

PRELUDE

Over the course of 11 years I have had the good fortune to direct or organize over 60 events. Counting those I have provided timing services for the number swells to over 150. Besides losing sleep a lot of Saturday's, I have learned a few things about putting on a race event. The number one thing I have learned is that there is more than one way to do everything. And as far as one "right" way, well, that is always a matter of perspective.

The best races do some things very well and very few races can do everything well – though some manage to do this year after year. The Twin Cities Marathon comes to mind as an event I come away each time (5 so far) thinking "that was perfect."

There are a couple limiting factors to every event – money, human capital and time. A vast majority of races are done with volunteers, and probably one or two sleep deprived and very passionate people who do 90% of all the work. Often there are organizations that put on events and allow time to be spent on an event during regular business hours. Many fundraiser events do this. Budgets are often very tight, with sponsorships being critical to success. The more you get at a race, the more money it cost.

Trekman races take place for one major reason – I am passionate about people and running. Putting on races allows my social bug to be satisfied over and over. I get to hang out with my friends and family who help, meet great new volunteers year after year and see hundreds of smiling faces at events. In addition I get to put on events the way I would like to experience them as a participant. I do not run purely for sport, I run because it is a lifestyle choice that improves almost every aspect of my life. Trekman events hopefully epitomize that ethos.

Over the years I have been asked many questions, and there really are answers to all of them. Most of them are logistical, and others purely personal since Trekman Racing is an extension of me and not something beholden to an entity. Yes, some things are done simply because I like the way "it" is and no other reason. Something must be going right as all events grow year after year.

Below are answers to questions I get regularly.

EVENT QUESTIONS

Q – What are the Trekman races?

A – I own/direct the Fools 5k and Park to Park Running Festival outright. I co-direct the Mud Run and 5 Sullivan Brothers Memorial 5k&10k. The Santa's Snow Shuffle is a Trekman event, with Main Street Cedar Falls as a minor partner. I provide free services for the ECO Tri as a member of the Cedar Valley Association of Soft Trails (CVAST) and also provide free services for the Cedar Bend Humane Society's Furry 5k fundraiser.

Q – What role does Trekman Racing play in other races?

A – I provide services from timing only to full blown directing and organizing for other entities.

Q – What happened to the Hudson Pump & Run?

A – After 10 years of success the labor intensive event took a toll on me and volunteers and I decided to retire it after the most successful year (2010). There are no plans to revive it.

Q – Is there a chance of a Cedar Valley Marathon?

A – Not likely, though it comes up every year.

Q – Why is there a cap on Park to Park?

A – There is a limit on parking and trail space for participants.

Q – Why did you drop the 5k from Park to Park?

A – I believe there are too many 5k's and not enough distance races in the area. A person can usually find more than one 5k within an hour's drive every Saturday.

Q – What about moving Park to Park to accommodate more people?

A – That would take away from the soul of the race (George Wyth) and I am interested in quality over quantity.

Q – Race "X" does " _____ " this way, why don't you?

A – I probably don't want to. ☺

REGISTRATION

Q – Why does it cost so much to run a race?

A – Shirts that are printed on two sides, awards (Park to Park has over 100 awards), certified courses (fees), insurance (1,000,000 policy), advertising, web site monthly fees, ambulance, portable toilets, water, food, food/shirts for volunteers, entry forms, timing and depending on the race lots of other services/items that are too numerous to list. And yes, I try to make a profit and have money to donate to a chosen charity.

Q – Why do entry fees go up so much?

A – To encourage early entry. This makes it easier on me and my family/friends as I type in every entry form and order every item, pick up every bottle of water (sometimes with help). Late entries push limits of all supplies and can make it hard on those who registered early.

Q – Why do online companies charge fees?

A – Like you learned in school – nothing is free, work deserves reward.

Q – Why are there no refunds if I get injured and let you know early?

A – First, I am not aware of any race that offers refunds (though you might know of one). There are races that offer deferments, but the ones I know of that do that are large races that have

paid staff that can do the record keeping. The basic reason is just putting on an event is stressful and very time consuming, and refunds are not something I want to take on.

Q – Why can't people run for free?

A – If you need this answered there is no help for you in English.

Q – I registered early, why is there an error in my age/name/town/gender/shirt size?

A – The most frequent answer is bad data sent in. A wrong date put in, box checked and so on. The other error is data input on my end from late night typing sessions or day of entry's where we are rushed. All issues can be fixed – and is why I stress checking preliminary results.

BIBS

Q – Why do I need a bib?

A – It shows you registered for the event and are not a bandit (very bad)

Q – Why do you want bibs worn on the front?

A – Easier to see you are registered and for tag tear timing it makes it much easier on volunteers who need to get that tag quickly and efficiently in the finish chute.

