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Becs Gentry: Ready to level up your running? With the Peloton Tread and Tread+, you can challenge yourself anytime, anywhere. Whether you're building strength or working on speed, Peloton has a class for every goal from five to 120 minute workouts. With muscle building classes and flexible training options, you'll have everything you need to crush your next race and then recover from it. All-access membership separate. Find your push, find your power at onepeloton.com/race-training. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner for New York Road Runners.

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Intro: Thank you, New York. Today we're reminded of the power of community and the power of coming together. Athletes, on your mark.

The first woman to finish for the second straight year here in the New York City Marathon is Miki Gorman, a smiling Miki Gorman, and why not.

2:29:30 is the time for Grete Waitz.

Look at the emotion of Shalane Flanagan as she comes to the line.

Pointing to his chest, pointed to the USA he so proudly wears across his chest. A great day for Meb Keflezighi.

00:01:20

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, everybody, happy New Year, and welcome to the first Set the Pace of 2025. We are presented by Peloton, as we are each and every week. I'm the host of Set the Pace and CEO of New York Road Runners, Rob Simmelkjaer, and with me, my lovely co-host from Peloton, Becs Gentry. Happy New Year, Becs. How are you?

00:01:41

Becs Gentry: Hi. Happy New Year. I'm great, thank you. I think we were both just discussing how much of a break it actually felt like this year.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it was amazing. We had a really nice quiet period at New York Road Runners, fairly quiet on the race front. I'll talk about that in a second. But it was really quiet, really restful. I got away for a little bit with my girls, did a little skiing up in Vermont. That was nice.

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Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And it was just a really, really nice break. What about you? What'd you guys do?

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Becs Gentry: We did a very quick weekend before Christmas down at the Jersey Shore with family, and then everybody was scattering to different places for actual Christmas this year, so we had our first Christmas just the three of us in our home in Brooklyn which was wonderful.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh my gosh.

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Becs Gentry: We created memories. Tallulah had her first coming down the stairs on Christmas morning and Santi Claus as she calls him. So it was very wonderful, and we have some great neighbors and good friends, so it was a big family local affair which was great.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: There is nothing like a kid's first Santa, Christmas, and the magic of that. It brings back all of the magic that we felt as kids-

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Becs Gentry: It does, yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... when you have a kid who's experienced that. It's just amazing, so I'm sure.

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Becs Gentry: She doesn't quite grasp it just yet. She loves Santa Claus, the lights, but she doesn't understand the concept yet. So the presents were just, the fun was opening them and then it was like shove it aside, next one, okay. So I think next year when she's three, four, that's sort of when the real magic and all of that comes is going to be... just judging by her excitement this year for something she doesn't quite understand.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, it's going to be so good. I can't wait.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You've got so much to look forward to with that.

That's awesome. I'm glad you had a great time. Did you do much running or were you kind of on the shelf?

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Becs Gentry: I did not.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Good for you.

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Becs Gentry: I was on the shelf. It was divine. My body was like, "Thank you. My goodness me. What a great Christmas present you can give me after this year."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You belong on the shelf, like an elf on the shelf, Becs. You needed to sit still for a while after what you did in 2024.

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Becs Gentry: I did. Yeah, I really did. I really did take time off. We worked up until the wire here at Peloton. We were in until the Saturday, and Sunday there was classes, but I went to the Jersey Shore from the studio on Saturday, and then I didn't run for about a week until after Christmas which is unheard of for me. But I loved every second, and now I'm back on it but in the gym. I'm in the strength, I'm in the building phase.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it, I love it.

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Becs Gentry: It's great.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, that's great. Glad you had a break. I did some running with some local friends up here in Connecticut.

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Becs Gentry: Great. Oh, gorgeous.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: One thing I did not run unfortunately was the New York Road Runners Midnight Run on New Year's Eve.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, for good reason, for good... I was standing outside on our way to our friend, our neighbor's house on

New Year's Eve, and I thought it was fireworks going off, and Austin just turned and looked at me and went, "No, no, that is thunder and lightning." And I said to him, "I'm so happy I didn't go and run because I would've been scared." And then you guys had to cancel it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It was crazy. The Midnight Run which is a four-miler on New Year's Eve, yeah, we just could not put it on. Obviously it's crazy to see that kind of weather on New Year's Eve in New York City.

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Becs Gentry: It's wild.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Thunder and lightning. I was actually in Connecticut. I wasn't there for the race this year, hadn't planned to be, but yeah, Ted Metellus, our chief of event operations and race director called me around nine o'clock and said, "Listen, there's a lot of thunder and lightning in the forecast." I was like, "What? Really?" I mean, I couldn't really believe it in late December, and sure enough, a little while later the skies in New York just lit up, and we had no choice but to cancel that event which was of course disappointing, although I think most runners were kind of relieved because the weather was brutal. Who wants to be out in the pouring rain on New Year's Eve with lightning overhead?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It had been a weird year. We had had to cancel the fireworks because of the drought that existed. Then all the rain came so-

