A Primer for the Novice Race Director
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So you have got it into your head that you want to organize a race. Never mind where the idea came from; probably someone put you up to it. It sounded like a good idea at the time. Now you are committed. Where do you start? The usual advice of starting at the beginning is sound, but finding the beginning can be tricky.

The beginning, believe it or not, is answering the question: **Why do I want to do this?** Honesty with yourself is essential, lie to other if you must, but get a hold of what you are going to get out of this. Putting on a race is so much work you had better have a good reason for doing it, or the job is going to get old fast. Be clear about what it is that you will need to accomplish in order to satisfy your personal goals. Keep this up front. Many people will distract you. They will have their own goals. It is great to help others met their goals, but if you do not meet your own, this race will have no future.

Besides your personal goals there are two basic reasons for organizing a race (or doing anything else for that matter): 1) fun, and 2) profit. Unless you live in some unusual place where there are plenty of untapped potential sponsors just dying to give you money and hundreds of potential runners just waiting for someone to put on a race, forget profit: It is not that you can't make *some* money putting on events, it is just that you might make more by getting a steady job.

Fun. The odd thing about fun is that it disguises the real financial profit. I put on races for our local Runners Club with the goal of getting the community to exercise. The medical literature is clear that if you can get your community to engage in ongoing vigorous exercise, your community, *in the long run*, can save incomprehensible amounts of money in medical expenses and lost revenues due to illness and disability. I have the luxury of looking at the long term, because I have the luxury of being able to do this as a volunteer and am otherwise not gainfully employed. I do not need to make a profit in order to justify doing these events. As long as I am not actually losing money, I've got myself an unpaid job (I think). I am up front about this because many would be race directors, and this may include you, do not have this freedom. Many would be race directors are from body part or disease associations (e.g., The American Left Foot Association) and may not have any experience as runners themselves. Or, you may be a runner who is sympathetic to the body part association and has said yes to the pleas of the association director. Body part or disease associations' mission is to raise money, so their mind set is going to be quite different from mine. Despite this, potential race director whose primary mission is to raise money and potential race directors whose only mission is to put on a great race will both need to consider many of the same issues for ultimate long term success.

For long term success racing events must meet the needs of two very different populations simultaneously.

These populations are; **committed runners** and ***uncommitted couch potatoes*** (to be known from now on as **potential athletes**). (The literature on exercise motivation suggests that in the short term *committed* coach potatoes should be left alone, they are a challenge for another

day.) The two populations (committed runners and potential athletes) require different things. To only meet the needs of committed runners can result in a successful ongoing event; just not one that easily attracts potential athletes. To meet the needs of potential athletes while ignoring the needs of committed runners will fail in the long run, since with luck potential athletes will become committed runners.

The Needs of Committed Runners.

  The goal, when designing a race for the committed runner, is to give the runner the opportunity to achieve a personal record (P.R.) on that course. Nothing about the organization of the event should prevent the runner from achieving a P.R. The runner's time should be limited only by his/her's personal training, health and/or the weather. To do this a number of things must be considered and provided for:

    1) *An accurate course*. When a runner who has run thousands of 5K's crosses your finish line and looks at the clock and says "damn, that course was short/long", he is not coming back next year. If you advertise a certain length race, then the race should be that length, not more or less that length. Do not measure the course with a car! Do not even measure it with a bike! Measure the course with a surveyor's measuring wheel. Your department of public works, or local friendly architect or landscaper may have one. If you cannot borrow one, buy one. They are usually available at hardware stores for under $100.00. I measure the course more than once. Measure the course as a runner would run it, i.e. cut the corners. Ideally get someone from the Road Runners Club of America, United States Track and Field or a similar organization to certify the course.

    2) *A well marked course with plenty of volunteers*. If a runner is coming up to a turn and is not sure which way he is going to go, he will start to slow down. If as soon as he sees the turn he also sees a volunteer pointing the direction he is to go, he will have no need to hesitate. If that lead runner makes a wrong turn, only to look over his shoulder and see the guy who was trailing him going the other way, he is going to have something unpleasant to say to you at the end of the race.

    I put out mile markers at each mile. The county loans me orange cones for the course. I place one of these cones at each mile with an 8" x 11" sheet of paper taped to it. On this paper is the number that is the full size of the paper. It works well. Runners appreciate it.

