.

The ultradistance race was exciting in the first half. The mixed team and two solo starters were mostly together. In the second half, the field spread out, and Austrian Gerhard Schiemer (an experienced ultra trail runner with multiple World Championship experiences) pulled ahead and eventually won with a 20-minute lead, achieving the second-best time ever in the 7-year history of the race (despite the new course having 500 meters more swimming).

The winner's prize was a unique handmade wooden clock in the shape of an island and the Championship Cap of the My SwimRun Championships for the 1st Ultra SwimRun World Championships.

The evening ended pleasantly for many in the sauna by Lake Kallavesi, followed by a final dinner.

Would we recommend this race? Absolutely. Despite setting a new participant record, the race still has plenty of potential and more than deserves it. The course is very demanding with 1200 meters of elevation gain and challenging trail sections over roots and rocks. The relaxed, family-like atmosphere made everyone feel comfortable and eager for the coming year.