



IN THE NEWS



FIRST EVER AFGHANISTAN MARATHON

War-torn Afghanistan may seem an unlikely venue for a marathon, but in mid-October 37 intrepid runners from Europe, the United States, Canada and Afghanistan took part in the country's first international event. Competitors could enjoy stunning scenery, as the race was held 2,500 meters up amid the peaks of the Hindu Kush in Bamiyan Province, a UNESCO world heritage site. Britain's Keith MacIntosh emerged victorious in the event – which organisers are hoping to expand for next year – in an impressive time of 2hrs 55mins.

marathonofafghanistan.com

© Marathon of Afghanistan



15 MINS WITH...



JAMES BINGHAM, RACE DIRECTOR

What compelled you to organise a race in Afghanistan, one of the world's most dangerous countries?

I've been to Afghanistan several times for personal adventures and my experiences have given me a different perspective: they gave me the confidence that something good could be done here.

What were the main challenges involved in organising an event in a war-torn country?

You've got to have some pretty good local knowledge about what's going on and you have to keep a close eye on the security situation. There are obvious risks and we needed to take a lot of precautions. We had armed guards at various checkpoints.

Once the race was underway, did it run smoothly?

Being a new event in a foreign country, there was always going to be some teething problems – mainly surrounding the language barrier, as most of the marshalls were local volunteers – but it was definitely a success. It provided the stage for a woman called Zainab to become the first Afghan woman to run a marathon in the country.

James is also the race director of the Ring O' Fire race in Anglesey, a 135-mile coastal ultra – ringofire.co.uk



COMEBACK KID

An inspiring win for top GB runner Chris Thompson in October's Great Birmingham Run – just 10 months after achilles tendon surgery that left him unsure whether he would run competitively again. Thompson, who won European 10,000 metres silver in 2010, was forced to undergo surgery when told by experts that, "Without it, my basic quality of life would have been severely hampered." Surgeons removed 50% of Thompson's tendon but, with "a lot of hard work and sensible decision-making", he proved he was back near top form by sprinting clear in the final metres to win the half-marathon in 63 minutes flat.

greatrun.org

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