    3) *The race must start on time*. Committed runners warm up and time their warm up to finish immediately before the race starts. Warming up for a mile (if that is the plan), arriving at the start line with a minute to spare and then standing around for 15 minutes (while late comers are registered) is not going to make the runners happy. If you advertise the race to start at 10 a.m., that is exactly when the race should start. Since the race director gets tied up with an amazing amount of last minute details, the best thing to do to insure a timely start is to assign a no-nonsense person to the job of race starter.

    4) *Sort the start*. "Fast runners up front. Medium runners next. Walkers and slow runners in the rear." Use a bullhorn. Saves the voice.

5) *Nice Awards*. I do not believe people come to events for the prizes, but that is not to say that they don't like nice awards. If a runner has a budget and can only do so many events a year, or if there are two potential events to attend, the runner will probably take into considerations the quality of the awards as well as the shirts and the food. Adults can store only so many of those tacky little statues in their closets or local landfill. Having awards that the winners actually display will serve as free advertisement for the race for years. You can get as creative as you can afford here, but I have found that nice awards don't cost that much more than tacky awards.

On the other hand, kids, if you have a kids division, like tacky statues. Consider asking mature people with a long history of winning to donate their trophies. In truth, for years they have been wondering how to get rid of them. The kids will be thrilled. The bigger the better. Gaudiness is good.

Adults (well adjusted adults) do not actually need awards. If you are going to do a race without awards make sure people know this up front. Give certificates so that the people who have accomplished something have the opportunity to be recognized. Recognition is important. And, finally, if you don't have awards your race fee should reflect this.

6) *Good competition*. Committed runners go to races for the challenge. If they didn't want a challenge they could stay home and run. If you want to get good runners it is important to get other good runners. The quickest way to do this is to offer large cash awards or appearance fees. Unfortunately, I can't afford this, so I waive the entrance fee of my top three men and women for the following year. This increases the likelihood of their return, hopefully bringing other runners with them.

7) *Be prepared to return a racer's entry fee*. If someone starts to get hot and bothered by something, return their entrance fee. If a runner goes off course because there was no one at the turn, offer to return his entry fee AND waive his next year's entry fee. You cannot afford annoyed runners giving bad press for the next year. Make yourself a couple of blank fee waiver forms for the next race and keep these and some cash in your pocket. The more quickly you can fix problems the less likely they are to have negative repercussions.

8) *Accurate, timely, hard copied results*. Committed runners expect these. It is not enough to simply post the results at your local YMCA or even web site. Many runners may be from out of town. Post your results online.

The Needs of Potential Athletes.

There are two overall goals when designing an event for potential athletes, first is to get them to do it, and second, is to insure that the positives of the event out weigh the negatives of the event, **in the *very* short term**. Let me be clear, we are looking for immediate gratification here, and it is up to you to provide it. This event must be fun. If it is your goal to get these people to train on a regular basis, then they must like your event so much that they want to train for the next one and hopefully do a little better. They must feel good about what they have done, even if they finish last.

In order to accomplish this your race must do/have a few things:

1) *Numbers*. It is key that the potential athlete not feel that "I am the only slow person here", "everyone is looking at me", "I'm so embarrassed", "I will never expose myself like this again". If you are going to attract potential athletes, for example you say that you have a 5K run and **fun walk**, then you must make sure you have walkers and they have fun. There is probably a walking group at your local mall, get them to come. You might reduce the entry fee for walkers, first time participants and/or retired people. They are probably not going to win an award so you don't have to cover trophy costs with their fees. Consider group and family discounts. Distribute your flyers at the local shoe stores and athletic retailers shops. Beat the bushes. Create a game that the walkers can plan along the course that has prizes only for the walkers, e.g. **Road Bingo** (rules to be given later).

2) *A designated last place finisher/sweep*. Select a *really nice* person who can say encouraging things to the people she/he comes up upon. I find it amazing the number of people (usually women) who say in response to my encouraging them to try an event, "I don't want to come in last." To which I say "You won't, we have a designated last place finisher." This really seems to make a difference. Once these ladies find out that they won't be last, they sign up. My designated sweep also tells the course volunteers their job is finished and they can leave the course.