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Becs Gentry: Kind of was irony, wasn't it?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: But it was too late to have the fireworks. Then we tried to put on a drone show and then we had to cancel that because of some issues with drones around the country. So there were all kinds of backs and forths and it just seemed like it wasn't meant to be this year.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. But you know what we can take away from

this is that New York Road Runners puts the safety of their people first, and as disappointing as it can be to cancel things we know that that's the best decision and there will always be other runs. I mean, I can tell you a pretty cool four-mile run that's coming up in spring this year that you convinced me to do last year.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: So there's always more races, people.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: There's so many. Very well said, I couldn't agree more. Thank you. I can tell you've been hanging out with me for a while. You're speaking my language a hundred percent.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We obviously put safety first. So happy New Year. Sorry we didn't get a chance to see you all on New Year's Eve, but we know we'll see all of you out there running one way or another in the coming weeks. So, Becs, we have a fun thing we're going to do this year. For the first show of the year, a little bit different, we're calling it New York Road Runners State of the Union. We're going to talk a little bit about where New York Road Runners is as an organization, where we are with our running community, with our mission, our vision, all the things that we care about to let you, our listeners, our community, know what our plans are, what our priorities are for the year ahead. Becs, we got a lot of great questions from listeners and members.

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Becs Gentry: We do. Yeah, thank you, everyone.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, thank you so much for all the questions. We're going to run through those questions. Becs, you're going to grill me on all the questions that we got.

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Becs Gentry: I am. I know. It sounds so serious, but it's not. It's going to be informative and wonderful.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: A hundred percent. We're going to make it fun. We're going to make it fun because that's what we do. And Becs, we can start a little bit with just some highlights from the last year. We had so much happen at New York Road Runners. We issued a new reimagined mission statement and vision statement which is a huge deal for the organization and really kind of is a north star, as I like to call it, for what we're doing in the coming years. Our vision statement is to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running, and that's really what we're all about. We know that running makes us healthier as individuals, it makes our communities stronger, and it transforms us. You and I can speak about that, we speak about it every week and we speak about it with amazing people who have had their lives transformed by running. So we know that's what this organization's all about, but to put those words to paper really helped.

Our mission statement, we talk about being a New York City-based nonprofit which is really important that people understand. We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming the health and the wellbeing of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. So that's what we're all about and that gives us a sense of what we do and what we are. Becs, we had an incredible year in terms of racing and record numbers of finishers at the TCS New York City Marathon, 55, 646. We also saw records at the United Airlines NYC Half with 27, 843-

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Becs Gentry: One of my favorite races.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... and the MasterCard. Yeah, amazing race, and the MasterCard Mini 10K-

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, another.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... was also a record with 9, 694 finishers as well. So it was a big year for racing.

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Becs Gentry: Do you think we can get over 10K this year at the 10K?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I think we got a shot the way things are

going. It definitely is a good goal. So you're right. 10K for the 10K, let's make that a goal.

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Becs Gentry: Let's make it a goal. We should get that on New York Road Runner social. Come on, 10K for the 10K.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Okay, we're going to do it. We're going to make that happen. We'll get some good weather in June (inaudible) do that, Becs.

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Becs Gentry: Everybody in your office hates me now.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Exactly.

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Becs Gentry: They're like, " Ugh."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: A memo to staff. Sorry, Becs made me do it. But no, I think it's a good idea.

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Becs Gentry: It's fun.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: So let's put that down.

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Becs Gentry: I'll run it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. Okay, good, we've got one.

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Becs Gentry: Got one.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Just need 9, 999.

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Becs Gentry: We can do this.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I think we can do this. Okay.

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Becs Gentry: We can do it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We have a record number of New York Road Runners members right now. We have new member exclusive events for the first time. We had a first member- only race this year. Grete's Great Gallop last year was a member- only race for the first time, a part of Member Week, which was awesome. And of course we had a lot of great live episodes of Set the Pace, Becs, where you and I got a chance to meet members face to face. Love that.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, me too.

00:10:39

Rob Simmelkjaer: We've also, Becs, as you know, had a big focus on mental health and mental well- being over the last couple of years. We launched a new event, the New York Road Runners Mindful 5K, a new race out in Queens which had a mental health focus and a lot of great activations around that, lots of new online resources and in- person resources at the marathon for people to have a good experience both with their mental health as well as their physical health. And Becs, I'm super proud of one additional thing we did in 2024, a really expanded commitment to sustainability at New York Road Runners. We launched our Team for Climate which was incredible. We had 250 runners run the TCS New York City Marathon to help us raise money to offset the carbon footprint of the marathon, and that team crushed it.

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Becs Gentry: Wow, yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: They raised over \$ 600,000, nearly 800, 000 actually. The goal was 600, they raised almost \$ 800,000. So it was a great year, Becs, and we're excited about so many things in 2025.

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Becs Gentry: And rightly so, and congratulations to everybody who came over the finish lines of one of the New York Road Runners races for the first time or hundredth time. Wherever you're at, congratulations. It was amazing, and obviously thank you to all of the volunteers who help make the events go as smoothly and smilily... that's not a word, but I'm going to go with it... smilily as possible.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It is now. I love it. I love it. And one other thing that I want to mention about '24 and then we'll get into some of the '25 priorities is our Rising New York Road Runners program-

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Becs Gentry: Oh, the best.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... which is our program for New York City public school kids that introduces them to physical fitness and running. We are now at 100, 000 kids in New York City who are a part of that program, and we're just so thrilled to see the growth of that because that's fundamental to our mission is getting young people active. Those are the runners of the future here in New York City. So we're very proud of that as well.

