



Press release - Chamonix (France), Thursday 25 July 2024

Inclusivity and equality take centre stage at HOKA UTMB Mont-Blanc

The 21st edition of the HOKA UTMB® Mont-Blanc will next month welcome the Team Adaptive — 12 athletes who have overcome disabilities or significant illness and are out to make their mark in trail running.

As the first edition of the iconic event to incorporate the new UTMB Group policy for disabled athletes, the 2024 event will see significant initiatives to improve accessibility and comfort alongside a move that will also see prizes awarded equally to men and women with parity across all distances.

Building on its long-standing commitment to the inclusion of athletes with disabilities in the world of trail running, as well as encouraging the participation of women, the HOKA UTMB Mont-Blanc organisation aims to show that disability is not an obstacle to sporting performance and achievement, while at the same time extending a welcome to all runners.

The Team Adaptive, 12 athletes with disabilities

The flagship project has emerged from a collaboration with Boris Ghirardi, amputee athlete and fervent trail runner, and aims to create a space where these athletes are not only participants but also sources of inspiration.



Jacky Hunt-Broersma
high-res photo



Travis Warwick-Oliver
© Alexis Berg - high-res photo

The Team Adaptive was born out of a shared desire to turn challenges into opportunities, illustrating that adaptability and resilience open the way to surpassing oneself.

The team members embody the values of perseverance, inclusion and solidarity, running not only for themselves but also to motivate and broaden horizons about what is possible in sport.

Among the team's key figures:

- Boris Ghirardi, aka 'Robot Foot', has been on an inspiring journey from a motorcycle accident to top-level competition. His commitment and determination to overcome physical obstacles have made him a model of resilience and innovation.
- Travis Warwick-Oliver, a South African tibial amputee, who founded an organisation to provide mobility aids.
- Jacky Hunt-Broersma, an American athlete who set a record by running 104 marathons in 104 days, expanding the limits of amputee athletes.
- French breast cancer survivor Sophie Maigrot, who uses sport as a therapy and to raise awareness of cancer prevention.
- Nicolas Ronget has been visually impaired from birth with just under 2/10th vision in his right eye and less than 1/10th in his left.
- Franck Derrien, who is autistic and is rarely seen without his emblematic blue T-shirt with the message "Je suis autiste, et alors?" ("I'm autistic, so what?"), with Teddy, his teddy bear, a faithful everyday companion.

New initiatives

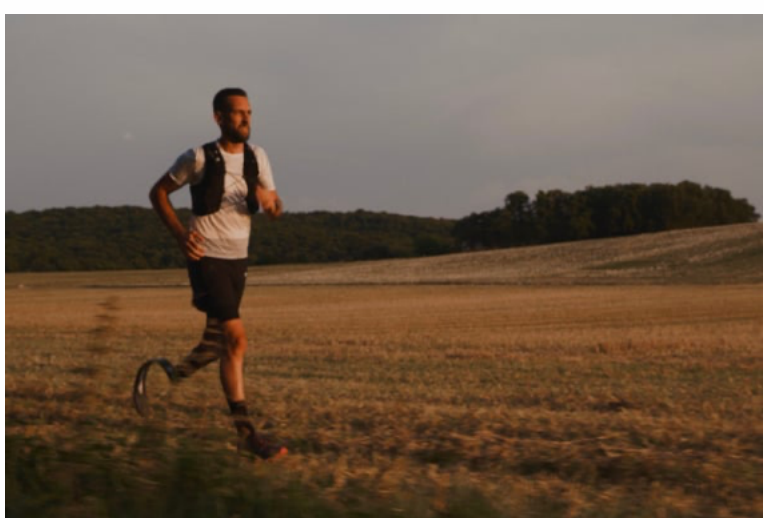
Aiming to encourage and reassure runners with disabilities, the HOKA UTMB Mont-Blanc event allows them to be accompanied by a runner-guide at no extra cost. They will be allocated an additional bib for a runner-guide who will accompany them for all or part of their race.

It is also possible for those who wish to do so to request special arrangements, such as different times for collecting race bibs or dedicated areas at the start of races to avoid crowds. Seats will also be provided at each refreshment point to ensure comfort.

In addition, the organisation is implementing a direct qualification policy for the UTMB World® Series Finals — UTMB®, CCC® and OCC — for disabled athletes, recognising the additional challenges they may face in accumulating the necessary qualifications. As long as they have at least one Running Stone and a valid UTMB index, disabled runners can apply to bypass the draw and qualify directly for the finals.



Pol Makuri Redolat
© iancorless - high-res photo



Boris Ghirardi
high-res photo

Strengthening fairness for women in trail running

The organisation places gender equality at the heart of its priorities, ensuring balanced visibility for all athletes through its various communication channels and during live broadcasts of the races.

From the introduction of prize money in 2018, gender equity in its distribution has been a founding principle, guaranteeing complete parity across all distances. With the introduction of the HOKA Prize Purse this year, the event rewards every athlete's performance equally, regardless of the distance covered, recognising that even the shortest distances require the same level of dedication and perseverance.

The UTMB, the emblematic race, is an exception and provides higher prize money than the other finals.

Targeted measures are also in place to meet the specific needs of women, contributing to their comfort and commitment to trail running. Menstrual products and personal hygiene items are available at all refreshment points in the main races, supporting female athletes in their performance. The organisation also strives to provide separate and adapted infrastructures, such as individual bathroom facilities and changing rooms for men and women, to offer a respectful and comfortable experience.

In addition, an innovative childcare policy has been introduced for UTMB World Series events, affirming UTMB Group's support for the active participation of women in trail running. This policy is designed to be flexible and accommodating, and is aimed at pregnant athletes, athletes whose partner is pregnant, and athletes in the process of adoption or surrogacy.

To find out more, visit this link: <https://utmb.world/inclusion>

Note to editors

About UTMB® World Series

UTMB® World Series is the world's ultimate trail-running circuit that unites the sport's biggest stars and passionate runners through the best, leading international events in the most stunning locations. Built on a passion for the mountains with sustainability at its heart, UTMB® World Series gives all trail runners the chance to experience the UTMB® adventure across the world, with events taking place across Asia, Oceania, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. It is the only place where runners can begin their quest to HOKA UTMB® Mont-Blanc, where the prestigious UTMB® World Series Finals will be held. Launched in May 2021 through the collaboration between the UTMB Group and The IRONMAN Group, the UTMB World Series circuit brings together many of the best international trail-running events on the planet. For more information, visit <https://utmb.world>.

About UTMB Group

Since the creation of HOKA UTMB® Mont-Blanc in 2003 by a group of passionate friends, UTMB Group has been the driving force behind the development of trail running. The HOKA UTMB® Mont-Blanc is the sports pinnacle event, and every year, 10,000 runners earn their place on the start line. UTMB Group also pioneered the LiveTrail™ technology, an innovative digital service that supports the management of endurance races. Revered by hundreds of thousands of athletes, UTMB® has become a global, premium, and leading brand. In May 2021, UTMB Group partnered with The IRONMAN Group to launch the UTMB® World Series, which brings together many of the best international events on the planet to provide exclusive access to the sport's pinnacle event, HOKA UTMB® Mont-Blanc. The UTMB® World Series is built on the founding principles of HOKA UTMB® Mont-Blanc: surpassing oneself; fair-play; respect for people and the environment; and solidarity. Find out more at <https://utmb.world>.

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