

# So, You Want To Put On A **ROAD RACE?**



Some helpful hints  
brought to you by the  
Yellowstone Rim Runners.

## Acknowledgments

This material was originally developed by the Peninsula Track Club in Newport News, Virginia. The Yellowstone Rim Runners made minor changes and additions to this material to fit our local situation. We gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Peninsula Track Club and its Board of Directors to use the material on which this brochure is based.

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# INTRODUCTION

*Managing a road race is a stressful, pressure-filled experience that will tax your patience, decision making, and problem-solving capabilities. Planning for a small- or medium-sized (100 to 200 runners) successful race requires the same amount of effort as a large race. Much of the satisfaction you will derive will be the result of dealing with a very complex, challenging and demanding process that culminates in an event others will enjoy and remember for years to come. You will also reaffirm the joy of giving. And you will be constantly be pursued by others to do it again, and again, and again.*

Planning and managing a successful road race is a very complex undertaking. It involves considerable planning, coordination, communication, and a team of very responsible people. This booklet outlines some helpful hints for race directors, volunteers, and runners.

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# WHY?

There are many good reasons to put on a race:

- ◆ to promote physical fitness and healthy lifestyles
- ◆ to bring people together for a good time
- ◆ to promote your organization, group, institution or town
- ◆ to add variety to an existing event or festival
- ◆ or simply because it's fun

## **Raising money is NOT a good reason to put on a race.**

Most races do not raise very much money and those that do are well established events with a large number of participants, and (most importantly) lots and lots of sponsorship dollars to cover their expenses. If your primary motivation is to raise money we strongly encourage you to consider events other than a race.

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# THE BEGINNING

- ◆ Allow for **one full year** of preparation.
- ◆ Seek advice from *experienced* people.
- ◆ Work through a local running club and ask for a club representative to be the race director. (**DISCLAIMER:** many of the Yellowstone Rim Runners who are most experienced with putting on races are already heavily involved with existing races; we cannot guarantee that an experienced person will be available to assist with your event).
- ◆ Carefully review annual running schedules and calendars. Be careful not to conflict with well established races or events, e.g. parades or festivals.
- ◆ Be familiar with the area's weather history and norms.
- ◆ Obtain expert help from an experienced course measurer to measure and or certify course distance. (If you are not able to, or do not wish to certify your course, you should state in your race form and any other literature that it is not certified)
- ◆ Consult with local governments on formal permission, permit issuance, medical support, insurance requirements, and police coordination for traffic management.
- ◆ Consider assuming responsibility for an existing race in need of revitalization. The advantages of doing this include:
  - Already measured and/or certified course,
  - Regular time slot already familiar with local runners,
  - Experienced source of specific and useful information,
  - Established sponsorship.
- ◆ Consider a one-mile fun run for children.

## **Tip #1**

**Volunteer and work a few races so you can experience the full range and scope of activities, tasks, and roles required for a quality event.**

**Talk to your local running club about volunteering.**

- ◆ Choose a date (with at least two alternates), confirm date with local jurisdictional authority (city, county) in writing.
- ◆ Start praying for good weather. Be prepared to conduct a race in less than perfect weather.

**Now begin the preparations.**

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## THE RACE DIRECTOR

This is the person ultimately responsible for everything. He/she knows what to do and how to do it. He/she also knows that there are no excuses, no rationalizations, and no good reasons why everything is not done right and well.

**Some of the key race director duties are:**

- ◆ Develops a schedule for your race
- ◆ Provides some general financial planning
- ◆ Selects a competent and experienced group to manage the race and produce accurate race results.
- ◆ Obtains any necessary insurance for the event.
- ◆ Understands and incorporates sound safety precautions.
- ◆ Secures sponsorships (cash donations, door prizes, awards). Lack of sponsors reduces financial profits for your club, charity, etc.
- ◆ Ensures race is announced in road running schedules, club newsletters, athletic stores, and local newspaper about 6 months to 1 year ahead of time.
- ◆ Recommends the course and works with the person doing the course measurement and certification, if there is one. Ensures that mile markers are accurate and clearly visible on race day.
- ◆ Arranges for media coverage for race.
- ◆ Secures medical assistance to be on standby during the race.
- ◆ Ensures timers, course marshals, traffic control, and water stations are on course.
- ◆ Secures adequate number of volunteers for registration, course management, and other race day events.
- ◆ Arranges for refreshments: juice, water, soft drinks, sports drink, fruit, bagels, yogurt, etc. for all runners and volunteers.
- ◆ Approves design and fabric of race shirt (name and year of race clearly marked, major sponsors highlighted, running club acknowledged, colors, etc.)
- ◆ Works with t-shirt designer and screen printer for quantity and sizes. Prepares the flyers and announcements to be issued at least 3 months in advance of race date. Seek advice from a good running club before printing.