Now what we're thinking about for 2025 already, well, obviously we want to continue our focus on mental wellbeing and sustainability. We're going to continue to have resources at events. The Mindful 5K will come back. Team for Climate is going to expand not only to the marathon but also the United Airlines NYC Half and the RBC Brooklyn Half, so we're excited about that. Technology is a huge focus, Becs, of what we want to do, and so everybody in our running community is soon going to start to see the impact of some of these technology initiatives. We're going to be launching a new registration platform in 2025. This is coming soon, and so people can start to get ready to see this. One of my goals, I joke around about this, Becs, as CEO of New York Road Runners. You know that little walking man that you see sometimes when you're go on our website and you have to wait and wait and wait to get on the website to register for a race? My goal is to kill that walking man. I want him dead, seriously.

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Becs Gentry: Sinister.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I know. So that's the evil side of Rob Simmelkjaer.

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Becs Gentry: He's gone.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I want that to go away because I want people to have a much cleaner, more efficient experience of signing up for our races.

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Becs Gentry: I would agree with that.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: So we're partnering with a platform called haku and soon everybody out there will be getting some messaging around that. So keep your eyes peeled on your email because that is coming very, very soon at New York Road Runners. Speaking of technology, Becs, we're also working closely with our partners at TCS to launch a new app for New York Road Runners. Many of you have used the kind of one-off apps that we have for the TCS New York City Marathon and the United Airlines NYC Half. We are going to create a new year-round app that will allow you to track runners at all the races with one app no matter what, and it's going to have lots of other great bells and whistles as well. So that's coming also in 2025. So tech is a big, big focus.

Other things, Becs, programming, we're going to bring more programming back to the RUNCENTER in Manhattan over on 57 Street, fitness classes coming back, more panels and discussions and things like that. We're going to expand the Race Week programming during our big race weekends like the United Airlines NYC Half, the Brooklyn Half, and the New Balance 5th Avenue Mile. So more coming up, more member-only events at RUNCENTER and more live podcasts both at the RUNCENTER and around New York City. So, Becs, I'll get to see you in person even more-

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Becs Gentry: Yay.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... which I'm excited about because we spend so much time looking at each other on these screens. So that'll be fun.

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Becs Gentry: Yes. Absolutely.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And some new stuff from Peloton coming as well.

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Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Do you know about this?

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Becs Gentry: I do.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: New classes with you guys.

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Becs Gentry: I'm very, very excited for this. I was part of the filming of the first one I think that will be dropped and we cannot wait to share that with the world.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I get so many great comments from Peloton members about the new video and the footage and the things we do on Peloton for runners. People love it. You're a big part of that, Becs. And so we're going to continue to expand what has been an awesome partnership with New York Road Runners and Peloton. So we're excited about that.

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: So those are some highlights. And, Becs, we got so many great questions.

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Becs Gentry: We did.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: So I'm going to put you in the seat of the interviewer here and you can fire off some of the questions that our members and our listeners asked of me, and we'll go through some of those.

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely. So as Rob said, we put it out there, we got all of your inputs, and we were inundated with the amount of questions that you had for Rob, for New York Road Runners as a general organization. So we've sifted through them and we could do multiple podcasts getting these questions out, but we've put together a handful here. So Rob is in the hot seat, the CEO of New York Road Runners is ready to answer some questions.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh boy.

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Becs Gentry: Here we go. We're going to kick off with a very

popular theme and that was capacity and number of races. So capacity being how many people can run each race and number of races being how many races of held throughout the year. So the first question comes from William D. S. and he says, " Why are you not allowing more runners at sold- out races, especially the NYC Marathon?"

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Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, so the first thing that people should know about how many runners are allowed in our races, Becs, is that we have an agreement with the City of New York. Depending on the race, it's either with the City or with the Parks Department. All of our races that take place in parks like Central Park or Prospect Park or Flushing Meadows, we have an agreement how many runners can be in that race. So we have a limit to each race in terms of how many we can have. The Parks care about that because they want to make sure that the park isn't overcrowded and that they have time to clean up and let others use the parks. So each race has what we call a cap and that's what we're allowed to have.

Now if we have a cap of say 5, 000 runners for a race in Central Park, we have an estimate, we kind of know how many people are likely to show up at a race. We don't know exactly, but we know for any given race there's typically a no-show rate. We do a great job, we have a team at Runners that does a great job figuring out how many people to let in to races. So we are focused on getting as many people in to every race as we can, but there's only so much we can do. We can't overfill. We can't go way above our numbers because that is not what's in our agreement with the city. And so, yeah, we wish we could let everyone into every race, but that's just not the way it is, and so we're doing our best to accommodate the incredible demand that exists for our races right now.

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Becs Gentry: Wonderful answer. Well done. First one, whew. Wipe that sweat from your brow.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's the number one question I get so I'm so used to answering it.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And I get it. It's what we call a good problem to have because so many people are passionate about

running, but of course we want everyone running, so we'll talk more about that as we go.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. And I think, Willie, as you will find, there are a lot of races, not a lot of marathons, but that's what makes it so unique. And so, as Rob will talk about, there are other things we can do to help people get in.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And by the way, the Marathon, as I've just mentioned, all these races had a record number of finishes.

