

GTC NEWSLETTER

“There are as many individual pathways to success as there are individual runners.
“Discovering what works best for you is a large part of the challenge and the fun.”
| Jack Daniels |

A Message from Your GTC President

Mike Burchett, our GTC President, shares his thoughts about the past year of his presidency of GTC: reductions of track and cross-country programs, our own self-imposed restrictions, the hope for positive news in the future, and our club’s efforts to meet your interests and needs.

A Message from Your GTC President

By Mike Burchett



The year 2020 has been a trying one. It has affected all of us in different ways, and has impacted the sport of running in ways previously unimaginable to most of us. Nearly all of the large road races that are benchmarks of our sport have been cancelled, and competition at the collegiate and secondary-school levels has been curtailed as well. We just recently learned that yet another institution of higher learning, this one in our area, is cancelling its men's track and cross-country programs.

Although we have experienced relatively few pandemic-related legal restrictions compared to other countries and regions, most of us have significantly restricted our own activity out of responsibility to ourselves, our friends and

community. To those of you who have exercised the self-discipline to make these sacrifices, I extend to you my deep personal gratitude and thank you as well on behalf of our entire club. The Greenville Track Club supports your efforts, and I hope that this has been clear in our approach to ensuring the safety of our community.

As I write this, some promising news is coming to light regarding the prospects for controlling and potentially eradicating the COVID-19 virus in the coming year; but until these prospects materialize, rest assured that our club will make every effort to provide runners with the opportunity to train and race safely.

At the end of this year, I will be turning the position of president over to our current president-elect Robin Walter, and will be moving back into the role of past-president where I last served in 2014-2015. It has been an honor, a privilege, and a distinct pleasure to serve the club and community in this role for the past 3 years, and I look forward to continuing to serve in a different role next year. Rest assured that the Greenville Track Club will be in good hands for years to come, and that we will emerge from this episode stronger, smarter, and ready to lead the revival of running in the Greenville area.

We are able to be in this position because of the foresight and planning of many good people who have come before us, some of whom are still active in the operation of the club. But we could not have done it without you, the members who faithfully pay your dues and participate in our races and outreach programs, volunteer, and help to spread our good name far and wide. We may be a running club from Greenville, South Carolina, but we have members, supporters, and friends all over the country and in many other parts of the world who

families, and our

share our commitment to fun, fitness, and fellowship. Thanks to all of you most sincerely for your loyalty and your continued support.

In addition to finding creative ways to extend racing and training opportunities to you during this difficult time, we are always looking for new ways to enhance the value of your club membership. We recently conducted a membership survey to help identify some ways to improve your membership experience, and we are presently awaiting the final processing of the results. But please do not hesitate to contact any of our officers, board members, race directors, or program coordinators directly if you have questions or feedback.

I wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and a happy and healthy 2021. See you out there soon, I promise!

Please check our website (www.greenvilletrackclub.com) and Facebook page frequently for updates, and feel free to contact our race directors or e-mail me at president@greenvilletrackclub.com if you have any questions.

The Greenville Track Club is here for the running community, separate but together. Stay well and stay safe!



Spinx Run Fest 2020

Ed Hughes is the GTC Race Manager for the Spinx Run Fest series for 2020. He and Kerrie Sijon, Robin Walter, John Pope, Mike Sullivan, Beth Grumbles, Lola Amacher, Mike Caputo, Sandi Hardaway, and Joy Bailey worked much of this year to set up and administer this program with the support of the Spinx Corporation, and the contribution by Kroc Greenville and the Kroc Center of the venue.

What is Virtual Plus?

Virtual Plus (VP) is a new virtual race format introduced by the Greenville Track Club at Spinx Run Fest 2020. The format adopts the basic features of a virtual race and enhances it with added features:

1. Participants run on a common course, measured to USATF standards.
2. The course is well marked/signed, and participants are given a course map including turn by turn directions.
3. Participants wear bibs and are timed accurately/automatically using a camera timing system

Spinx Run Fest 2020: Keeping the Streak Alive

What we Learned from Putting on our first Virtual Plus Race

On November 7th, 2020, the Greenville Track Club concluded its annual multi-distance running event, Spinx Run Fest. But instead of a one-day extravaganza, this year's event went "virtual" over a six week period. Yes, it was disappointing we couldn't put on a normal event for 2000+ runners, but we made the most out of the situation and in the process developed an exciting new virtual race format with some interesting new timing equipment.