3) *Random prizes*. I think that random prizes are key to making the event fun for people who haven't a prayer of winning anything in the normal course of events. I obtain random prizes by groveling. Thick skin helps. It also helps to have established a certain track record of running good events and by knowing your runners. If one of your runners is a restaurant manager you might find it easy to ask him for dinner for two. One of my runners works for the airline industry and gets me a round trip ticket to give away once a year. Once a year I also ask most of the banks in town for two $50.00 Savings Bonds. This one is fairly easy. I place all the kids names into an envelope and pull out just kids names for this particular prize drawing.

Friends are key. My friends know people who have goods or services that they are willing to part with for the greater good of humankind, a little advertising and a tax write-off. Keep records of who donates what. After the race all contributors get a thank you letter. This letter may be necessary for tax purposes but also reminds the donor that you will be back next year for the same thing.

Needs of Both Populations.

Some things that are key to a good race are common to both committed runners and potential athletes. These are:

1) *Good food*. Try something other than bagels. Have a party.

2) *Nice t-shirts*. Few of us wear our t-shirts in an orderly rotation. When we open our t-shirt drawer our hands are drawn to our favorite shirts. If that shirt is from your race that runner is going to wear an advertisement for your race all year. On the other hand you might consider

something other than a t-shirt. Tote bags don't cost much more than a long sleeve t-shirt and will come as a welcome change to the people who do a lot of races. Ladies like tote bags and men like to pretend they are going to give the bag to their wives.

3) *Lots of friendly, enthusiastic volunteers*. Make sure that volunteering is rewarding for volunteers. They get their t-shirts first. A reliable group of trained volunteers can often be derived from the ranks of family members who go to all the races with their running loved ones. Getting repeat volunteers is worth the time and effort. Evaluate your volunteers. Some people just stand on the corners like a lump. I don't ask them again.

What kind of a race do I want to put on?

Probably the next question that needs to be answered is what kind of an event do you want to organize.   Do something that you are interested in. Don't get yourself stuck organizing a swim when you are not a swimmer and don't even like the water. The easiest thing to do as a first time race director might be a 5K race.

Do not do multiple events. Many of us have gone to events that had two events at once: a 5K and a 10K or a 5K and a 2 miler for kids. Pulling off simultaneous events is much more complicated than it looks. I have done one and may never do another. If you decide to do simultaneous events, recruit an independent, but like minded, race director for one of the events. You cannot be in two places, physically or mentally, at once.

One decision to consider is do you want to put on an out and back race or do you want a unidirectional race. The vast majority of races are out and back. A unidirectional race can often be more fun. Because the runners start and end in different places you can count on it not being the "same old thing". Unfortunately, providing novelty is a logistics challenge. You can either tell people where the start and where the finish is, and expect them to get their own transportation, or you can bus them.

Busing them is more appealing from the runners point of view. If you decide to do this you must chose between:

1) Registration at the finish. Park at finish, bus to race start before the race. Requires the last registrant to arrive X time before the race starts. X = the time it takes to drive from finish to start plus a margin of error, or

2) Registration at the start. Park at start, bus to race start after the race. May interfere with post race ceremonies.

The choice between these two options may depend on which site has the best parking. If you are busing to the start the runners must know how early they need to be their in order to catch the bus. One thing to keep in mind even if you hire buses, have on hand a few friends with vans, someone will always miss the bus.

Establishing the ground rules.

Working style.

Determine your own personal leadership/working style. There are two major potentially successful approaches; committee and benevolent autocrat. I personally am an autocrat (I like to think, benevolent). That doesn't mean that I do all the work myself, it is just that I don't use a committee to make decisions. Committees can be slow and require that everyone on them must be fully committed. But committees made up of hardworking fully engaged people have the potential of making fewer mistakes and offending fewer people. You are the race director and must be comfortable with the working style and decisions.

Spouses and/or significant others.

Sort out these relationships before you start. At risk of repeating myself, race directing is a lot of work. It is not only a lot of work, it is generally a lot of work in a short period of time in addition to the work you normally do. More than occasional T.V. dinners (poached chicken in my house) gets old quickly. You and your spouse need to understand the nature of the commitment and determine whether you can live with it.

