

European Athletics Association

Innovation Awards 2016 – Promotion category

runbritain/UK Athletics - #clickyourclock weekly competition



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



The #clickyourclock weekly competition run in conjunction with runbritain/UK Athletics is a programme which was established to promote the runbritain handicap scoring system and embellish an individual journey in a mass sport. Anyone can participate in the programme, from the ordinary runner who goes to their local parkrun every Saturday to the elites like multiple Olympic, world and European champion Mo Farah. With participation figures rising, the handicap provides a score on any terrain, over any distance but encourages personal progression rather than direct competition against fellow athletes. With numbers rising towards 1000 plus runners entering each week, it is a programme which continues to grow.

Introduction

Governing bodies across Europe face the common challenge of how to be relevant to the mass participation road races within their territories, the largest of which may have been established 20-30 years ago during the 1980's running boom by entrepreneurs operating outside of governing body influence.

The solutions to these disconnects have been pursued by various means:

- Licensing/permitting
- Setting minimum standards
- NGB providing officials
- Public liability insurance cover
- Promotion and publicity
- Awarding championship/grand prix status. Directing elite athletes
- Leading medical, police, highway and public body issues on a national basis
- Offering add on services like online entry, timekeeping, results

Even if some or all of these initiatives are undertaken in support of race organisers, it is still one step removed from governing body engagement with individual road runners who comprise more than 90% of the overall participants in 'athletics' as a whole. By providing a service that is relevant and useful to such runners, the governing body can create a large and commercially valuable database from which to launch strong communication directly to individuals, creating a quasi-membership scheme.

Background

In autumn 2010, runbritain launched its handicap scoring system with results from all licensed races and Parkrun contributing to a runners unique handicap score. In addition, it generates a free runners biography page with rankings by age band and postcode areas, progress graphs, head-to-head comparisons with other runners, training schedules and a link to the national runner ladder (which currently lists a quarter of a million runners).

The handicap scores range from Mo Farah at minus 7.0 to six hour marathon runners at plus 36.0. At the time of submission 64,000 handicap scores have been claimed at a rate of approximately 1000 a month since the launch. In autumn 2015, the system linked to the Strava training app so that a runners racing and training record could be held in one free online profile.

During 2013 and 2014, a monthly 'most improved' competition called 'Reward Running' was generated by runbritain. It is linked to the handicap scoring system and encourages regular racing with the ten most improved runners across a range of abilities winning a monthly prize. This drew between 1000 and 2000 runners per month to sign up to the programme.

In order to promote the handicap scoring system more widely and launched in March 2015 called '#clickyourclock'.



Objectives and findings for #clickyourclock

- ***To drive more visitors to the results section of the runbritain.com/runbritainrankings.com sites, especially between a Sunday-Tuesday***

Outcome: **(Achieved)**

Website Users

(NB: There was a record single month high of 213,000 website visitors achieved in April 2016)

2015: 777,381

2014: 709,832

2013: 467,312

2012: 263,601

2011: 128,893

2010: 43,313

- ***To encourage runners to race regularly and bring their times and handicap scores down.*** Outcome: **(Achieved)**

Total annual performances in runbritain licensed races and Parkrun

2015: 4,722,403

2014: 3,706,924

2013: 2,737,352

2012: 2,042,307

2011: 1,598,017

- ***To encourage more races to gain a license with runbritain in order for their results to be included within the handicap scoring and #clickyourclock competition. Also, to establish necessary pre-requisite to signing up for the free runbritain online entry system.***

Outcome: **(Achieved)**

| | Online licensed races (excl parkrun) | Races using runbritain online entry |
|------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2015 | 2,636 | 620 |
| 2014 | 2,405 | 498 |

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| | | |
|------|-------|-----|
| 2013 | 2,115 | 359 |
| 2012 | 2,013 | 325 |

- **To increase the overall database of runners receiving E-Racer magazine from runbritain.** Outcome: **(Achieved)**

Usable database has increased from approximately 89,000 at the end of 2014 to 110,000 at end of 2015.

- **To encourage more runners to use and review their runbritain handicap scores on a weekly basis.**

Outcome: **(Achieved)**

600-900 runners per week took part in #clickyourclock between March and October 2015. The 2016 enhancement of awarding the prize randomly for any entrants who improved their handicap score over the previous weekend, suggests it will double the average from 2015.