The Backstory. When the coronavirus began taking its toll on races in the Spring of 2020, the Spinx Run Fest organizing team and Flying Melon (event manager) truly believed things would return to normal by October 2020. When summer arrived and we were still sheltering in place, we figured we needed a contingency plan. Everyone on the team agreed we would go to a virtual format instead of cancelling the event, but everyone also agreed that a virtual Spinx Run Fest would be mediocre at best. It took a while to figure out, but we eventually arrived at a solution called Virtual Plus (see sidebar)

What did we learn?

Lesson 1. Runners like accurate courses and timing.

The term "Virtual Race" is an oxymoron. You can't race without accurate courses and accurate timing. The Virtual Plus format at Spinx Run Fest solved this problem by using certified courses and camera timing, as good as chip-timing. Participants in the Certified races were excited to have automatic timing. The Greenville Track Club was excited as well to know that the results and awards for each Certified race were accurate and fair.

Lesson 2. Multiple weeks are a good thing. Spinx Run Fest offered 4 race distances, so stretching our event over 6 weekends allowed runners to "double-up", "triple-up", and even "quadruple-up" on races. Participants liked the opportunity to run multiple distances to see which distance they were strongest in. The Grand Slam 48.6 Challenge (all 4 distances) attracted 10 athletes and was hotly contested in the Male division up until the last race, the Swamp Rabbit Marathon.

Lesson 3. You need a venue but it doesn't have to be very big. The Virtual Plus format required a small venue to set up the start/finish and timing system. We got permission to use the northwest corner of the Kroc Center field for our start/finish line. This patch of grass worked out great with parking located just a few hundred feet away. Except on the busiest running day, we never had more than 20 people occupying the start/finish area at any one time.

Lesson 4. You don't need police for traffic control. We had never planned on traffic control for our Virtual Plus event and couldn't afford it anyway. But that didn't mean we weren't a little bit nervous. After all, we were encouraging people to race and run responsibly at the same time. It helped that we designed courses with as few street crossings as possible. Everything worked out fine in the end. I suppose race directors have a tendency to overthink things and not give runners credit for using their heads... except for the next item.

Lesson 5. You can never mark courses too well. As there were no police or monitors to direct runners on our courses, we did the best job we could marking them (the courses, not the runners). We also printed maps with turn-by-turn directions and gave these to every participant before they started their race. The result? People still got turned around on the courses. Virtual racing is a new thing and many runners aren't accustomed to navigating on their own. We also suspect

some participants instinctively followed a runner in front of them...too bad the runner up ahead was just someone out for a morning jog.

Lesson 6. Video cameras are great for timing virtual races. We have a mad scientist's electronic workshop at Flying Melon Timing where we developed the Camera Timing System. Race timers have been using video cameras for decades as a backup for their chip timing systems. We just decided to ditch the chip timing system and advance the video technology to achieve the same accuracy. Our CTS units are self-contained and run off battery power. A bonus with using the CTS is that we got LOTS of finish line photos in the process, which we uploaded to the race page at RunSignUp.com

Most Important Lesson 7. Runners need company and camaraderie. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic has driven us all apart. Social distancing has been good for protecting our body's health but it's been bad for the health of our minds and spirits. Although the main goal of a virtual event is the running part, running solo can only get you so far. We experienced the real silver lining in Virtual Plus week after week. Bringing runners together, in limited numbers, in a safe setting, really raises the happiness quotient. Even when runners got lost on the courses, the first thing we heard them say was "It doesn't matter, I'm just happy to be racing again!"

