

Karine van Elsen

Passionate ultra runner



In The Picture

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Karine loves nature and challenges. As a recreational runner, for instance, she wants to try a 36-hour or 48-hour race one day. Not for a top time, but for the experience.

You became 3rd woman in the Marathon- en Ultracup. Is there a specific reason you're running ultras?

I like challenges, nature and I also like to test my endurance. And I like running long distances. I have already been Belgian Champion in my age category at the 24h and once Flemish Champion at the 100 km. Whether I finish first or last doesn't matter to me. It's getting there that gives me a kick. I do look at where the course is located, the location of the course and what weather is forecast. But I can enjoy running ultrarunning races. The only drawback is that as a healthcare professional, I have to work a weekend every two weekends. By the way, as a 60-plus year old, I will once again participate in the Belgian Championship 24 hours.

You also became first woman in the stage race België Diagonaal (2021) as well as the Ronde van Vlaanderen (2022). Had you been working towards this specifically?

For België Diagonaal, I did train a lot on slopes. In addition, I have been training five to six times a week for the last twelve weeks. At the Ronde van Vlaanderen, I did not do any specific training. There, I did suffer an injury during the eighth stage. But I still finished the last three stages. Slightly afterwards, I received word that I was high in the Marathon- en Ultracup rankings. And then I did decide to train more focused so that I could run many more ultra races. In the end, I became third woman and sixteenth overall in the cup and the oldest lady. Not bad in my opinion, knowing that I don't really run competitively.

You mentioned that you became champion a number of times. Can you tell a bit more about that?

My first Belgian Championship was in Maasmechelen. That was in 2014 and I ran the 100 km back then. I became second within my age category (V50) and Flemish Champion, because Valerie Turlot had joined the Walloon federation. In 2016, I ran the 24 Hours of Aalter in Aalter. There I also came second, but considering Wielma Dierx is Dutch, I became Belgian Champion within my age category. In 2017, I became second in the 100 km in Aalter. In 2018, I ran the 24 hours in Aalter with a 100 km split. Then I was the only woman within my age category (V55) and thus became Belgian Champion within my age category again. In 2020, I was luckier, because then there were 3 women running within our age category. I did stop then, but still got the bronze medal. Last year, I ran again as the only woman within my age category, but the medals by age category were abolished and from this year I am running in the V60 category. André Mingneau, the national coach, was going to gain advice again whether medals could be provided again within the age category... Because otherwise we would have to run against women ten years younger. And I personally don't think that's very correct.

Thanks for the interview Karine and we wish you lots of success in the future.

Kevin Simons