

Get set for Great Ireland Run!

Thursday, 22 January 2009

THE evenings maybe dark and cold just now, but preparing for a major sporting event that was launched in Dublin last week might help to make the time go in more quickly.

The Great Ireland Run 2009 will take place in the Phoenix Park on Sunday, April 5.

This is the seventh running of the event, which has continued to increase in popularity since the first run in 2003. In 2008 there were 8,000 participants and up to 10,000 runners are expected to compete this year.

The run is the largest mixed 10km race in Ireland and is preceded by a Junior Great Ireland Run for participants between the ages of eight and 15.

RTE Two will broadcast the run live in a special programme.

To incentivise elite Irish athletes and raise the standard of 10k running in the country, a new e3,500 plus prize fund is being put in place for the first 10 Irish men and women.

A star-studded field of international and national distance runners will compete on the day, including Ireland's top male and female distance runners, Martin Fagan and Mary Cullen.

They will be joined by Irish internationals Mark Kenneally (the best ever Irish male finisher in the run – 2nd in 2006), Vinnie Mulvey, Keith Kelly, Mark Hanrahan, Killian Lonergan and Orla O'Mahoney.

Participants are being encouraged to raise funds for good causes. The event's nominated charities are Our Lady's Hospice and the Marie Keating Foundation, and Barretstown for the Junior Run.

Over 1,000 runners have already entered the run, including several hundred from the UK.

The 2009 Run will again feature a County Challenge competition for the Ronnie Delany Perpetual Trophy.

Using the power of chip technology the county with the most finishers in a particular time frame are recorded and declared the winner.

Ronan Keating, Sunday Game sports reporter Evanne Ni Chuilinn, Winning Streak presenter Aidan Power and elite runners Deirdre Byrne, from Wicklow, and Mark Kenneally and Vinnie Mulvey, from Dublin, were among those who attended the launch in the Phoenix Park.

David Hart, marketing director of race organisers, Nova International, said: “As in previous years, the 2009 run will mix some of the world's top middle distance athletes over the same course with joggers and fun runners.

“It is a great day out for families and we expect that this year's event will attract even more runners, joggers and walkers from every county in Ireland, and that all those who take part will enjoy the benefits of getting fit.”

Prospective runners can enter online at www.greatirelandrun.org or by calling the Great Ireland Run on 1890 930 139.