

Virtual Hastings Half has attracted global entrants

Jack Butler
hastingsobserver.co.uk
sport.sussex@pimedia.co.uk

A virtual twist on the much-loved Hastings half-marathon has seen an influx of global participants.

This is the second year running that the much-loved event has been cancelled, with organisers deciding the current Covid lockdown rules would make the task of keeping all participants safe simply impossible.

While the adored event has been postponed until Sunday, March 20 next year, the event will continue this year virtually once again.

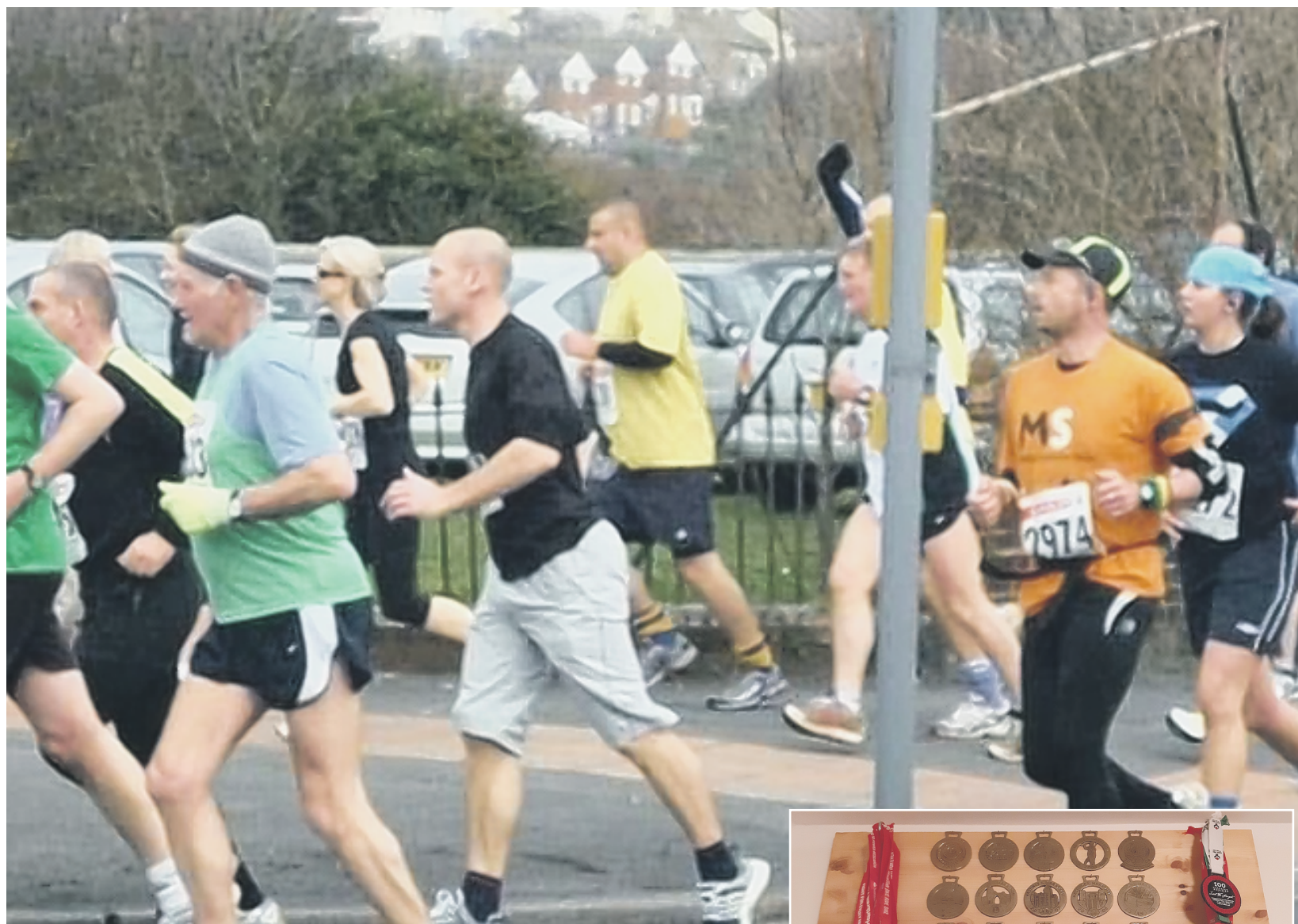
Like last year, the event will have free entry. The Hastings Lions Club hope to maximise the number of participants, and, thus, the money raised for charities.

Since the announcement, organisers have received an influx of entries, including many from across the globe.

Runners in Belgium, Cyprus, Holland and Poland have registered interest.

One entrant in particular, Mark Hilder, who has completed the half-marathon on no fewer than 19 occasions was hoping to fly from Poland for his 20th race – but will now be joining in virtually.

“As I said before this will be my 20th and almost certainly my last ‘Hastings half marathon’. Unfortunately, my body can’t take the strain any more, but I really want to make it to 20,” Hilder explained, whilst sharing the joy of receiving his 19th medal.



Mark Hilder (in the yellow shirt) taking part in a previous Hastings Half marathon and, right, Hilder's medals on display

“This medal is particularly significant for me because of the Polish connection between Alan Turing and the Polish mathematicians in cracking the Enigma code. I love it,” he added.

Mark is just one of the hundreds taking part in the virtual event, but having moved to Poland in 2018, he is hoping to return to Hastings in 2022, to complete the event, for the 20th time.

If you would like to take part in this year's virtual half-marathon, you can sign up at www.hastings-half.co.uk from now.

Just fill in a simple form to register.



We want to inspire wheelchair basketball players

British Wheelchair Basketball, the governing body for the sport in the UK, has launched its ground-breaking ‘Inspire a Generation’ programme, in a bid to double participation over the next four years.

The new programme, driven by British Wheelchair Basketball and supported by £1.5m of funding from Sport England, is a hugely exciting development for the sport, with an ambition to engage an inactive popula-

tion through inclusive activity and transition participants into longer-term active lifestyles.

The initiative is vital helping support disabled participants find or return to physical activity, many of whom have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

British Wheelchair Basketball are recruiting Community Activators and Local Community Partners to deliver the Inspire a Generation programme.

These individuals will receive the necessary support and virtual training to offer fun and enjoyable opportunities for people to participate in wheelchair basketball.

The six-week Inspire a Generation taster sessions will then begin in the summer (or when it is safe to do so) in communities across the country.

Lisa Pearce, Chief Executive at British Wheelchair Basketball said: “I’m absolutely

delighted to be launching the Inspire a Generation programme. It’s a fantastic opportunity for us to grow participation and, thanks to substantial investment of £1.525m from the National Lottery and Sport England, the first time in nearly 10 years that significant funding has been made to support participation growth in wheelchair basketball. There are a potential 70,000 new people waiting to play our sport and through

Inspire a Generation, we have the ability to introduce them to wheelchair basketball and embed sustained active lifestyles, whilst improving confidence and self-esteem.”

Great Britain Women’s Wheelchair Basketball player Sophie Carrigill added: “This is a very exciting moment for wheelchair basketball and a positive move to encourage more people to play the game. Wheelchair basketball is an in-

clusive sport - anyone can play, irrespective of age, gender and ability.

“The programme is a fantastic introduction to our sport – my life is so much better because I discovered wheelchair basketball and I hope that others can experience that through Inspire a Generation.”

To find out more about the programme or to become a Community Activator, visit www.inspireageneration.com.