

Oh My Quad



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Sarah, founder of the Gauntlet Games, talks about how to get into obstacle course racing and her mission to create a fun mud run for beginners.

Most obstacle course races can seem pretty scary. And if you're not quite a beast, you could be a little put off at the thought of scaling 12-foot walls and being electrocuted.

[The Gauntlet Games](#) is different. There's less fire and more foam. We spoke with Sarah King, founder of the Games.

What inspired you to set up the Gauntlet Games?

I've been in the events industry for over 10 years. I started working for British Military Fitness about seven years ago and ran their events department for five years.

I got heavily involved in the obstacle course race industry, and created a race called [The Major Series](#), which became the third largest OCR in the UK.

Gauntlet Games came about because I noticed a bit of a gap. The market needed a race that was a bit more approachable, to women in particular but not exclusively aimed at women.

Obstacle races are a great way to get outdoors and get fit and have a challenge. It doesn't have to just be something gruelling; it can be something silly and sociable that you can do with your friends. I wanted to create an entry level race for people who are too intimidated by other races.



The Gauntlet Games is a fun obstacle course race with more foam than fire.

What makes the Gauntlet Games different?

Marketing for a lot of other races is focused on bare-chested men completing tough obstacles. I wanted to inject a bit of fun into an obstacle course race, so the Gauntlet Games is very tongue in cheek. It's more of a silly challenge that you can take part in regardless of your fitness level.

We've got a 5K and a 10K option. We deliberately put all the obstacles on the 5K route, so the 5K-ers don't feel like they're missing out on anything.

The 10K includes a brilliant 5K trail run through mud, up and down hills and through woods, before hitting the 5K gladiator zone.

Every single obstacle has a gladiator. Every obstacle is interactive to some degree. This interaction results in a really fun and sociable challenge.

How fit do you have to be to take part?

It doesn't matter if you haven't run 5K before, you can still manage the course—but it's more enjoyable if you're more confident with your fitness.

We're trying to encourage people to try and take small steps to be able to run 5K before taking part in the race. Try to use signing up for the race as an excuse to get a bit more fit.

Whether that's going out for a run a couple of times a week and trying to increase the amount of running you're doing vs walking; whether it's mixing in a couple of activities. Just find some kind of fitness activity that you genuinely enjoy doing—it'll make it easier to stick with it.

Tell us about the gladiators

The gladiators we have this year for the Trent Park event are the Saracens amateur rugby club, so it should be a great atmosphere there. They can't wait to get their gladiator outfits on!

Obstacles include a giant 50m-long slippery slide, a huge foam pit for people to crawl through, a giant stack of straw bales with a gladiator at the top and a huge inflatable ball pool to wade through.

What's the most interesting part of organising an obstacle course race?

It's the fact that every day is totally different. One day I'll be out on one of the private estates planning the route, then working with the build team to work out logistics, then I could be working on marketing and sales, or doing administrative tasks.

The nature of running a small business is that you get involved in everything. But what's so great in the obstacle course race industry is the nature of what you're doing is so much fun – particularly this race, which is all about fun.

It's not in every job that you end up on the phone to some supplier asking how much foam something actually produces how high does the foam go and how high does it shoot.

What's the most challenging part?

Because the obstacles are featured around the gladiators, we've got to think very carefully about the way we process people around the course.

You want everybody to have a great experience and be able to come face-to-face with the gladiator at each zone; but that means you can't have 20 people running together into the same obstacle.

What advice would you give to someone looking to take on their first obstacle course race?

The most important thing to do is decide on which obstacle course race you'd like to do and to just sign up without giving it too much thought. Once you've signed up, you have something to aim for. It's very easy to keep saying 'I'll do it next week' and coming up with excuses.

Once you've signed up, that's it, you've got a motivation to train. It's worth doing research into the type of experience you need for that particular race, because there's a huge number out there and each has its own identity.

Do you want it to be a social experience, do you want it to be gruelling or more approachable? Bear in mind the time of year, because there are a few OCRs that take place during the winter, and that'll be a completely different beast.

What does your own training look like?

I'm doing my first Half Ironman soon and I have a 20-week training plan. Not sure how closely I can stick to it, what with running my own business, but it's about getting as much time on the bike, swimming and running as possible.

For me, running is a real challenge. And it's a half marathon you have to do at the end. I find running on it's own quite dull, so the thought of all the training that would go into running a marathon, the thought of just running for endless hours for endless weeks, it sort of fills me with dread a little bit.

That's why I like obstacle course races, you're never running more than a few hundred meters at a time until there's another obstacle to distract you.



Sarah finds running quite boring, so is always looking for ways to make it more interesting.

I try and make the runs as interesting as possible by not running along the streets and pavements, but going off-road. I try and mix up training quite a bit, so I'll do a run maybe once a week, but I'll also do lots of HIIT sessions at the gym and then do pilates and then do lots of other things to complement it as well.

The thing that keeps exercise interesting for me is changing it up all the time. This is why the half iron man scares me quite a bit: I realise I'm going to have to focus on the running quite a bit.

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