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Becs Gentry: They did.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: The big ones, Marathon, the Half, Brooklyn, so we did let in more people, right, and we actually have seen the number of finishers go up in these races, but there are limits to how many we can let in. We had 160, 000 applications to the Marathon, Becs. Trust me, if we let in-

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Becs Gentry: So that is three times as many that are allowed in nearly.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, exactly. And if we let in 75,000, well, not only would that be a problem with the City, but trust me, you don't want to run the New York Marathon with 75, 000 runners in it.

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Becs Gentry: I was going to say.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That would not be a good time.

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Becs Gentry: You're stuck between a rock and a hard place in that situation because, yes, we want to have as much happiness and as little disappointment as possible when it comes to the 160, 000- plus people who entered. But think about it. On that course, these are still New York streets, some of them are narrow, some of them are wide. Some of the bridges are long, some of them are short. That finish line, the final turn into Central Park, you guys, if you've never run it, it is narrow. So you do not want to be battling

for your spot at the finish line with a bunch of people, let alone toilets, water, hydration, fuel, all of those things. So the numbers are not there to disappoint. The numbers are there again for safety first and enjoyment levels of it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Bingo.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You could do this. You answer these questions. All right? No, we'll go to next one.

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Becs Gentry: Next one.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: What's your next question for me, Becs?

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Becs Gentry: Okay. A couple of people have asked this question, so Tellami and Jay Elewan. Will there be more races coming or added in the next foreseeable future, let's say?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, good question. So we did add one race last year, as I mentioned, the Mindful 5K. We are currently putting on 40 races a year for adults.

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Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: There are 52 weeks in a year. So there's not a whole lot of room for more races, but that said, we are looking for opportunities to add here and there and ways that we can add not only races, and this is I think an important point. It doesn't all have to be a race. Right? It doesn't all have to be a 9+1 official race that counts toward your credit to get into the Marathon the following year. We want people running in different ways. So we are definitely looking to add "running experiences," quote, unquote. They may not all be official races in the way that you're thinking of them, but we are looking to add opportunities for people to run, and there will be more coming out about that as the year goes on, no question about it. So yeah, we're looking to grow, but we definitely

are at a pretty high point already in terms of how many races we have. So the answer is yes, but slowly and very deliberately because we already have 40 races on the calendar for adults.

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Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh. It's so many. For adults, so you know, the kids' races are there as well.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes.

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Becs Gentry: Okay, so let's keep this vein going and we go into race accessibility, but also membership. So I've added membership here because this is something that you're going to talk about more in order to further explain the decisions about numbers. So similar questions from Shani Weiner asks and Jenny Dujour, amongst other people, and it is about how New York Road Runners is managing the increased popularity of the races. Most of these questions are focused on the big race, TCS New York City Marathon, and how race accessibility is going to be balanced in the face of increasing running popularity. So I think the bulk of the question is how can more people run the TCS New York City Marathon for the first time, how are you going to do that or how can they do that.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's an excellent question. So what I would start by saying is that if you live in the New York City area, and I don't know if the people asking these questions live in the New York City area, there is a guaranteed way to run the Marathon. We have the 9+1 program. If you run nine of our races and volunteer at one in the course of a year, you will run the Marathon the following year. So it's available to anybody who's willing to make that commitment. It's a really smart way to get in because you're also working on your running as part of that. And so I really encourage anybody who is in this area who wants to run the Marathon to explore doing it through that program.

There are obviously other ways for first-time runners to get in. The drawing is a hard way to get in, but I meet people all the time who say they entered the drawing and got in their first time, first time trying. Right? So it happens all the time. We don't have any particular advantage for first-time people applying for the drawing, but you can definitely get in that way. Obviously you got to get a little bit lucky. And then of course there's the charity route, and again, I know that's competitive right now between

Team for Kids and other charities. There are ways to get in. So I would start by saying that.

Now another thing I would say is make sure you're a New York Road Runners member because if you're a member your chances of getting into these races is better because we introduced in 2024, something I didn't mention before, the first ever Second- Chance Drawing for all these big races for members. So if you don't get in through the regular drawing and you're a member, you're entered into a pool automatically without doing anything for a second drawing that's only for members that gives you another chance to get in. So it increases your chance of getting in. I had such a great time calling members last year, Becs, who got in through that Second- Chance Drawing and they were thrilled. So that's another way to do it.

When it comes to races, we also introduced something new in 2024 called the Member- Only Standby List. So you can put yourself, if you're a member, on a list for a race and say, "Hey, if spots open up in this race, I'd like to run it," and we did a lot of that. In fact, 4, 000, about 4, 000 members gained access to sold- out races in 2024 through the Members- Only Standby List. So it's another great way to get into races by being a member.

And then lastly, Becs, I want to talk about a level of membership that is a huge help. It's more money, but it is not that much more money considering the benefit that you get. If you join not just as a basic member but as a Member Plus member of New York Road Runners, you get additional time ahead of everybody else registering for races to sign up. It's a two- day window that is available only for Member Plus members to sign up for all the races that are going on sale in a given period. And so it's basically a guarantee, Becs, that you're going to get into these races as long as you make sure you set your calendar, remind yourself to get on the website and register during that two-day window. The races do not sell out during the Member Plus period.

