



GULF WINDS TRACK CLUB

www.gulfwinds.org

RACE DIRECTOR GUIDE and MANUAL

Revised May 2009

PREFACE

If you have been associated with road racing for any length of time, directing a road race can be done with few problems. With effective planning and good organization, you can make a successful race a reality.

This manual provides helpful guidelines to put on a quality race. It is not however a replacement for experience. We strongly recommend you work with a race director on an existing race or get an experienced race director to work with you the first time you direct a race. The Gulf Winds Track Club Race Director Coordinator attempts to coordinate available dates for races and is available to answer questions or listen to any ideas. You will also find many of the club's race directors willing to offer ideas. A calendar of races is listed in the club's newsletter each month and on the club's web site.

NOTE: The list of current GWTC officers and the name of the Race Director Coordinator can be found on the Gulf Winds Track Club web site at www.gulfwinds.org. It is strongly recommended you contact the race director coordinator before deciding on the date for your race.

PLANNING

1. Your first job is to plan a race date well in advance. Always check with the GWTC Race Director Coordinator who maintains the event calendar for local races many months in advance. This will help to minimize conflicts with the dates already scheduled for other races and events.
2. When choosing a race site, select an area where there is adequate parking and plenty of room for a registration area, finish line, awards presentation area, and an area for runners to warm up. Restroom facilities must be available for participants. In addition, consider electrical needs and availability of water within close proximity to the site.
3. Make a checklist of needs in advance of your event.
4. Develop a budget for the event.
5. If you are directing a Gulf Winds Track Club “club race,” your budget must be presented to the GWTC Board for approval well prior to the event.
6. Consider what your entry fee for participants will be. Do not make the mistake of charging too high a fee for the race. Presently, for a 5K to 10K race, \$10 to \$12 for preregistration and \$15 on race day are reasonable and typical amounts.

GUIDELINES FOR A GOOD RACE COURSE

1. All courses should be accurately measured for distance and mile splits. Car odometers do not accurately measure courses.
2. The course should be measured following procedures of USATF so that it can be certified if appropriate (GWTC Grand Prix courses must be certified). The “Jones Counter” remains the primary recognized device for measuring courses. You can find more on certifying courses at <http://www.usatf.org/events/courses/certification/>.
3. Try to avoid a narrow starting and finishing area to keep runners from being crowded at the start or lapping one another in the finish chute.
4. If possible, minimize the number of sharp turns and turn-arounds on the course, as these may cause confusion or even injuries.
5. Try to avoid busy intersections and streets unless you have experienced people (police officers or experienced volunteers) to control traffic at these points on the course.
6. Mark each mile split on the course in a way that is clearly visible (such as a paper pie plate on a stick) and place the markers out of the likely path of runners.
7. The course should have water stops every 2 or 3 miles (especially in warm weather months), or in the case of a 5K race, at the 1.5 mile mark.
8. Water should always be available at the start and finish line areas.
9. The course should be clearly marked so runners can follow it. Most races use chalk dust to mark the course, and where possible use arrows to show all turns.
10. A “good course” is often in “the eye of the beholder.” But runners appreciate interesting courses that minimize traffic. Some races promote “flat and fast” courses, while others pride themselves on being tough and hilly. Many are on paved roads, while many others are on trails.

