

TACH Races: Marshalling at the finish

Marshalling at the finish can be good fun and it's a great way to help with a TACH race, without travelling too far from the pub. But it's a job that needs to be done right - if one of those finishers has just run a personal best, or beaten their nemesis by a hair's breadth; they will be relying on you to document it.

It's harder than you think to note down the race number, finish time and position of every runner flying past - especially when there's a big group finish. The following method should help new TACH volunteers assisting at the finish to produce reliable results without putting anyone under pressure.

Four people are required on the finish team, but a fifth can be helpful.

1. Before the race, each finish-marshal should adopt one of the following jobs:
 - a. **Time-caller** - this person calls out the time of each finisher
 - b. **Time-recorder** - this person writes down the finish time
 - c. **Number-caller** - this person calls out each runner's race number
 - d. **Number-recorder** - this person writes down the race number
 - e. **Support** - (optional) this person protects the finish team from interruptions and arranges for results sheets to be carried back to the Race HQ

Make sure you are clear about your role. This division of labour makes it much easier to focus.

2. Before the start, establish the number of runners that have registered on the day and make a note of the Race Director's phone number, in case of queries.
3. Collect your equipment from Race HQ. The team will need:
 - a. 2 x stopwatches
 - b. 2 x waterproof clipboards
 - c. Pens, plus spares
 - d. 2 sets of results sheets, ready labelled with position numbers 1-10, 11-20...etc
 - e. High-viz vests to help runners identify the finish
4. At the start gun, the Time-caller and Time-recorder should start both stopwatches. Each stopwatch should be held by a different person and kept safe for the duration of the race.
5. The finish-marshals should then make their way to the finish area. It may be necessary to draw a finish line and set up a finishing funnel using sticks and tape. Make sure it is really clear where to run - tired runners often miss the obvious.
6. As runners start to approach, the Time-caller should stand next to the Time-recorder and read out the finish time from the stopwatch. It can help to read out the minute just before the runner crosses the line (eg "forty-five minutes and...(pause).. thirty-two seconds") to give the Time-recorder more time to write, but don't pre-empt the results.

At the same time, the Number-caller should stand next to the Number-recorder and read out the runner's race number. If the race number can't be seen, send a supporter to ask the runner for their number.

- The two Recorders write each figure next to the relevant finish position. Every ten finishers or so, check both sheets match (“Was that the 15th finisher?” “Yes, I’ve got 15 race numbers down”). The sheets should look something like this:

Time Sheet

<i>Position</i>	<i>Time</i>
1	35:02
2	35:03
3	35:21
4	35:35
5	36:01

Race Number Sheet

<i>Position</i>	<i>Race Number</i>
1	41
2	11
3	6
4	78
5	30

At some point in the race there is likely to be a distraction; a finisher will ask you for his friend’s time; or an irate runner will turn up from the wrong direction. Stay focused and let someone else deal with it - this is where supporters come in handy.

- After every 20 results or so, send a supporter (or TACH runner) back to Race HQ with the paired sheets, so the results team can start inputting the data to the laptop.
- And that’s it - just keep going until you reach the total number of runners, or wait for the sweeper to confirm any non-finishers.
- Dismantle the finish line, and report to the bar for that well-earned pint.