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Bolder Boulder will rely on new chip technology

Runners to get more detailed information on race

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Boulder - With the stadium finish, the rolling wave start and the International Team Challenge criterium for professional racers, the Bolder Boulder is known as an innovator on America's road racing scene. This year the race will enhance its timing and results with a new twist on a not-so-new technology.

The 29th Bolder Boulder will employ electronic "smart" timing for the first time, utilizing a new product which race officials believe is superior to the chip technology adopted by major marathons and other races in recent years.

Runners will wear a "Smart Tag" that contains a pair of antennae and utilizes radio frequency identification. Electronic readers at mile markers and the finish line will detect the tags as they pass, recording each runner's progress. The tag, which works similarly to electronic employee ID badges, is about half the size of a credit card.

The new product from IPICO Sports will get more detailed results to runners, including their mile splits, and the results will be available sooner.

Bolder Boulder officials didn't jump on chip technology when it came along a decade ago because surveys told them the race's existing timing method was sufficiently accurate and because of the cost of the chip systems. They like the new product better, and it costs one-third of the better known competitors used by marathons in Boston, New York and Chicago, among many others.

"We always thought the technology made sense," race director Cliff Bosley said. "What we were waiting for was the right company to come to the market, one, from a technical standpoint that could maybe offer something more, and two, that could be that affordable piece that didn't exist before today."

Before they head home on race day, runners will be able to pick up a card at the race expo giving them their official finish time and mile splits. The technology also will allow race officials to do a better job tracking the professional race for spectators and the live Channel 4 telecast, offering mile splits for individual runners and up-to-the-minute team standings as the pro race unfolds.

Chip technology has enabled friends and family to follow the progress of runners in marathons via the Internet and cellphone text alerts for several years. Now other races are intrigued by the IPICO system. Officials of the World Marathon Majors (New York, Boston, Chicago, London and Berlin) will be at the Bolder Boulder.

IPICO chief executive Mark Herbst met with them at the Chicago Marathon in October and persuaded them to watch the product in action at the Bolder Boulder.

"They said, 'If you can do what you say you're going to do, next year you're in,'" Herbst said.

Because the system is more affordable, Herbst will target schools, training groups and health clubs in his marketing. The Smart Tag could help track coaches get more detailed information on each of their runners during a workout. The cost for a high school team would be less than \$5,000.

Bosley believes Bolder Boulder runners will love the system.

"These guys arrived at the time that was right for us to do this," Bosley said. "It allows us to take the technology and do something more with it than other road races do....When these guys showed up, we knew within the first hour they were sitting there talking to us that this was the direction we were going."

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