   If your spouse is a runner you face the potential of frequently being told what to do. As I mentioned earlier thick skin is a job requirement. You can ignore everyone else, but you have to listen to your spouse's suggestions. Doesn't mean that you have to do them, just listen.   Occasionally he/she might have a good idea.

   One of the things that you will discover in your life as race director is that many runners (possibly including your spouse, significant other, and good friends), are clueless about the amount of work involved. They will make "little suggestions" for things that they would like to see incorporated. Kindly having left the details of the "little suggestion" to you, they haven't notice that it's implementation will require a million dollars, two full time employees and a crane to accomplish. Stay calm. Smile. Repeat after me, "I'll give it some thought". Remember who you are going home with.

   Once you have made these major decisions/life changes you are ready to begin organizing your race.

The Organizational Steps.

   A very good race can be organized in eight weeks provided you are talented, intuitively organized, and have nothing else to do. If you are using a committee and have structured the committee so that all decisions need to be made by the whole, add extra time.

Major sponsors and/or organizational commitment.

Presumably you have some major sponsor or organizational commitment before you even start thinking about this event. This is your starting point and usually the name of the event, i.e. The Peninsula Cardiology /Bud Light 5K.

If you believe that there are people out there whose only motivation in life is to make your life easier, you are either:

1) exceptionally good looking, with more than your share of pheromones, or

2) sadly delusional.

Most sponsors participate in an event because the event brings them exposure or advertising they would not have gotten otherwise. It is important to be clear and up-front with sponsors. Know what they expect. If Blinkin Bagels is interested in promoting its new chocolate chip bagel at sporting events with at least 500 people, you are obligated to be honest. If you tell them to expect 500 and 75 people show up you have done yourself and everyone else a disservice. An enormous amount of food will go to waste and Blinkin Bagels will not be back.

One other comment on a particular type of sponsor. Beer companies. These people are usually great to work with, generous, and certainly perk up the awards ceremony. But be prepared. There are people out there who believe that the promotion of beer is un-Christian, and worse. They may howl if their children's t-shirts sport a beer company logo. And although it appears that runners seem to drink their fair share of beer expect a vocal minority to give you grief. You of course have to make and live with this decision. In my past experience none of the very few who have objected to beer have made any attempt to come up with alternate funding.

Insurance/Sanction

This is an important point. As a chapter of Road Runners Club of America, we are covered by their group policy. If you have a major sponsor, e.g., The American Left Foot Association, they probably have some sort of insurance for these types of events. If you have none of these I believe you are left with two choices: 1) buy single event insurance (big bucks), or 2) tempt fate. I mean really, what are the chances that a runner, who happens to be a painter in real life is going to trip over a poorly place cone and break his right wrist, develop permanent nerve damage in that hand, and sue *you* personally for every thing you have or ever hope to have. If you like living on the edge this may be the way to get a few extra thrills. P.s. if you think for a moment those waiver forms will actually protect you, think again.

Set dates.

Talk with local runners. Determine what else is going on and when. Going head to head with a successful event only assures failure. There will be some trade offs.

City/county/state approval.

It helps to sit down with the police person in charge of giving approval prior to mapping out your route. You may be planning to use the course that you and your buddies run every day. Unfortunately you have failed to noticed that your course runs right in front of the fire-house and the police may deny you a permit. Check with them first. A series of approvals may be necessary. Give your self plenty of time. In Maryland, the State Transportation Depart-ment's "Special Event Permit" is required to be submitted two months ahead of time and that is *after* I have obtained the Sheriff's written approval and the local State Police Captain's written approval, *on the same form*. It takes awhile to shuttle the form around.

Determine the event.

Consider doing something unique. If you have a choice of a dozen 5K's to do over the summer but you have to travel to get a good 10K race, do a 10K. Fill a niche.

Professional personnel.

Contract with professional people early. If you are going to use a professional timer make sure you can get one for that particular day. This is especially true if you are planning the event for a popular running day, e.g. St. Patty's Day, Thanksgiving morning, etc. Contact these people before you produce the flyers, since you may be forced to change the date or time depending on their availability.

Flyers.