Mechanism for #clickyourclock

As part of the licensing process, British road races are required to provide full results post-event. In practice most of these are uploaded to the runbritain rankings results section on a Sunday evening or Monday morning.

One key difference between the race organiser's own (external) results and the formatted runbritain results in 2015 was the introduction of a final vertical column to each line of results. This column included the #clickyourclock running clock logo.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|-------|-------|-------------------|-----|---|--------------------------|-------|-------|-----|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 83 | 41:32 | 41:23 | Dominic Mcpherson | V50 | M | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 84 | 41:33 | 41:27 | Simon Downs | V40 | M | Kingston upon Hull | 39:47 | 39:47 | 4.7 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 85 | 41:33 | 41:23 | Anthony Smith | V50 | M | Bridlington Road Runners | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 86 | 41:33 | 41:29 | Peter Cork | V40 | M | | | | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 87 | 41:34 | 41:30 | Sean Kelly | V45 | M | Scarborough | 41:30 | 39:48 | 7.5 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 88 | 41:39 | 41:33 | Alan Smith | V45 | M | White City (Hull) | 41:06 | 41:06 | 7.1 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 89 | 41:40 | 41:37 | Neil Pearcey | V50 | M | Scarborough | 41:37 | 40:46 | 7.7 | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 90 | 41:45 | 41:41 | Tom Evans | SEN | M | | | | | | |

Runners are encouraged to click on the icon and register their handicap score. Clicking your clock reveals the percentage amount by which the runner has improved their handicap score with that particular racing performance. Around 60% of those who 'click' each week record a positive score improvement.

Subsequently, these claimed scores go on to an online leader board for that week's competition, which runs Sunday-Sunday with a deadline of noon each Wednesday to see which runner is drawn randomly from those who have improved their score, winning a Polar heart rate monitor.

The Wednesday deadline was selected for two reasons:

- To allow runners time if their race organiser was slow to upload results.
- To generate traffic to the website on one of the quieter midweek days.

The 'last call' for sign-ups and results are also shared on the runbritain social media channels as a reminder to runners to join in the following week. With nearly 16,000m Twitter followers and almost 30,000 likes on Facebook, the reach via these channels is substantial.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The #clickyourclock initiative has helped to position UKA/runbritain as a relevant and engaging brand for ordinary runners. This contrasts with the B2B relationship that defines most European Member Federation's relationships with the road running community. Their model can interact with race organisers through licensing, insuring, awarding of championships etc but individual runners are much harder to reach. Most road race participants have little or no awareness of the governing body but the #clickyourclock programme has helped to address this issue.
- It creates a unique personal journey in a sport where the numbers of race participants in a given year can be overwhelming (five million racing performances in the UK in 2015).
- The non-pressurised competition format encourages a sense of personal improvement, progression and enjoyment. In its June 2016 edition, Runner's World

magazine in the UK (85,000 monthly circulation) asked “Who were the most improved runners in Britain last year?” They ran an eight page photo-spread featuring men and women at a range of distances and abilities who had improved the most. The feature was based exclusively on the runbritain handicap scoring format and the individual athletes saluted how motivating their score improvements and weekly #clickyourclock progressions had been in encouraging them to train and race more. Runner’s World has the ambition to make this an annual feature in their magazine.

- It is aiding and accelerating the process of ratifying and posting results because runners complain to race organisers if the full results are not posted in time for the Wednesday at noon deadline for #clickyourclock. Therefore, it means that runbritain does not have to push race organisers to receive these results but rather the expectation comes from the consumer.

- As promotion on social media channels and word of mouth referral increases the number signing up to #clickyourclock each week, we have the ambition that the present format could help reach the following targets over the next 12 months:
 - 2000-3000 runners clicking their clocks each week.
 - 250,000 website visitors each month.
 - 85,000 runbritain handicap scores claimed.
 - 3000 races using runbritain online licensing system in 2017 (double the 2007 figure).

- The next phase of promotion would include:
 - More than one weekly prize (providing further awards to individual male, female, age bands, newcomers, regional, club teams).
 - Creating a Facebook page for discussion around the leaderboard. This would increase communication between participants in the runner community.
 - Establishing feature races each week as ‘best for improving your handicap score’.
 - Consolidating a formal year-round joint promotion with Runner’s World.
 - Advising race organisers to use #clickyourclock as part of their event promotion and race benefit.