Q – If the race is chip timed then what difference does a bib make?

A – You will not be removed from the course for suspicion of being a bandit (very bad). Imagine running towards the finish and you do not have a bib, and someone blocks you from finishing because you do not appear to be registered. Awkward if you are and do not have your bib on!

Q – Why is my name not on the bib when other people have a personalized one?

A – You did not register early enough. Printing companies require time to do custom jobs.

SHIRTS

Q – Why is there a shirt deadline?

A – Shirts are the largest expense of any event. They must be ordered long before race day, so to minimize space in my basement it is nice to have a solid number needed so they do not go to waste if the guess is too high or there is not a shortage for a low guess.

Q – Do you have a system for ordering extra?

A – Yes, and it works so well that in 11 years and over 40 events less than 1% of people have ever walked away from a Trekman race event without a shirt.

Q – If you are out of shirts why do I still have to pay the late fee at registration?

A – Two reasons. The first is that 10% of a race field typically does not show race morning and RD's take this into account. The left over shirts race morning go to the late entrants, and most often everyone gets a shirt. Since the volunteers are just that, they have no way of knowing who got a shirt and who did not so after a race nobody gets a shirt not paid for. Secondly, behavior modification – late entrants are hard on a race and if you are concerned about the \$5 late fee then register early and it will not ever be an issue.

Q – Why won't you hold my shirt for me or send it in the mail?

A – It sounds easy, but imagine having a 50 hour a week job, a family and then trying to accommodate every single request for a special favor. I used to do this when I first started and all I can say is harder than it sounds. Sorry, Trekman Racing will never be Burger King.

Q – Are shirts the biggest pain in race directing?

A – YES. I will never understand how people who are ultra-concerned about having a race shirt can wait until the day before or day of a race when entering. If you must have a shirt, make the shirt deadline and you are assured a shirt! I put on races, Trekman Racing is not a clothing store.

PACKET PICK UP

Q – Why are your packet pick-ups only at night and why can't the Runner's Flat staff hand out packets early?

A – I have a job and volunteers have jobs. The Runner's Flat is a sponsor and helpful, but cannot answer many specific questions. Nor should the employees be expected to spend work time on a Trekman event.

Q – Why don't you hand out true packets/bags for events other than Park to Park?

A – To go green. Bags go right to the trash for most people, as do manila envelopes.

Q – Why do half marathon entrants get the cool back sacks and others get a smaller bag?

A – They pay more.

BANDITS

Q – What is a bandit?

A – A rude person who does not believe in paying for a race. This person has no respect for a race director, sponsor or volunteer who puts time, effort and money into making an event happen.

Q – Is it true you are hard on bandits?

A – Yes, I put in way too many hours those freeloaders cannot comprehend and consider a bandit to be a thief/cheat (and you should, too). I will embarrass a bandit publicly and ban them from Trekman races. To be fair to those who may claim "I didn't know," I announce no less than 3-5 times before each event that everyone is to be registered.

COURSES

Q – What does USATF certified mean?

A – A person with a flexible ruler measured every inch from start to finish. Okay, not every inch, but it does involve measuring with a special device taking into account temperature, humidity, air pressure in bike tires, calibration on certified straight path and multiple rides.

Then there is some fancy shmancy math thrown in for correction values. All USATF courses are a smidge long to correct for any possible mistake in value.

Q – My Garmin says the course is short/long, what is that about?

A – Bottom line – GPS units are NEVER “accurate.” For a very good explanation of USATF vs GPS measurement that anyone can understand click here:

<http://www.hamptonrockfest.com/hamptonhalf-GPS.html>

FINISH LINE/TIMING

Q – Why do some of the finish line volunteers seem so bossy?

A – They have one job, and that is to make sure the finish order is correct. In a big race people are finishing at the rate of 2 per second – that is a lot of pressure to get the order right.

Q – My watch and the results do not match

A – Possible answers include starting your watch at the start versus when you crossed the start line, a mixed up tag in line, a mistake entering the bib order.

Q – I do not care about my time so why do I have to finish in the chute and stay in order?

A – If a person gets “clicked” for a time and then leaves the chute before a tag is collected that persons time will be associated with the person finishing behind him/her. That makes everyone behind him/her wrong. I am surprised at how many people try to exit the chute or miss it entirely.

Q – My time was wrong in the results, how can that be?

A – Several ways that can happen. Tag timed events are done with volunteers, not professionals who do this for a living. It can be very easy to click the timing button one more or less time when 5-8 people are crossing the finish line. Tags can get put in the wrong order at the end of the chute, tags sometimes stick together from being wet and two look like one when being counted, people wear the wrong bib and we get people out of order (happens all the time). **Most all errors are caught and easily fixed. It is why I make many announcements to check preliminary results.**