Your flyers should be in the mail three or four weeks prior to the event. Printing may take as long as two weeks. Flyers should be interesting to look at and not require a magnifying glass or law degree to read and understand. You can figure out the essential elements that a flyer needs to contain by looking at other race flyers. The information portion needs to contain: race name, distance, date, time, place, award categories, cost, sponsors, whom the race benefits, race direc-tor, telephone number for questions and address to mail application, time and place for packet pick-up, and anything unusual about your event.

Volunteers.

 Decide who is doing what. I have discovered that people who say they want to help, really do want to help, they just don't want to devote their lives to the process. If they did they would be the race director. For me it works best to give a large number of nice people very clear narrow assignments. "Missy, will you approach the two quick change oil places near your business and

ask them for gift certificates to be used as random prizes." If random prizes are important to you and you just say to the committee members "we need to get prizes", it is not going to happen. Willing people must be given unambiguous assignments that they can accomplish w narrow time frame.

Traditionally **course volunteers** expect to show up ten minutes before the event and be told what to do. The last thing you need to do is to *plan* to spend the minutes before the race doing something that is easily done long before the start. It just requires a little thinking on your part.

Don't get me wrong. It may sound like I am talking to these people as though they were idiots. I am not. Most of these people are not volunteering to be problem solvers. Although they might be rocket scientists in their normal lives, they are in the "tell me what to do" mode for your race and will appreciate clear job assignments. They want to know ahead of time what corner they should stand on, what time to arrive and when they can leave. Having people standing around is a waste of their time and not very satisfying. Prepare a map for all of the course volunteers and indicate where they are to be. Prepare written assignments. If you think you might be short volunteers, leave the nearest sites unmanned, provided they are not critical turns or intersections. People always show up at the last minute and say they are available to help. Assign late arrivals to the nearer sites. Have maps available.

After a number of races I have some volunteers that I know I can count on for specific jobs and I don't need to worry about those issues. Think of them as assistant race directors. Consider finding someone who is always in charge of refreshments. Whether or not refreshments are minimal or extensive she is in charge of getting them, serving them, finding volunteers, etc.

Consider finding a person to always handle the course, course volunteers, marking, cones, etc. It is essential that this person drive or bike (if possible) the course minutes before the race starts to make sure all volunteers are in place and understand their role. Taking a spare volunteer along on this job helps if you find a corner that is not manned.

Whether or not you are planning to hire professional timers, you will still need chute volunteers. If you are not hiring professionals find someone to be in charge of the chute. In the chute four volunteers are usually sufficient for races with under 300 runners. Eight volunteers will be necessary for larger races and short races where you might anticipate that the runners will not have time to spread themselves out.

At the rear of the chute you will need to place two people to pull tear tags. As the runners enter the chute some will immediately stop and bend over to catch their breath, other will keep on walking. It is essential that the runners be reminded to stay in the order that they finished once in the chute. The person who has pushed the timing button will have times that says 17:01 and 17:02. In order to correctly assign these times to the people who came in at those times, the tear tags on the bottom of their run numbers will need to be pulled in the correct order and place on a pin. Occasionally, consecutive finishers are assigned the same time. Someone in the chute will need to be the decision maker, and decide who was first. If you have professional timers, the hired man will usually do this. If this is a home grown operation the decision maker in the chute will always need to be paying attention.

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Long hard vigorous exercise results in venous dilitation of the legs. As long as the runner is running this venous dilitation is no problem. But as soon as he stops the large amount of blood in his legs is no longer pushed back to his heart with leg muscle action. Consequently a large portion of his blood will pool in his legs and the runner can turn quite pale, pass out or throw up. Possibly all three. The tag puller is going to get a lot of people's sweat on her/him and some other stuff if he/she is not lucky. Occasionally the runner will fall on the chute volunteer. This is not a job for the dainty. To help the runner avoid passing out or throwing up have them keep walking. The tag tearer will need to be able to walk backwards while removing their tags. This is a bit tricky, don't wear heels.

An additional word about thick skin.

There are people out there whose personalities would not normally be called sweet. Sometimes we call these people-JERKS. Jerks personalities do not improve with racing, hypoglycemia, hypotension, dehydration, pain and/or suffering. As a matter of fact, it usually deteriorates. The chute volunteer who is pulling the numbers will be the first "official" the Jerk interacts with after many miles of obsessing about some minor infraction that has taken on new meaning in his life, or heaven forbid, not winning.

Record keeping.

