



As previously announced, the 2013 Genghis Khan Festival will introduce a new competition that will crown the King and Queen of the Grasslands. The honorary title will go to the athlete who completes the 200km of mountainbiking and 42km of marathon running in the fastest time. Shanghai-based German Hauke Stockrahm is one of two men, the other being China's Ji Xinli, who accomplished this remarkable feat already last year. And he's coming back!

Hauke Stockrahm is not the only one with 'royal' ambitions for this summer. Almost 30 athletes have already confirmed doing the combination of 3 days biking with one of the three running distances (42km, 21km or 10km). So far, ten of them are going all the way and will thus compete for the top honour. A good occasion to shed some light on how the experience was for Stockrahm last year. He's next up in our 'Focus on Athlete' series.

*More information and regulations about the King of the Grasslands competition can be found in the [KOG section](#) of this website*

**Question: The Genghis Khan Festival has become a classic on China's amateur sports calendar and will be organized already for the 7th time next year. How do you feel about this?**

**Stockrahm:** It's great to hear that the number of participants is increasing that much. I also try my best to support it. For this year I already convinced 4 of my colleagues and friends to sign up for one of the races in 2013.

**What do you like most about the Genghis Khan Festival weekend?**

Besides the amazing landscape, it's especially the relaxing way your team organises the

festival. That's what all the athletes were reflecting about during the event. Besides, I love this little town somewhere in the middle of nowhere. With Xiwuqi you guys found the right spot to hold such an event.

**In a way you and China's Ji Xinli were the unofficial Kings of the Grasslands last year. Now the combination of running the full marathon with riding the 3 days long distance MTB will be an official competition with rewards. Several people have already signed up by now. How will your experience from last year help you this time?**

There is definitely one thing I learned last year: don't underestimate the grasslands! This time I will start more slowly. The 3 MTB stages plus the Marathon race will require all your power anyway so don't be stupid and use it up too early.

**Was it more difficult than you expected? What happened on the first day of the MTB race?**

The most challenging and harder than expected were these long rolling hills of the Mongolian grassland. Especially if you are not used to run on a such a terrain, you will suffering a lot. Yes... I remember the first stage. There was this steep downhill section about in the middle of the track, followed by a bump in the mud track. I went way too fast down, so I flew over my handlebar and fortunately landed in the soft grass and didn't get hurt too much. But this accident caused that I lost my timing chip, which was fixed on the bike frame. I found it and put it into my pocket. I believe in this position the chip was not detected when crossing the finish line.

**Why did you decide to participate in both the Grassland Marathon and the MTB long distance stage race? In particular the Saturday must be very tough!**

I went to Inner Mongolia once before for travelling purposes in 2009, that's when I fell in love with the grasslands. So when I signed up for the 2012 event, I didn't want to miss even 1km of the beautiful scenery. That's the secret reason I signed up for both events. The Saturday stage was quite ok for me. Of course after the Marathon I was totally exhausted. But I made the right thing and kept moving until the 2nd MTB stage. In that way you don't give your muscles the chance to become sore and it enabled me to finalize the afternoon race without too much suffering. However, the Sunday morning was hell... When I got up in the morning with painful muscles all over my body and knowing I have to cycle another 100k I was almost about to give up... Thanks to my girlfriend Li Jun, she managed to convince me to get up and do the last stage..

**Your marathon run is more than decent (21st last year), but do you also specifically prepare for the MTB?**

I like running and cycling in the same way. I do cycling to work basically every day about 30k in total. Besides I do some tours on the weekend. Hope that's enough for preparation

**What is your personal best on a standard road marathon? When and where did you perform that?**

That's easy to answer since I have just participated in one road marathon so far. It was last December in Shanghai and it took me 3h23min. The grassland marathon last year was the first marathon in my life.

**Were you racing in Germany before?**

I never raced in Germany before. I am basically a football (soccer) player. In 2008 I moved to Shanghai, it was not possible for me to practice football in the same way like before. So I discovered running and cycling as a good replacement.

**Which bike brand do you ride and which specifications? Do you have experience with**

**WTB products?**

I just have a Giant Trekking Bike. Last year I rented one of the event bikes. These were okay, only they could have been oiled a bit more. For this year I am planning to buy my own mountainbike and bring it to Xiwuqi. I have not decided about the brand yet. But I still have a pair of WTB grips from last year's event at home. I will fix these on my new bike.

**How often do you train per week, where and how many kilometres do you ride per week?**

I'm cycling about 150k per week and running maybe 20 or 30k per week. Besides I'm playing football and badminton.

**Do you have a pre-race ritual ? Things you feel you must do before a race?**

It's not really a ritual... but there's one thing which is important for me... It's my personal favorite playlist on my Mp3 player. A great selection of Reggae, Ska and Punkrock-music. That really pushes me during the race and I cannot imagine to start without it.

**How does the Genghis Khan Festival compare with other events you have done in your career?**

Like I described at the beginning, the friendly and familial atmosphere makes the Genghis Khan festival really special. Especially the Yurt Village party after the 2nd MTB stage is a great opportunity to share the experiences about the race with the other athletes. Such a pity the party is before the last MTB stage. Otherwise I could have had a few beers more. Anyway that's how the Genghis Khan festival differentiate from other sports events and make it really unique.

**Which advice would you give to people who want to take part in the Genghis Khan Festival?**

Better start slowly... at the end you have to push hard anyway to finalize. But even then don't forget to enjoy the great landscape of the Mongolian grassland...Then you will leave Xiwuqi with pain in the muscles but with a smile on your face!