Again, it's a bit more money, but not a huge amount more. I think it's, I'm going to be corrected on this if I get it wrong, but I think it's about another 60, \$ 65 to be a Member Plus member versus the \$ 60 to be a basic member. So when you think about how much you're getting in having that access to races, it's well worth it, and I encourage anybody who is really focused on getting into races to upgrade their membership to Member Plus because it makes a huge difference.

00:27:25

Becs Gentry: Absolutely, agreed. I mean, get in on that, everyone. Come on. Start the new year strong with a little gift to yourself there.

00:27:33

Rob Simmelkjaer: A hundred percent.

00:27:34

Becs Gentry: Okay. So I think you sort of answered this question in your last answer there, but I think we could dive a little bit deeper into it because this question is from SD5289NY, and they have asked what your plans are to make membership worth it for 15- plus year members getting shut out of races. So I think we can go a bit deeper on that membership and what's happening there.

00:28:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, a hundred percent. I mean, first of all, I want to say that I have no higher priority as CEO of New York Road Runners than to make membership a great experience for our members, and when I first came a couple years ago what I saw was membership that basically was a discount. What you really got for being a member two years ago was a discount on races, if you got into the races. What we want to do is make it about a lot more than that. We want to obviously emphasize the community side of it, but create a whole new set of benefits for members of New York Road Runners. And so that is why you've seen us add some of these things in the last year that I just mentioned, the Second- Chance Drawing, the Members- Only Standby List, the members- only race that we had last summer and we'll have again.

Members also get access to exclusive non- race events we have at our expos, during Member Week, throughout the year, exclusive experiences for members, members swag that we give out to our members, and we're thinking about these things all the time. So we will be announcing more member- only perks in 2025. I mentioned the app earlier, Becs, and I think the app is also going to give us more opportunities over time to give our members exclusive access to things that live in the digital sphere, and so that's a big focus.

So understand the question. Get it. Members, we love you, we care about you, and we want to make sure that this membership is worth it because even if you're struggling to get into races, we want to make sure you're getting a great experience. And again, not to wear out that point, but if you're a Member Plus member, well, then the race experience, getting into races becomes a lot easier as well. So that's the message to all the members out there.

00:30:00

Becs Gentry: Exactly. We love that and we love our members. Okay, so here's one that is big in the running community

and it's called entry swapping. So it's a little bit of a touchy subject, but let's get into it. This might get you a little bit hotter under the collar, Rob. Okay, so ValBrecht4 has asked, "With races filling up instantly after registration opens, what is New York Road Runners plans to make sure slots don't go unused on race day?"

00:30:32

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, thank you, Val, for the question. So I answered this in a couple of different ways by talking about the fact that we sell a number of slots that takes into account people not coming. Right? So that is a way that we try to ensure that slots don't go unused because we're selling more slots than there are actually available in the race. So that's the first thing we were already doing that you may not know about if you're just a member kind of paying attention to what's happening. So that's number one. All right, second is about the member standby list. I mentioned again, the Member- Only Standby List which is important as part of this and how many people got in through that. So we talked about that already.

Now what I think you mentioned is the swapping of bibs, and that is essentially a, hey, I can't run this race, but my friend, Becs, would like to run. Can I give Becs my bib? Now just handing somebody else your bib right now is very, very, very much against the rules.

00:31:33

Becs Gentry: Yes.

00:31:34

Rob Simmelkjaer: You cannot run a race with somebody else's bib and can't emphasize that enough because if you do that there's a chance, a good chance in fact, that it's going to be noticed because you'll run a time that's a little unusual maybe for that person or we'll just... listen, it's a good chance that we'll see that, and we don't want that for a lot of reasons. It's not just because of selling these bibs, it's because there's a safety issue. If something happens to a runner and you've got somebody else's bib on, we can't contact your emergency contact. We don't know who you are. We can't deal appropriately with any emergencies that happen. So you just can't run with somebody else's bib, full stop.

Now we know that in some other race organizations you can officially transfer a bib to someone else. It's something that we are very much looking at. Our technology does not support that right now, but I mentioned earlier that we're going to be switching over to a new registration platform called haku. haku does support that, so we are looking at what we can do, how we can do it. Can't say anything about

that yet because we're not really sure yet what makes sense, but it is definitely something that is on the road map.

00:32:53

Becs Gentry: That's amazing. Growing a business means a lot of audience attracting, a lot of lead scoring, and a lot of long days. But with HubSpot, it's easier than ever for marketers to boost leads and score customers fast which means pretty soon your company will have a lot to celebrate. Visit hubspot.com/marketers to learn more. Okay, now let's talk about race types, Rob, because we have at the moment everything from a mile, I mean excluding the kids' races, a mile up to the TCS New York City Marathon in distance. Historically, there have been other distances involved in New York Road Runners events and we have had a question from T. Y. Gellans. I'm sorry if I've mispronounced your name there. It looks like it might be Dutch.

00:33:43

Rob Simmelkjaer: Ty, I think it's Ty.