The Future of Virtual Plus. While the rollout of a coronavirus vaccine is imminent, the virus is not going away any time soon. Comfort levels will have to return to normal before large running events can return to normal. That means VP is here to stay in 2021, beginning with Run Downtown Virtual Plus in January, and continuing with our large GTC events through the Spring and Summer of 2021. I'm having a hat made out of Ghirardelli chocolate since I said I would eat my hat if we held another SpinX Run Fest Virtual Plus in 2021. Who knows? Even after the coronavirus is gone, there will be times when VP will be a

good option. Personally, I would like to continue our Grand Slam 48.6 Challenge at Spinx Run Fest in 2021 whether or not we get back to a normal format. We obviously couldn't have held the Grand Slam without VP and multiple race dates. Another desirable thing about VP is that it's cheaper to put on a race since you don't have to hire traffic police or rent out a large venue.

See you at the start line. Let me wrap this up with an amusing story. When we first updated the Spinx Run Fest race page with new information on Virtual Plus and the Camera Timing System, I included "Runner Instructions" which told participants to raise their hand to activate the camera just before they took off from the start line. As I later found out, the motion activation setting in the CTS software is so sensitive that hand-raising isn't necessary. But I chose to leave the step in the instructions anyway, as it's been a joy to watch the various styles of hand-raising and other "dance moves" performed at the start line (Yes, these were recorded to video). Someday I may write some code for the optional speaker module on the CTS. Something like "Thank you, contestant number 1" should do.

We hope to see you at the next Virtual Plus event, and don't forget to give us your best "zany" at the start!

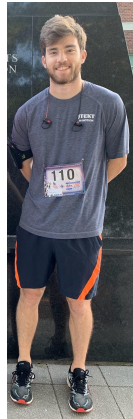
Credential	2019 Spinx Run Fest	2020 Spinx Run Fest Virtual Plus
Event Duration	1 Day	6 Weeks
Number of Races	5K, 10K, HM, Marathon	5K (x11), 10K (x9), HM (x9), Marathon (x2)
Number of Participants	2000	710
Swag	Shirt, Medal, Souvenir	Shirt, Medal, Souvenir
Timing System	Chip Timing	Camera Timing
Courses, Marked?	USATF Certified, Yes	USATF Certified, Yes
Event Venue	Fluor Field	Kroc Center
Traffic Control?	Yes	No
Water Stations & Toilets?	Yes	Yes



GTC Corporate Shield Running

Sarah Schoonover, your GTC Corporate Shield Race Director, manages our GTC Corporate Shield races and corporate sponsorship participation. She would like you to meet one of the members of her management team for this GTC program, Josh Ferguson.

Corporate Shield Running



Hey, Josh! Josh Ferguson is the captain of the JTEKT Corporate Shield Team for the GTC. JTEKT North America is a global leader in engineering and manufacturing automotive systems, bearing solutions, and high-performance machine tools.

Josh began running at the start of college (Fall of 2013) as a way to stay in shape. He found that he really enjoyed running and it slowly morphed from a way to stay healthy into a passion. Josh took over as the JTEKT Team Captain in 2019 with the goal of increasing participation and promoting the many health benefits of running and walking. He also wanted to dispel the idea that races are only for fast runners and encourage anyone and everyone to participate.

Thanks in part to John's efforts, JTEKT promotes Corporate Shield participation in several ways:

- Employees are offered paid 1 race registration per season, this encourages those who may want to participate but don't want to pay registration fees to partake.
- Organized weekly on-site group runs/walks to make it easy for people to maintain their fitness and enjoy the camaraderie that running can create. COVID-19 caused the company to temporarily stop these, but JTEXT plans to resume this practice in due time.
- Completed 5K training plans as a team leading up to Corporate Shield events. These are great for those who may be interested in doing a 5K, but don't know how to train, as well as for those who may not want to do it alone.

- Published a monthly newsletter that highlights upcoming races, includes training tips. The newsletter also features active members in the "Member Spotlight." This newsletter allows the team to get to know each other better and stay informed.

Thanks, Josh, for your successful efforts! Thanks, JETKT, for sponsoring and promoting running as a part of a healthy life!



The Message of 'Splits'

Your Newsletter editor reads his running splits as though they come to him on little stone tablets. Here's why.