Keeping records is much like college statistics, staying up is essential, once you fall behind you are lost. Although I may contact a potential sponsor in person, I always follow-up with a letter. That way all sponsors and contributors are in my address file. Once the race is run, it is a simple matter to produce thank you letters to all contributors using this address file.As entry forms come in the runners are placed in a word processing file that is consistent with the format that the professional timers want. I can add as many columns to the information as I want. To return to the issue of flyers, I structure the application portion of the flyer so that the answers the runners provide are in the same order that the information is typed into the word processing file. Not having to skip around the application to fill in the file reduces errors and wasted time. At the end of the race I take the file, organize the columns so that it is consistent with my mailing list file, add the two files together, sort by name, delete the duplicates and voilà: a new mailing list. There are a couple of other local race directors for whom I have set up recording forms so that we are all consistent. I give the local body part associations a mailing list for their

race. They enter their competitors in a word processing file consistent with mine, after the race I add their list to mine, and by the following year when I am ready to send out flyers for my next race my mailing list is considerably enhance with local runners who have entered any of a number of 5K races in the last year.

T-shirts.

The first thing people do when they come to packet pick-up is hold the t-shirt at arms length to inspect it. I don't think you will lose many participants if you give out ugly, cheap shirts, I just don't think you will necessarily attract new participants. Remember, you want people to wear these. Long sleeve shirts are unusual and appreciated in the cooler months, but do cost a bit more. If you decide to go the long sleeve route, give runners the option of a short sleeve if they want it. Many people will go for the short sleeve and in the process save you a few dollars.

Contact your suppliers early. Understand the price breaks. That is, if you order 99 shirts, it is one price per shirt, but if you order 100 it is less per shirt. Find out when the last day you can order is and how late you can reorder. Unlike food, I would rather have too few than too many. I order what I conservatively think I need. Supplier may do a run as late as two days before the race if a lot of unexpected people show up. I do not guarantee shirts to last minute registrants, this is clear in the flyer. Don't forget to order for your volunteers.

Trophies.

As I mentioned earlier, (most) adults can only use so many of those tacky little statues, but kids really love them. The bigger the better. Consider asking some of your more successful long term runners to recycle some of their stored trophies to give to the children participating in your event. Then you will only have to purchase new labels for the trophies. In this way you can save money, provide kids with a big thrill and save land fill space at the same time. For adults think of something that they can use that will serve as an advertisement. I have received a very nice framed wildlife print from our local museum. In past races I have given out hand made mugs that were highly regarded by the winners. Keep your local artisans in mind, they may be able to produce something that is nice but not much more expensive than standard trophies.

Random prizes.

Some races do not do this at all. I consider random prizes to contribute to the fun of the event. It is also one of those things that nicely fills up the time between the last place finisher and the awards ceremony. One of the most popular random prizes is socks. People love a new pair of running socks. Give some thought to what prizes you have received and used and which ones you have thrown away as soon as you got home. Approaching people for discontinued merchandise can be quite successful.

Race numbers.

Road ID has a really nice program where they will supply you with race numbers, or some other things, if you agree to give out their advertisements and send them your participant's names and addresses at the end of the race. Race numbers aren't exactly cheap, so this saves a goodly amount. There are also a few companies you can order numbers from, their advertisements can be found in the back of most running and triathlon magazines. The important thing is not to forget to order **pins** at the same time   **Labels**.

For all those people who register prior to packet pick-up I make two kinds of labels.

Race number labels.

These are the labels that will be adhered to the tear-off tag on the bottom of the race number. In truth, you do not need to make labels, you can let the runners fill out the bottom of the number. Unfortunately, many runners will not fill this out and other runner's handwriting is so bad you will have wished they had left it blank. To make life as easy as possible for the timers (i.e. to minimize errors), they are going to need to be able to read the bottom of the tags. What you put on this label depends on what is on the label you are using and more importantly what information the timers are going to need. Some race number stubs have more information on them than the timers will ever require. Don't put stuff on the labels you will not need. I use the run numbers from *Road ID*. The tag on the bottom of these numbers seem to require only the most essential information: last name, first name, age, and gender. If you are using categories other than age and gender, i.e. weight, put that on also or instead or age. Although not required on the label I also put the run number on, so that as I am attaching the label to the number I can make sure I don't make any mistakes. The last race I did the pile of race numbers had two number 50's. I would not have noted this if my labels did not have numbers on them. Using the merge file that I have stored all the racer information in, it is an easy job to produce these labels shortly before packet stuffing.   It is a simple matter to adhere all the labels at once, then re-stack the race numbers for packet stuffing. Of course at packet pick-up there will be last minute registrants for whom you do not have labels. Someone at registration (not the runner), who understands that the timers will need to be able to read these quickly, should fill the bottom portion of the tag out by hand.

