



# Keep on Running

*Running for fun and for exercise has never been more popular and with the London Marathon coming up this month, maybe it's time that you got inspired to put your trainers on*

THERE'S a running boom sweeping the country and it's showing no signs of slowing down. In fact, the rise of mass participation running in the UK has hit an all-time high.

More than 38,000 runners will stand on the start line of the London Marathon this month – a record 253,930 people entered the ballot this year and the capital's streets will be lined with a 750,000-strong crowd of cheering spectators for the race on April 23.

These figures are no longer unusual. The Simplyhealth Great North Run, the world's largest half marathon, is also balloted and last year saw 57,000 runners take part, with more than double that applying for entry.

Latest Sport England figures released in December 2016 showed that running is well on track to become Britain's favourite sport. The Active People Survey shows an increase in weekly running participation from 1.4million in 2005-6 to 2.2million today, putting running a close second behind swimming as the nation's favourite physical activity.

Each year there are hundreds of running events to take part in across London and Essex alone, including a 10k that finishes on the track inside the London Stadium for a truly unforgettable finish line high. Free weekly events such as Great Run Local sessions have broken down



barriers to increase participation, and as more events spring up, more people get the bug, and the boom continues.

Former Olympian, BBC London Marathon commentator and Great Run Company chairman Brendan Foster knows only too well the impact that the running boom has had on the country – and his business has been instrumental in leading the way.

The Great Run Company organises more than 40 mass participation events across the UK, including the next big event for London – the Simplyhealth Great Newham London Run, at the London Stadium, on July 2.

'We've seen such incredible growth and



***"Marathon fever – it's all part of the running boom"***  
***Brendan Foster***



it's only set to continue,' says Brendan. 'Since our beginnings in 1981 with the very first Simplyhealth Great North Run, demand has grown and allowed us to expand across multiple distances and locations across the country, from 5ks to our newly-launched marathons in Birmingham and Stirling.

'Running is something that's accessible for everyone, whatever your age, ability or background. You don't need an expensive gym membership – just a pair of trainers and the motivation to give it a try,' he continues.

For many, signing up to an event, whether that is the London Marathon or a local fun run, can be an exciting but daunting process. Many commit to raise money for charity, often before they've even started running, so it acts as a great motivator to get to the start line.

'Motivation to go to the gym can come and go, but running always seems to stand the test of time as people often commit to taking part in an event and it becomes something that people can enjoy together,' adds Brendan.

'People often discover a real joy in running once they start training, and once they've experienced their own race day for the first time, they're hooked and come back for more.'

It's the celebration of running and camaraderie that Brendan is referring to here. Training for an event can be hard work, especially if juggling running with work or family commitments. But race day is the reward for all the hard work.

You and a few thousand other runners will stand together on the start line full of nerves and anticipation at what you're about to achieve. All the training over the past few weeks or months culminates in this moment – and it's yours for the taking.

'Our goal at Great Run is to break down barriers to running by making running fun and creating events that engage local communities, promoting health and fitness as a lifestyle choice,' continues Brendan.

'Our flagship London event, the Simplyhealth Great Newham London Run, gives runners the unique opportunity to run in the footsteps of Olympic legends on the track

where Mo Farah, Jess Ennis-Hill and Greg Rutherford won gold for Great Britain in 2012.

'People talk about the finish-line high and where better to get your fix than inside the stadium that hosted the London Olympic Games? It's also the same stadium that will play host to the world's greatest just weeks after at the London 2017 World Para-Athletics Championships and IAAF World Athletics Championships.

'We had 15,000 runners take to the track at last year's 10km and 2km Family Run events, and we believe London and the surrounding counties can lead the way in helping running take the top spot as the nation's favourite participation sport.'



## FEELING INSPIRED? CHECK OUT THESE GREAT PLACES TO RUN IN ESSEX

### Follow the River Lee straight into London

Pick up the River Lee navigation and let it take you straight to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park – for a quick preview of the Great Newham London Run!

### Hadleigh Country Park, Hadleigh

Take on the hills at Hadleigh for breathtaking views across the Thames Estuary and see first hand the London 2012 Olympic mountain bike course.

### Walton on the Naze to Clacton along the sea wall

For the perfect half marathon distance and a breath of fresh sea air, run the pier to pier and back again from Walton on the Naze to Clacton, either along the sea wall or the bridal path below for a mix of mud and gravel.

*Find out more*

*The Simplyhealth Great Newham London Run 10km and 2km Family Run takes place on July 2 at the London Stadium. Enter at [greatrun.org/London](http://greatrun.org/London)*



## FIVE TOP TIPS TO PREPARE FOR THE BIG RACE...

*from GB runner  
Jonny Mellor*

### Training Plan

Following a training plan will keep you on track and make sure you get the right runs in to meet your goal race. [www.greatruntraining.org](http://www.greatruntraining.org) offers free plans that take into account your current fitness level and provides you with a structured and progressive plan in an easy to follow format.

### Run/Walk

Don't be afraid to mix periods of walking with running as you safely and gradually increase the distance. Time on your feet is just as important during the early stages of training and will help prevent injury and illness.

### Find a Run Buddy

Having a training partner or a group of friends you can run with is great for motivation and sharing the pace, making it much easier to train for the longer distance.

### Sign Up

Entering an event provides the motivation to keep training and a final goal to aim for.

### Time Management

It's time to get organised. Consider running before work or on your lunch break, leaving you with more free time after work for other commitments that might otherwise interrupt your training routine.

### Nutrition

Make sure you're well hydrated before, during and after training as well as replenishing your body with carbohydrates, protein and vitamins and minerals post training.