00:33:44

Becs Gentry: Ty, Ty Gellans, there we go. You wouldn't think I do this for a job, right, leaderboard names. Okay, Ty has asked, "Will there be any ultra marathons again?"

00:33:58

Rob Simmelkjaer: Ty, this is one of the most frequent questions I get.

00:34:00

Becs Gentry: From me too, Ty.

00:34:02

Rob Simmelkjaer: Appreciate the question. We used to host an ultra marathon. It was called the Knickerbocker 60K, but the pandemic came along and that's one of the few races that we did not bring back post-pandemic for lots of reasons. Didn't have a huge amount of interest in the race, it's a really long and hard day for our staff for a relatively small number of runners. So we didn't bring that back and it's not currently on the roadmap. However, however, that doesn't mean that there aren't great ultras to run in the New York City area. Black men Run, New York City, and the NYC Way are keeping the ultra community in New York engaged with their annual Ted Corbitt 50K which is a local ultra marathon that will be held actually coming up on January 26th in Prospect Park. We're going to put a link to that race in our show notes. There's a virtual option for that race as well. So check it out.

And with the new registration platform, one of the things we do want to do going forward is actually highlight some other races that are not Road Runners' races happening in the tri-state area that will give people a chance to have some different experiences, and ultras are a big part of that. So we probably will not be putting on an ultra ourselves anytime real soon, but others are doing it and we're going to make sure that we point our runners in the direction of those races because we want those races to succeed and thrive and to give runners a chance to experience those things with other organizers as well.

00:35:37

Becs Gentry: Absolutely, and that's all part of the running community. We are just one vein of the heart of New York running being New York Road Runners, and as Rob just said, there's other organizations and we all work together and we all run together. So let's share, let's share those miles. Okay, Jess Gray, "Would you consider including treadmill for the virtual program?" Thanks, Jess. I love this question. I bet you're a Peloton member.

00:36:07

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, that's a good question actually. Well, the question fascinates me a little bit. I mean, yes, if you're doing it on a Peloton, you're likely to have a great experience. I've been running on the treadmill a lot lately, Becs. I ran five miles this morning, we record on Tuesdays, on the treadmill because I have no other way to run right now on a weekday when it's 20 degrees and dark at my preferred running time. So I got into the gym and ran five on the treadmill. I just can't... I do it, Becs. I have to admit, I really need to start running with you and your classes because I just do not enjoy this, Becs.

00:36:47

Becs Gentry: Yes.

00:36:47

Rob Simmelkjaer: I do not enjoy running on the treadmill. I got to start doing these classes with you guys because maybe that would just make the time pass. It kills me. I'm just not a treadmill guy. But anyway, I digress. Obviously Jess is, and so first of all, we partner with Strava on virtual racing and the thing about those virtual races on Strava is we track it by GPS, right? So we need to see, Strava does, that you actually ran the distance that the virtual race was so that we can tell you ran, and that's why there are not any current options to participate in those virtual races on a treadmill. But I think it's an interesting question. Becs,

let's talk about it with your colleagues at Peloton and see if there's a way to solve for that.

00:37:37

Becs Gentry: I would agree.

00:37:37

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's actually an interesting idea.

00:37:39

Becs Gentry: That would be.

00:37:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: Peloton users with a Peloton Tread or a Tread+ can already run segments of the TCS New York City Marathon with the incredible scenery that is recorded for those races. You can run the course on the Tread. We've got new content coming out as we mentioned. So yeah, let's have a conversation. So the answer for now, Jess, is no, but we will talk to Peloton and see what's possible.

00:38:03

Becs Gentry: Yeah. But hold please.

00:38:04

Rob Simmelkjaer: Maybe there is a way to solve for that. I don't know.

00:38:04

Becs Gentry: Yeah, we could, we could. My brain is whirring. Let's have a chat.

00:38:10

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it.

00:38:11

Becs Gentry: All right, next and final question in this category is RunningNYCS. Maybe more races in the afternoon and not so early in the... I think morning is what they meant here, not so early in the morning if you can, question mark.

00:38:28

Rob Simmelkjaer: RunningNYCS is not a morning person apparently.

00:38:30

Becs Gentry: No. Absolutely not.

00:38:31

Rob Simmelkjaer: Would like races in the afternoon. And by the

way, I get it, especially this time of year.

00:38:35

Becs Gentry: Yes, the 7:00, 8:00 AM, they're hard, that time.

00:38:35

Rob Simmelkjaer: I totally, yeah, I'm doing my runs right now on the weekends at noon or 1:00 because I'm just trying to get as much warmth as I can. The issue around this, well, there's two issues. Number one, permits, I talked about earlier and the Parks department, and especially if we're closing streets, the Department of Transportation wants these races to happen at a time that has the lowest impact on others out there. So people who want to just use the park, the busiest times in Central Park or Prospect Park or wherever are going to be those late morning and afternoon hours where people are out and about with their kids or on bikes or whatever. So the races do disrupt the use of the park and it definitely is not a good thing to have races happening at that time. And then also afternoon races in the summertime obviously are a challenge when the temperatures are too high.

