



Boston Bound

The Boston Marathon is the world's oldest annual marathon with the 112th running taking place on April 21, 2008. It's not just its age that makes this road race so special, but also its qualifying system, which makes it one of, if not the most prestigious road race in the world.

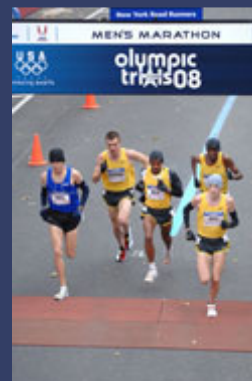
Like the New York City Marathon this past November, this year's Boston will feature an additional prestigious and no less important event, the U.S. Women's Olympic Trials, which will take place the day before the marathon.

Both events will be timed using the ChampionChip system by Granite State Race Services' Bob Teschek and Sports Management Associates' Mike Proctor. This year's race will have nine checkpoints on the course—at every 5K through 40K plus the halfway mark—in addition to the start and finish for 11 locations in total. While Proctor says the use of more equipment and personnel to time an event such as Boston can make coordination more challenging, the best practices they use for other races are the same as the ones they employ here.

The U.S. Women's Olympic Trials will have eight checkpoints set up on the course, but similar to the

U.S. Men's Olympic Marathon Trials Sets More than One New Record

At the 2008 U.S. Men's Olympic Marathon Trials on November 3, 2007 in New York City, Ryan Hall set a new record for the fastest men's Trials time at 2:09:02. That time, so significant and now, forever captured in record books, was recorded by New York Road Runners (NYRR) timer Tom Kelley using the ChampionChip system.



Courtesy of New York Road Runners.

However, that wasn't the only record set that day. Because the Olympic Trials course was a series of loops around Central Park and checkpoints were set up at every 5K, plus start and finish, data was collected at all those checkpoints continuously, not just when the runners were at the 5K, 10K, etc. mark, so in total, 54 splits were recorded. The detailed splits can be found online at www.usatf.org. According to Kelley, this race recorded more splits than any other to date.

The NYRR is unique in that it not only creates and manages its own events, but it also times its own events, of which there are a lot. "We have a race almost every week," Kelley says, for a total of 52 events a year. Most of those races get four- to six-thousand runners.

Men's Trials in New York City, six of those points will be used multiple times as a result of course design so data will be collected at each mile from miles three through 26, plus the halfway point and the finish—all relying on the ChampionChip system.

ChampionChip Keeps Time(rs) Together

The 2008 OneAmerica 500 Festival Mini-Marathon in Indianapolis on May 3 won't appear different to most participants but something will have changed. This year, event timing will be handled by John Magnuson of ChampionChip Minnesota and Mike Proctor of Sports Management Associates, Inc., keeping the Mini-Marathon "in the ChampionChip family," says Magnuson.

Using the word family isn't too far off in describing the network of ChampionChip timers and in particular, Magnuson and Proctor, who have been partnering on events for years. "We work together fairly often," Proctor says. For one thing, the companies bring complementary skills to each other and working together increases their capacity. Another, non-insignificant reason, Proctor notes, is that combining forces ensures continuity from year to year as events fall on roughly the same dates each year but can shift around a little as a result of calendar-year changes. If suddenly two events are falling on the same Saturday in May, having both Proctor and Magnuson in the lead ensures

That's a lot of timing and Kelley relies on ChampionChip for all of it.

ChampionChip—It's Not Just for Runners

While long the timing system of choice for running events and triathlons, ChampionChip has been used to time many other types of events, some you may be surprised to learn about. John Magnuson of ChampionChip Minnesota uses ChampionChip to time the largest inline skating event in North America—with over 4,000 participants—the North Shore Inline Marathon in Duluth, Minn., as well as a few other inline skating races.



At the Mora Vasaloppet cross-country ski races held in Mora, Minn., which has a self-imposed limit of 3,000 skiers, you'll find the timing mats buried under the snow. "We like to be about six inches under the top of the snow," says Magnuson. "It allows the grooming machine to go over it without doing any damage to the equipment. It works well in cold weather. [This year], we started at about 14 degrees below zero with wind chills making it minus 30 to 40."

Magnuson takes advantage of ChampionChip's versatility in a number of ways, including cycling races and stair climbs also. But the most unusual use of the system has been to track people at a convention using a chip. For four years, Magnuson and Mike Proctor

that both events will be covered with the same expertise as the previous year.

Magnuson takes this idea a little further adding that if something comes up at the last minute for either timer, the event is covered. But beyond the logistics of the event, collaborating on multiple events creates not just partnerships but friendships. In addition to increasing resources, Proctor says with a chuckle, "John puts up with me."

Magnuson seconds that. "He puts up with me too," he says. "Through the partnership, we've developed a wonderful friendship. That's just as important as anything else in the business. I know pretty much exactly what he's doing and he knows what I'm doing so there are no worries. It allows us to utilize each other's strengths better."

When it comes to any event, but especially a large one, such as the Mini-Marathon with 44,000 participants, strength in numbers and expertise behind the scenes is a very good thing for an event. For Magnuson and Proctor, partnering on events makes for good time.

of Sports Management Associates have worked with the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Convention using the system to verify attendance by giving each participant an envelope containing a chip.

In 2008, Magnuson will continue to use ChampionChip to time cross country races using video boards updating individual and team results in real-time to give spectators at the finish an idea of what's happening out on the course. He'll also be timing the OneAmerica 500 Festival Mini-Marathon in Indianapolis on May 3 with more than 44,000 participants.

ChampionChip Works for All Times

Because ChampionChip is the chip for all the premier races around the globe, it's easy to overlook the fact that it isn't just large events and the companies that handle those events that rely on ChampionChip. No event is too big for ChampionChip, but the reverse is also true: No event or company is too small.



Sid Steinweg got his start as the finish line director of a local event in his home state of Colorado and spent the next few years leading the finish line timing crew for the three largest events in his community (including the Pikes Peak Marathon). He discovered his inner timer and now owns ChampionChip of the

Rockies (CCR, www.ccrtiming.com) along with his wife, Liz. CCR times races from 100 to 1300 competitors. The company started timing in the 80s and purchased its own ChampionChip equipment in 2002. That year the company timed eight events and now times 56 a year, from foot races to triathlons and some unusual ones in between, like a winter quadrathlon. (bike, run, ski, snow shoe, and then back in reverse order).

Having been around since primarily the pull-tag-only era (during which Liz said, “never again” to tag-timing triathlons), the Steinwegs can appreciate the beauty of chip timing, which reduces the number of staff needed, not to mention the headaches. It also enables CCR to tackle some interesting events.

With a proven reputation, the company adds a few new events to its calendar each year, and times mostly triathlons, but the Steinwegs have noticed an increase in specialty events that request their services, such as a ski, bike, kayak event or a run, bike, kayak. “This segment is definitely growing,” Sid says. “Nowadays, chip timing is expected by the athletes.” But the most unusual race to cross his path was a “blow cart race,” where three-wheeled carts with a wind mast race on a dried up lakebed.

Who knows what unique event will next book a date on CCR’s race calendar?

Until then, "We'll keep this streak alive as long as we can," the Steinwegs say. "We feel lucky to do what we're doing."