The Message of 'Splits'

There they were, my splits after the Swamp Rabbit Trail run that Friday, September 18th, 2020. Some say they have little to add to the pleasure of being out and moving on a given day.

After a run, however, I am drawn to them. I can't resist looking! I want to correlate reality and the physical and emotional sensations I experienced on the road or trail that day.

It probably goes back to long-ago flight training. An ultimatum from a very unhappy instructor that helped me explore, survive, and yes, advance and enhance that experience.

Let me offer you an example.

Six and a half miles. September. Hot, muggy, mid-morning, a real sweat-city day, a reverse PR day. I'm already there; don't ask why. Going to take lots of sips from my Camelback Repack fanny hydration pack. Not many of us that day on the Trail dodging the bikes.

My Apple watch and its Workout app recording 14:14, 13:17, 13:14, 14:43, 14:15, 14:13, and a final half mile at 11:33 pace.

Sounds glacial? Work with me here. I'm normally a 12 minute something guy. You are a lot faster and a lot younger. I get it. Adjust the numbers in your mind for your pace if it helps, but keep the pattern. How would you explain these numbers? What would the story be for you?

The course I ran on SRT was the average course: mild hills, mild downhill stretches, a gradual climb toward Travelers Rest over the first 4-5 miles. My course that day was "out and back", where I turned around at roughly the halfway mark at mile three in the total mile set for that day.

Later, I open up my Apple watch's list of mile splits.

First surprise: pace consistency. My consistency for a period of several miles surprised me. During my run I have little idea of the mile times, only my perceived effort, my stride, and my breathing. How do I remember my legs and lungs feeling each mile? Do I remember my stride feeling “normal” or noticeably long or short during that mile? Did that reflect my split time for that mile?

Second surprise: a ‘lost’ 1.5 minutes per mile. Looking now at the actual times and the pattern during the entire six miles, I noticed the break, if that was what it was, between miles three and four. I added a minute and a half per mile! Do I remember feeling tired, or did I encounter some hills? Did I stop and answer my phone? (And why did I answer it anyway!)

Third surprise: after that change in performance, I settled into a new pace consistency. Though slower than before, if anything I was incrementally faster per mile with each succeeding mile. How’d that happen? The new energy gels I was chewing that day? Some ‘visions-of-glory’ slogan?

Fourth surprise: my stride finally opened up in the last half mile push to ‘empty the tank’, *going uphill!* What was going through my mind?

My mind nibbles on the questions. Are those the right questions?

No surprise to me was my overall slower than average time of 13:52 per mile. I felt ‘slow’, burdened by the weather. Still, could I have run any faster overall without exhausting myself? Without losing the joy of exertion?

Back in the day I used to fly gliders for fun. It established an appreciation for the balance between risk and reward. My flight instructor repeated endlessly “Fly the aircraft! No matter what happens in the cockpit, inside the aircraft, on the instrument panel, fly the aircraft like your life depended on it - it does!”

That was only half the lesson.

A post-mortem followed every flight. The fun part was always followed by the fact part: what actually happened, and why. And *how to improve the experience*.

That was the other half.

So, that may explain my attention to and fascination with splits. I need both halves of my running experience: the 'flight' and the post-mortem.

Improving the experience is part of the fun. It's one of the challenges of running for me.

In our Newsletter header quote from his book, *Daniels' Running Formula*, Dr. Jack Daniels suggests we discover what works best for us. So, when the dust settles and the smoke clears, I'll read the unique story my splits have to tell. Perhaps I'll learn something that works better if not best for me, and I'll hope to *improve the experience*.

When I try to practice what Dr. Daniels is telling us, as I think we all do in our own way, this is my way.

So, a takeaway for you, from me? Let thoughts and analysis about your running inhabit and inform how you walk/jog/run. But above all, be totally 'with and in your body' as it moves! Consciously balance effort and enjoyment. There's only one pair of hands on the controls. Fly the aircraft!

And maybe later, read whatever story your splits have to tell. Maybe there's something in there for you.

See you on the road.