So great question. It's something that actually I'll think about a little bit in the winter months, see if there's a thing we could do around afternoon races. But for now, based on our permits, the answer unfortunately is you're going to have to set that alarm, RunningNYCS, and get yourself up and make it to one of our starting lines at 8:00 or 9:00 AM, whatever time it is.

00:39:53

Becs Gentry: Absolutely. I know, it's not great, but if you're training for one of those marathons or longer races, you got to get up early because you got a long day ahead of you. So it gets you in the habit. Right?

00:40:06

Rob Simmelkjaer: A hundred percent. Win the morning, win the day, I always say.

00:40:09

Becs Gentry: Oh, we like a mantra.

00:40:12

Rob Simmelkjaer: Get on out there. Make it happen.

00:40:12

Becs Gentry: Okay, let's talk about expanding the mission. We have C. J. R. Palmeiras has asked, "Why not franchise to other countries, Brazil, for example?"

00:40:27

Rob Simmelkjaer: So as I mentioned earlier, we're a New York City based nonprofit. We're not a for-profit organization, and our mission really is focused on serving local communities here in the five boroughs of New York where there is so much need that we want to fill and have the impact that we have here in New York. So that is the primary focus of the organization. There are a lot of great running organizers and organizations out there around the world, and we love to see the international runners coming in to visit us for the TCS New York City Marathon and other races all around the year. We are going to start working to do a better job of pointing people in the direction of local running organizations where they can run, but right now it's not really something to franchise.

It's an interesting question, franchising. It's not like we're making burgers or something that could actually really be franchised. I mean, it's running. Right? It's putting on racing events. People can do that in other places. Obviously we have incredible tradition in New York of putting on really high-quality races and other things, but I don't really think it's like even if we were a for-profit, like a franchisable thing per se. But again, as I mentioned, we're really focused on New York City right now.

00:41:49

Becs Gentry: Amazing, and rightly so. We've got it. Okay, so Nuvoletta Italiana has asked, "Will the partnership with country's return? We miss Italy Run, Japan Run, et cetera."

00:42:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: I know, Becs, that some of those previous runs were so popular. The Italy run was huge. The Japan Run, the UAE Healthy Kidney 10K, those were really popular races. They were all off the calendar by the time I came in as CEO. Now one thing people should know is that those were actually sponsored races. So those countries, their tourism boards or some other element from those countries were actually sponsoring those races, and just like TCS sponsors the Marathon or United Airlines sponsors the Half. So those were sponsors. Those races went away, and the thing is, it's challenging to bring some of them back, Becs, because it's kind of like hard to do it in a fair way. If we brought Italy Run back, let's say, right, well, then there'd be 20 other countries that would raise their hands the next day and say, "We want a race. We want one of those races."

It would be hard to determine in a fair way what country should get a race and what country shouldn't get a race, and we feel really bad if we didn't represent all the different constituencies and nationalities that are out there.

This is New York City, we've got the most international, diverse population in the world, and I would feel bad if we couldn't have a race for every country, but we can't have a race for every country. So therefore it's a little bit better, from my point of view, just not to have country races because that way we're treating everybody equally.

So thank you for the question, but that is definitely not coming back. So please continue to go out and enjoy the Nutella and all the great stuff that was at the Italy Run and the other part. We miss having that stuff and we definitely have fond memories of those events and those races.

00:44:06

Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh. I'm sure they were so, so fun. All right, let's move on to the verticals, addressing the verticals. These are things that kind of feed in to what makes New York Road Runners what it is, aside from just the running. So we've been asked by L. Joey, "Will New York Road Runners develop program for senior runners?"

00:44:29

Rob Simmelkjaer: Good news, L. Joey, we have one. Absolutely, we have a great program for senior runners and walkers that's called New York Road Runners Striders' program. It was launched nearly 15 years ago in 2011. It is a free program and it offers senior adults physical activity for people who want to lead a more active life, and I think just as important, meet new people in their communities. We have a lot of folks who are walkers. It's called Striders. It's primarily but not exclusively a walking program. We have a lot of folks in that program who might start walking, but then they will graduate up to run-walking and then even just running. We have folks who walk our races, who run our races, who are all part of that Striders' program, and a majority of our Striders' coaches are seniors themselves who actually do a great job offering a peer-to-peer experience for these people in a safe setting. So any seniors out there who are interested should check out the Striders' program.

Now if you don't think Striders is right for you, then I would really encourage you to check out all of our other training and programming options. Group Training is for all ages, and that's available in communities all around the city. Open Run, our weekly free running program in New York City Parks, again, open and accessible to runners of all ages and abilities. So they're there, and I think if you show up at one of those you'll find a welcoming community with people in your age cohort. I've met so many people, Becs, who signed up for Open Run really to get moving, and

what happened is they made friends. They found a community that is so important for people at all ages, but I think especially for seniors, Becs, who sometimes become a bit more isolated. It's really important to have that community, and Road Runners is a great way to find that.

00:46:31

Becs Gentry: Exactly. And if you want to find out more, we had a wonderful guest on the podcast last year, Dr. Leo Murillo, who has been a runner with New York Road Runners for a really long time. He's definitely one to talk to about the progression of running all the way through the life, and now as his senior running stage is here and blossoming, go check out that podcast as well if you want to find out a bit more.

