

# In The Picture

June 2016

# Gert Mertens

Vice champion BC 100 km 2016

Winner M&U Cup 2011, 2014 and 2015



11 May 2003... The ValkenbergRUN, also the start of Gert Mertens as an ultrarunner. After his first marathon in January he ran his first 6-hour race, assisted by his father. He ran 50 km without stopping. His fastest round was the last one and ended at 70,476 km! He is one of the best Belgian ultrarunners!

## How did your passion for ultrarunning begin?

My passion for ultrarunning started at the Dodentocht in 2000. I had walked it the first time, but it took ages. The next year I ran large areas of the race track and I really liked it.

## You specialised yourself at the 6-hour. But we also received hints that you want to participate at longer hour runs. A new destination or a try-out?

I never dared to start a longer hour run, but I'm considering it for a while now. If it's not that bad it could mean that it becomes a new destination in my running career. An important condition however is that I can make enough training mileage and that's sometimes the hardest part. The 6-hour is my specialty because you are running in rounds. Thus race track knowledge isn't a problem and you can perfectly take care of your supply and even adapt when necessary, if you have an assistant.

## You organised the 50 km at Schoten in August every time. You kept it deliberately small. May we know why?

When organising a race I see two choices. You see it big, but you'll need electronic time registration and a lot of volunteers. This can only be done if you have a couple of good sponsors and the support of a (sports) club. If you are well established with a lot of paying participants you can also do it without sponsorship. The other choice is that you keep it small, with the help of some family members and a manual time registration. The idea of the 50 km was to celebrate my 50th birthday. It was an additional reason to keep it small. The runners knew me all in person and were personally invited by me.

## The organisers also know you via the marathon-and ultracup, a regularity criterion with a scoring system. Can you explain how the scoring system was worked out?

In the beginning of the cup Jos Cleemput and Lucien Taelman worked out this scoring system. They started with lists of results of men and women of different ages and developed a scoring system based on those results. The marathon is the step towards ultrarunning. A couple of years ago a system with bonus points was added to reward regularity and to prevent that someone only runs marathons. We had to introduce the maximum of twelve races at the moment that the cup grew enormously regarding the participating organisations. Twelve races can still be spread over a year in a healthy way.

## The scoring system only gives points up to 24h races. Is it because no stage races have joined the cup or aren't they allowed?

Indeed, stage races never joined the M&U Cup. They are usually runs among friends, where the distance and time registration is done less accurate. Neither did we contact organisers of races that are spread over a couple of days.

Thank you for the interview Gert.

Kevin Simons