

AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS** **2021**



Best Use of Sponsorship

€50,000 or Under



8 December 2020; Olympians, Jessie and Thomas Barr at the launch of the Irish Life Health 'Runuary' programme in Dunmore East, Waterford. The training programme supports runners of all levels, to stay on track and to run January and not let it run them. Developed in partnership with Athletics Ireland, runners can sign-up free of charge at irishlifehealth.ie. Photo by Sam Barnes/Sportsfile

Campaign

Irish Life Health Runuary, I will run January, it won't run me!

Description of Campaign

Irish Life Health leveraged its sponsorship of Athletics Ireland to develop the 'Runuary' programme, empowering runners to have a positive and healthy start to 2021. In the uncertainty of the pandemic, the running community was supported to take control, so they could run January and not let it run them.



Public Relations Consultant

Galvin Sports



Client

Irish Life Health

Background to the Campaign

As title sponsor of the National Athletics Championships, Irish Life Health have many opportunities to bring their partnership to life throughout a regular athletics season. However, in 2020 the Covid-19 crisis resulted in the cancellation of almost all sporting events, including 38 of the planned 40 Athletics Ireland National Athletics Championships.

Moving into the last quarter of 2020 without the traditional sponsorship assets to activate, Irish Life Health needed to explore alternative ways to leverage the partnership. It was clear that running had become a lifeline for thousands. However, continuing to stay motivated to run in the cold dark months of winter would be challenging regardless of the mental and physical health benefits experienced.

Working with Athletics Ireland, Irish Life Health developed the Runuary programme. It was a month-long running challenge starting on January 1st and ending on the 31st. There were training plans available to suit all runners' levels, from the beginner to the more advanced, to help them stay on track for a healthier 2021.

Statement of Objectives

1. Build mass awareness of the Irish Life Health Runuary programme through earned media to the target audience.
 2. Drive consideration and conversion of runners to sign-up to the Irish Life Health Runuary programme through a social media campaign.
 3. Engage and support the runners who signed up to #Runuary to ensure they have a positive experience from the programme and high awareness that Irish Life Health was the sponsor.
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Programme Planning and Strategy

The communications strategy for Irish Life Health was fully integrated, including earned media, social influencer activity, social media activation, and a media partnership.

The campaign concept was emotive, reflected the challenging times in which we were living. It centred on empowering and supporting runners to control the controllables: 'You Run January, Don't Let it Run you'.

The campaign was launched a little under four weeks before programme was set to start. The launch centred on achieving the same day/next day sports media coverage to start building awareness of the campaign. The timing also ensured we would secure interviews for the longer lead publications, to land content over the New Year.

Selecting newsworthy and relevant brand ambassadors from the athletics community was central to the earned media strategy. Olympic siblings Thomas and Jessie Barr were chosen to launch Runuary. Thomas Barr is one of the most well-known current Irish athletic stars. Jessie Barr was also a credible spokesperson as a performance sports psychologist and Olympian. She was identified as an ideal ambassador to pitch to wellness publications for New Year content.

A comprehensive social media content plan was developed and pushed out on Athletics Ireland and Irish Life Health social media channels. A hero piece of video content was developed to support the campaign, reminding runners that no matter how hard it was to get out the door, they will always feel great after a run.

We identified that social influencers could bring #Runuary to life through their channels and encourage their followers to sign up and stay engaged with the programme from the outset.

Measurement

The campaign exceeded all KPI's in terms of media reach as well as landing key messages in targeted publications. The signup rate was double the identified KPI with 97% awareness of Irish Life as the sponsor of the programme and 86% stating they would take part again in 2022.

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