00:46:57

Rob Simmelkjaer: A hundred percent.

00:46:57

Becs Gentry: All right. Two more questions, Rob, before you've sweated everything out again after your run. We've been asked by SuburbanDadRunner, "What can you do to better support New York City's club culture?"

00:47:12

Rob Simmelkjaer: So the clubs are such a huge part of what we do at New York Road Runners and a huge part of the running community in New York City. Right? So many people get into running by joining a club. They're finding communities there. We love it. It's a huge part of what we are about, and we are constantly trying to support and nourish the club ecosystem in New York City and beyond. So we have something called Club Council which is essentially an organization that all the clubs join and allows these clubs to register with New York Road Runners on our website. People can find clubs by looking at that section of our website. A lot of folks find their club by looking at that, and we work daily with them.

We have a small department at New York Road Runners. There's a guy named Anil Bhamhani whose job is supporting in the clubs. That's his full-time job at New York Road Runners, and so he is having back and forths with the clubs day in and day out. The Club Council also has meetings four times a year, quarterly, where we get together, we talk to the clubs about what's going on at New York Road Runners, we hear back from them and work with them on making sure it's a great experience.

Now a big part of the club scene is what we call the Club Points series which is a chance for all the clubs to

compete every year. They compete for points in all the different age groups and genders. And then we have a big gala called Club Night where we honor the clubs and we honor the runners who are competing for these awards of Runner of the Year and Runner of the Year at every age group and all the great things. So both clubs and local runners get honored at this. And then we also have a club-only, essentially, or at least club-preferred event in the summer called the NYRR Team Championships. That's a five-mile race that takes place in Central Park and it showcases all the clubs. Clubs are given preferred entry into that race.

So the clubs get a lot. We also give bibs to every single club for each one of those Club Points series races. That includes the Marathon, the big Halfs. So they're getting entries to use as well. So it's a really deep connection that we have with the clubs. We're always looking to improve it, to deepen it. If you've got other ideas, ways you think we can better support and engage clubs, please reach out to your Club Council rep on your club, they'll reach out to us. We're having a lot of really good conversations to make sure that the clubs continue to thrive because they're such an important part of our community here in New York.

00:49:56

Becs Gentry: Amazing. All right, we have one final question today from Michael Garofolo. "When is the next wave of races for the 9+1 program opening registrations?"

00:50:07

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. So soon, Michael. Our next set of races that will be open for registration will be opening in late January, early February. Keep an eye on your email for that. Okay? Very important, keep an eye on your email, keep an eye also on New York Road Runners' social channels so that you can know when it's announced that we are launching those races. I mentioned that we're doing this technical work, the new technology, new platform. So the reason that the date is unclear still is because of the work that's being done there, but it will be in the late January, early February period. So be patient. Watch your emails.

00:50:49

Becs Gentry: And just keep up to date with the New York Road Runners' website, the race calendar. Get yourselves involved with any and all races you can. And don't forget that you can come and train as well. If you don't get into the races, it doesn't mean you can't come along for the community runs and all of the incredible training programs as well that New York Road Runners' offer.

00:51:10

Rob Simmelkjaer: Becs, great job grilling me. Great job with those questions. Thank you for doing that. Don't you have to go to a class?

00:51:18

Becs Gentry: I do.

00:51:18

Rob Simmelkjaer: Aren't you supposed to teach a class?

00:51:19

Becs Gentry: I do.

00:51:19

Rob Simmelkjaer: Okay.

00:51:19

Becs Gentry: I have to go and teach a class in about 50 minutes, yeah.

00:51:22

Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, you got plenty of time. You got plenty of time.

00:51:22

Becs Gentry: Plenty time, yeah.

00:51:24

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, this was fun. Did you learn some things about New York Road Runners?

00:51:26

Becs Gentry: I did. I really did. There's a few things I had no idea about. Yeah, my brain, as I said, is whirring on ideas of how we can get some of these questions answered and the world made better for some of our members out there as well, both on the New York Road Runners' side and on the Peloton side.

00:51:48

Rob Simmelkjaer: There's so much opportunity, so I'm really excited about what 2025 has in store for Road Runners-

00:51:56

Becs Gentry: Me too.

00:51:56

Rob Simmelkjaer: ... for all of our runners and our members out there, for Set the Pace as well, because I'm excited just to get started with a whole new set of conversations with great people who make running a big part of their

lives. I hope that all of our listeners out there are as fired up for the year as we are.

00:52:15

Becs Gentry: Yes.

00:52:17

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. I love it. Well, thank you, Becs. Thank you to all the listeners and the members who sent in those amazing questions. They were really good questions. By the way, keep the questions coming. You don't have to just do it when it's a special episode. You can always throw questions in in the comment section or as a review to the podcast in Apple podcast. We will always check them out. Remember to check the show notes out as we're going to have some information and links to some of the answers that I gave today. And that's it. That does it for our first episode of Set The Pace for 2025. Hope you enjoyed it. If you liked the episode, subscribe, rate it, leave a comment so we can continue to add listeners to our community here on Set the Pace in 2025. Once again, I want to wish you all a very happy New Year. Hope you guys have a great year running and beyond. Enjoy the miles. We'll see you next week.