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# ENTRY FORM

The race entry form or flyer should include the following:

## *Sponsors*

- ◆ Name and Distance of Race
- ◆ Day, Date and Location of Race
- ◆ Start Time
- ◆ Clear directions to race (map desirable)
- ◆ Registration Information:
- ◆ Reduced fee for advance registration until cut-off date
- ◆ Race day fee
- ◆ Name of organization to make check payable to
- ◆ Where to mail pre-registration
- ◆ Award categories: Overall places (male and female); age groups (male and female)
- ◆ Name and logos of all sponsors (major sponsors may be highlighted)
- ◆ Request for runner information: Name, address, telephone, gender, age

## Liability waiver

(sample liability waivers can be found in the GUIDELINES FOR SAFER ROAD RACING EVENTS on the Road Runners Club of America web site at [www.rca.org](http://www.rca.org).)

Runner signature (parents or guardian signature if runner is under 18)

## *Entry can also include:*

Whether or not course is certified (map desirable)

Door prizes offered

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# VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers form the backbone of any race event.

## They will:

- ◆ Staff the registration table
- ◆ Greet runners and distribute pre-registration race packages
- ◆ Accept race day registration forms and funds
- ◆ Ensure name, age group, and gender are ready for input into computer
- ◆ Give runners an initial favorable impression of the event
- ◆ Direct the runners on the course where changes of direction occur and hold back traffic
- ◆ Call out the time at each mile marker
- ◆ Offer water or sports drink to runners at predetermined intervals (every 1.5 to 2 miles) during the race
- ◆ Manage the finish line to provide accurate times, assist finishers, and produce accurate race results for announcement at the awards ceremony

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# RUNNERS

## Runners are the customers!

The better they are treated, the more of them you'll see on race day, the more successful your event will be, the more likely they will return each year, and the more they will share their good experience with others.

- ◆ Courteously request each runner to sign the liability waiver on the race flyer/application.
- ◆ On race day or at the packet pickup, friendly helpful volunteers greet each entrant with the smile and a wish for a “Good Run.”
- ◆ Clean restrooms or porta-johns should be available near the registration and start/finish areas for runners.
- ◆ Runners need plenty of fluids prior to, during, and after a race. Ensure there is water or sports drink at the registration or packet pickup areas, on the course (in pre-filled cups), and at the finish area.
- ◆ Provide enough refreshments for double the numbers of runners that you expect. Runners are hungry people!
- ◆ Runners enjoy and remember well organized and managed events, a good course, and a fun social after the race. They will be back in future years and probably bring a few friends.

### Tip #2

**The safety of each runner and volunteer is a top priority.**

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# AWARDS

## Types

*Choose among:*

- ◆ Trophies
- ◆ Medals
- ◆ Plaques
- ◆ Unique bowls, wood carvings or art sculptures
- ◆ Ribbons
- ◆ Certificates

*Awards should include:*

- ◆ Race identification on awards
- ◆ Name and date of the race
- ◆ Distance
- ◆ Age Group
- ◆ Gender

*Door Prizes*

- ◆ Gift certificates
- ◆ Sports paraphernalia
- ◆ Passes to local parks/events

### Tip #3

**Have volunteers “prefill” the cups at water stations before handing out to runners.**

### Tip #4

**Solicit businesses for door prizes as sponsorship. Their donation would be acknowledged at the race and on racing t-shirt.**

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# RACE DAY CHECKLIST

- ◆ Tables for registration
- ◆ Tables for computer support; indoor facility for computer in event of inclement weather
- ◆ Finish chute (stands, flags)
- ◆ Timing Equipment/Display clock
- ◆ Tables for refreshments
- ◆ Table for awards
- ◆ Plenty of advance time for instructions to volunteers
- ◆ Conduct children's fun run 30 minutes prior to race start
- ◆ Public address system
- ◆ Starting gun/horn
- ◆ Instructions to runners
- ◆ A good bicyclist or a pace vehicle to lead runners along the course from start to finish. Please ensure that bicyclist or driver knows the course well and stays well in front of the lead runner (but clearly in view).
- ◆ Course marshalls to hold back traffic
- ◆ Brightly colored cones to mark race course
- ◆ Stop watches for timers at each mile markers
- ◆ Ensure runners are given aid if in obvious need
- ◆ Congratulate runners on their performance
- ◆ Sweep bicyclist or vehicle

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# LOOSE ENDS

- ◆ Thank all volunteers—a race shirt if appropriate.
- ◆ Thank all sponsors in writing
- ◆ Thank local government or military base personnel in writing
- ◆ Fax/deliver/e-mail results to local newspaper and thank press coverage in writing
- ◆ Submit results to local running club newsletter
- ◆ Document the entire process for the next year

**Kick back and relax – you've done an excellent job**

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# OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Road Runners Club of America has more useful information on their website at [www.rrca.org](http://www.rrca.org). The RRCA's *Guidelines for Safer Road Racing Events* can be found under "Resources" and "Management" on their web site and contains much more detailed advice on road races.