Packet pickup.

Encourage people to pick up their packets the day before the race. Makes race day easier. For larger races two alphabetized lists with corresponding numbers help. I actually know a 12 year old girl who is very good at this job. "Your name, please", "how do you spell that?".

Late registration.

You can run registration as late as you want, just do not let last minute registrants interfere with the quality of the race for those who were thoughtful enough to register in a timely man-

ner. Start the race on time. If you are expecting a large crowd have separate tables for packet pickup, late registration, and a place to fill out the forms. Bring extra forms and pens. Have someone to direct traffic. Make sure you have volunteers who are **not** also running the race working these tables so that the runners will get a chance to warm up prior to the race start. Late registration for morning races tends to be more chaotic than late registration for afternoon races. Plan on it. Don't forget to bring a cash box with plenty of small change. Make sure the person handling this cash box knows what to do with it when the race starts. If all of your registration table volunteers are planning to run this cash needs to be put somewhere. Think about it ahead of time.

Maps.

If you are good you can put a map of the course on the flyer. It is also helpful to have an enlarged posted version of the map for people to see before registering and to use to clarify issues that might come up with the runners or volunteers prior to the race.

Interval timers.

 Committed 5K runners rely on 1 and 2 mile timers to pace their runs. For 10K runs I place timers at 1 and 3 miles. People for this job are best found from the running wounded. Regular runners who are injured and cannot run your race will be grateful for an opportunity not to feel left out and to perform a function that they normally appreciate (and come to the chicken barbecue). They will also be more committed to getting it right than someone who does not compete. The timers are stationed a bit in front of the starting pack either on their bikes or in a car. When the starting gun goes off they start their stop watches and quickly leave in order to get to their stations before the first runner. As each runner passes their mile marker they yell out the time. Once all the runners have passed and walkers are arriving at the marker, the timers can leave and return to party. Walkers don't usually care about their interval times.

Water.

As long as there is water at the start and finish I do not feel that a 5K race requires a water stop unless it is unusually hot, but there are people who disagree with me. If you are planning a longer race you will need at least one water stop, maybe more.

Sound system.

 Conducting an awards ceremony without an adequate sound system is awful. If the facility you are using does not have a system contact some nice person in a band. They can help make your day much easier. Of course who ever supplies the sound system gets a t-shirt and comes to the barbecue.

Award ceremony.

Unless the awards are all the same, things go more smoothly if you have the awards clearly labeled prior to the start. It is key that you have help for the awards from someone who under-

stands what you are doing. Again, the running wounded come in handy here. (This is my husband's job.) If there will be any awards that are out of the ordinary make sure your help is clear about this prior to the start. Once the awards ceremony starts if you are giving out the trophies, it is your help that will be doing most of the thinking. Make sure they know what they are doing. I have recently attempted to use local celebrities to give out awards and have discovered that this does not work. Usually, it is only the race director who knows the registrants well enough (provided he/she has a good memory) to know if there has been a mistake. Its awful to get the results sheet from the professional timers indicating no awards in the 60-64 year old women when you *know* there were runners in that age group. There will be mistakes, plan on it and fix them quickly.

If there are people you want to thank, or other announcements you want to make, make yourself a note. Otherwise you won't remember. As a matter of fact, in the heat of the moment I have so often forgotten to do this that I have taken to putting a note in the runners' packets including all the thank you's.

Clean up.

For some reason it is always the same people. Most people will toss their garbage in a can if that can is readily available. The more barrels you have out ahead of time the easier your clean up will be later.

Thank you letters.

Once the race is over it is tempting to ignore these. Resist. Do not put this task off. Personalize each letter. And if you are operating within an organization make sure the letters are on organizational letterhead.

Most importantly, remember, this is about having fun.