

VareseNews

Bruno's latest folly: one and a half marathons, in the Arctic Circle

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We met him at the **New York marathons**, because, for years, he has been **the best ranked competitor from Varese**. We met him again, when he was running the legendary distance of 42 kilometres and 195 metres, when his goal was to **complete seven marathons on seven continents**, with a record total time. And then, for charity, he was also the protagonist of an **attempt at a crazy record**: to run the **New York marathon dressed as a snowboarder** (including board and boots), within what at the time was the limit. When he reached the end, he was exhausted, but he made it with 10 minutes to spare.

Now, **Bruno Bonicalzi, 41, from Gallarate**, is expected to take part in another “crazy race”: **a marathon and a half-marathon in two days**, in unique and particular surroundings, under extreme conditions, **within the Arctic Circle**. The “combined” undertaking (so, with the sum of the times) is called the **Polar Bear Challenge**, and even getting to the start is complicated: flight to **Copenhagen**, gathering of all of the participants and **flight to Kangerlussuaq**, a small village in **Greenland**, which was once quite famous because it was home to an important American military base. The village (of about 500 inhabitants) will be the headquarters of the ice race, which starts with the **Polar Circle Marathon**, on Saturday 26th, and ends the following day, with the half-marathon. (photo above: Bonicalzi in Antarctica)

“But the adventure in Greenland already starts **on Friday, when we'll be busy checking the route**,” Bonicalzi explained before taking the plane to Copenhagen. “We're going to have to bring **steel crampons**, because at some points, the **snow is constantly blown away by the icy wind**, so we'll be running on the ice cap. It will be a great beginning, considering the double effort on Saturday and Sunday.”

Before leaving, the runner from Gallarate took part in a 30-kilometre race in Pavia, and then finished his preparation in the **Varese City Run**, last **Sunday**.

This **promises to be a tough undertaking**, even for someone like Bruno, who has already several races behind him. “It's a considerable unknown, because, **even in training, I've never tried the combined marathon and half-marathon**. Generally, the day after a marathon is one of rest, but this time, I have to add another 21 kilometres of running. And as always in these cases, we'll all rely on the environment and **the warmth of our fellow runners**, because, obviously in places like this, there won't be any real spectators cheering the runners.”

Bonicalzi at the Varese City Run

Bonicalzi has already completed an extreme marathon; **in March 2018, he took part in one in Antarctica**. “At that time, it was even more ‘exclusive’, insofar as we were running alone, and nowhere; **there were only the people who had a place on the ship** that had brought us there. In preparation for the Arctic, it was a good ‘training ground’, because I competed in complicated environmental conditions, but here in the North Pole, it will be much windier and more humid, with a **temperature of between -15° and -20°C**.”

At least on the eve of the *Polar Bear Challenge*, however, **Bruno has no doubt about what his greatest athletic folly was**. “At the Arctic Circle, or at the South Pole, we’re still talking about athletic performance, even with all the limitations (the record for the Polar Circle Marathon is 2h53’45”, which was set last year by the Greenlander Martin Møller *ed.*).

In comparison, **running in New York, wearing an anorak, boots**, gloves and goggles, and carrying a **snowboard**, on a really hot day, was quite different. Crazy, insane.”

di Translated by Ciccone & Francesconi (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)