RACE DIRECTOR: MAIN DUTIES

1. Recruit dependable volunteers for traffic control, the finish line, registration and water stops. This is one of the hardest parts of directing a race.
2. Recruit knowledgeable people to produce accurate race results. GWTC uses a time machine and a chronomix for back up. You will need a system to record the time and place for each runner as they cross the finish line. Generally, this also means that each runner needs a unique number to wear during the race.
3. Obtain liability insurance for the race. GWTC provides race insurance for GWTC races only. The waiver statement must appear on all race flyers and must be signed by every participant or his/her parent or guardian. If your race has been designated as a GWTC Grand Prix race, your race must have liability insurance coverage as outlined in the Grand Prix Race Qualification Standards.
4. Arrive early on race day to mark the race course or refresh markings as necessary.
5. Most races include a t-shirt for runners as part of the race packets. A race director may also consider alternative merchandise such as hats, shorts and other items.
6. Decide what, if any, awards you want to give for overall winners and age group winners. Often, awards are given to overall male and female, Master's (over 40) and Grandmaster's (over 50) male and female, the top three in 5-year age groups, and any special categories that apply to your event. There are many types of awards such as coffee and beer mugs, trophies, plaques, medals or cash.
7. Obtain a permit. Most races will need a permit to use the streets. Contact the Leon County Sheriff's Department or the Tallahassee Police Department to obtain the permit and to request assistance with traffic control on race day. This should be done at least two months in advance. Call to confirm before race day. Make sure you have plenty of volunteers in case the officers do not show up.
8. There are new regulations applicable to recreational events that take place within the city limits of Tallahassee. Check with the Tallahassee Parks and Recreation Department.

PUBLICITY

1. Develop a race flyer that describes the race and tells runners how to register. It is helpful to review examples of race flyers from other races. (See current examples under "Race Calendar" on the Gulf Winds web site.) Print race flyers and leave copies at local running stores, fitness stores, gyms, and any place related to athletics you think would be appropriate. Flyers may also be distributed to high school and middle school track/cross country coaches. The flyer should be prepared a minimum of 2-3 months in advance of your event.
2. Advertise your event on the radio and in local area newspapers. Most media will run public service announcements, especially if the beneficiary of the event is a nonprofit group, like Habitat for Humanity, etc. The best place for a paid announcement or flyer replica is the GWTC monthly newsletter, the *Fleet Foot*. Contact the current newsletter Editor, as listed on the GWTC web site or in the current *Fleet Foot*.
3. Send your race flyer electronically to the GWTC member who maintains the GWTC web page, so that it can be available on the GWTC online race calendar. It is also advisable to send the flyer and race information to *Florida Running and Triathlon* magazine. The information will be posted free of charge on its website and in the magazine.
4. If you wish to allow participants to register online, you may wish to utilize the services of **Active.com** or a similar service for online race registration.

5. Obtain sponsorships to help cover the costs of your race. Sponsors can be very difficult to obtain, but they can be the key to making your race financially successful.

STARTING LINE

1. Make sure that the starting line is well marked before the race.
2. Runners should be organized so that the faster runners line up closer to the front. This will help keep the start organized and reduce the chance of runners tripping each other.
3. Water and toilets should be available near the starting line. Often races rely on port-o-lets.
4. After the runners line up for the start, give race instructions. Instructions should include which side of the road to run on, where the water stops are located, and what to do at the finish line.
5. Runners expect to have their split times called out to them at every mile during the race. This requires the timers to be at the beginning of the race, probably about 50 yards in front of the starting line and standing at their vehicle to start their stopwatches before quickly taking off to their assigned mile marker.
6. The person maintaining the clock at the finish line MUST be at the start, or in radio or phone contact, so the clock can be started at the start of the race.
7. There should be a lead vehicle/bicycle to lead the first runner along the correct course. There should also be a "sweep" vehicle/bicycle that follows the last runner.

WATER STATIONS

1. Attempt to locate water stops in spots where runners will have good access and the tables do not obstruct traffic or place volunteers at risk.
2. Have at least one cup of water or sports drink (or both) available per runner per water station (more on hot and/or humid days). Stations that are located on an "out and back" course will need more water, sports drink, and cups than courses that are "point to point."
3. Make sure the volunteers at the water station fill the cups before the runners arrive. One or two 6-8' tables are needed to hold the pre-filled cups. Ideally, the volunteers working the water table should hand the cups to the runners as they go by. Fill cups no more than 2/3 full. Use paper cups (frequently donated) as they are easier to drink from and pick up later than plastic.
4. Have at least one large garbage bag at each water stop for the volunteers to use for collecting the used cups and other trash that they will pick up in the vicinity of the water station.
5. Make sure water station volunteers know where to go for more water if water runs out.
6. Stations should be available every two to three miles.

FINISH LINE DUTIES

1. Think carefully about the system you will use to record each runner's time and place as they cross the finish line. As mentioned above many races use a chronomix and a finish card. The chronomix records the time, and a sequentially numbered finish card is given to the runner and provides their finish place. The finish card should have a place for name, sex, age and time, and the runners should be encouraged to complete and turn in the card at a designated location. Some races use race numbers with tear off strips at the bottom. These are torn off and put on a string in order of finish. If this method is used, the registration

staff should write the entrant's name, sex and age on the tear-off before giving it to the entrant. A volunteer should be recruited to hand out finish cards at the finish line, and additional volunteers should be recruited to tear off strips and place the strips on a stringer. Cards can be ordered through ads in running magazines such as Runner's World, or you may construct and use your own. Use sturdy card stock if printing your own finish cards.

2. Have a finish chute at the end of the race (formed with orange traffic cones or GWTC stanchions). The chute keeps runners in order after they cross the finish line and makes it easier to record times and pass out finish cards or tear strips.
3. Keep runners in order and move them through the chute as quickly as possible. Watch out for the midpack surge at the finish line. In most races there may be a large number of finishers who come through the chute about the same time.
4. If you use finish cards, make sure you have male and female age group boxes to hold the runners' finish cards and plenty of pens or pencils on a table where they can fill out the cards.
5. Assign 1-3 volunteers to the results table to keep things going smoothly and quickly.
6. Try to have race results for the overall winners and age group winners as quickly as possible after the race. The time spent organizing your results allows runners time to cool down; however, if you take too long to process the results, the participants will leave. When that happens, you will be left with the responsibility of getting the age-group awards to the respective winners (overall winners usually don't leave).
7. Equipment such as the timing clocks, chronomix recorders, water coolers, signs, traffic cones, safety vests, tables, and chairs can be rented from GWTC by contacting the current GWTC Equipment Manager.
8. Use of a timing device such as a chronomix at the finish line is essential to record the times of the finishers. It can be used to match up a runner's time with his or her finish card or electronic score report. (Reporting accurate race results is very important.)

RACE DIRECTOR CHECKLIST

1. Date of race (day, month, year)
2. Place of event, location of pre-registration and packet pick-up if appropriate.
3. Time of event (a.m. or p.m.)
4. Cost of entry and the prices for early and late registration; No t-shirt option; and the cutoff date for each.
5. Awards - number of awards, age groupings, male/female, and any special awards (wheelchair, race walkers, etc.)
6. Order t-shirts, towels, medals, or other items to be given to each registrant and finisher. (When calculating number of t-shirts to buy, do not forget to include the volunteers.)
7. Order race numbers (bibs) safety pins, and finish cards.
8. Volunteer list and their assignments/responsibilities.
9. Restroom (port-o-let) facilities

10. Permits if necessary. (Check with City of Tallahassee Parks & Recreation Dept.)
11. Event insurance (always advisable, required if a GWTC Grand Prix race)
12. Pick up race equipment the day before the race and return it immediately following the race.

ENTRY FORM

A well-designed registration form should contain the following information and sections:

1. The name of the event, location, date, time, registration cost, length of races (5K, One Mile, 10K, etc.), the deadline for preregistration.
2. Directions as to how to register (where to mail the registration form, how to complete online or on site registration).
3. If paying by check, exactly who the checks should be made out to.
4. Sponsor information and who the proceeds of the race will go to.
5. Awards: what they are, who will receive them (age groups, etc.)
6. Special features of the event, such as early packet pickup, pre-race dinner, etc.
7. Contact information for the race director or main contact person for the event.
8. The registration form should require participants to provide:
 - first and last name
 - date of birth and/or age as of race day
 - gender
 - mailing address
 - phone number
 - e-mail address
 - t-shirt size or no t-shirt option
 - legal waiver statement
 - signature line with space for the date