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# **WORLD CHAMPION WIGHTMAN STARTS LARGEST EVER TCS MINI LONDON MARATHON**

Some 10,000 children are being cheered on by crowds, friends and family in the biggest ever TCS Mini London Marathon today (22 April) – ahead of tomorrow’s (23 April) 26.2-mile event.

World 1500m champion Jake Wightman returned to The Mall as the Official Starter and will award medals to rising stars of the standalone event, now in its second year.

Thousands of schoolchildren aged 4-17 are running this year’s 2.6K or one-mile course in the mass participation event and championship races, designed for the best young athletes.

Wightman, who won his historic gold medal at the World Championships in Oregon last summer, was delighted to be back at the event he took part in twice as a youngster.

He said: “It’s a real honour to be the Official Starter of the Mini Marathon. I did this event twice in 2008 and 2009 and both times they weren’t exactly amazing performances that would have seen me being able to come back and start the race one day. Given I was one of the kids running this at one point, it’s pretty special to give back and start it.”

After the championship races, which were the first to take place, Wightman congratulated the winners of the 2.6K event, including runners from across the UK in the boys and girls under-13s to under-17s category, as well as those in the Ambulant and wheelchair events.

Lyla Belshaw couldn't believe she'd won the Under-15 Girls' event, saying afterwards: "I wasn't expecting that! Usually I hang back, but I went off this time and tried to stretch out the race with 1km to go.

"As I approached the finish, I was looking at the big screen and realised I was going to win, and I was so shocked. I couldn't process it. If I can win a race, I want it to be this one, the training really paid off."

Illias Zghoundi, winner of the Under-17 Boys T53/54 event, was also happy with his performance: "It was a great experience on a new course with one big uphill, which was fun! It was quite technical, and managing the downhill sections and the hairpin at the top was difficult, but I felt good.

"The experience was brilliant – it's the third year in a row I have done it and the ambience and the people at the end get you over the line.

"Dave [Weir] has helped me so much in recent years and I wouldn't be here without him. He is a fantastic mentor."

The TCS Mini London Marathon also includes an accessible one-mile event, which also ends at the world-famous London Marathon Finish Line on The Mall, giving children of all abilities the chance to enjoy a special sample of the London Marathon experience.

To encourage participation and support schools, every participant aged 17 or under who finishes the 2023 TCS Mini London Marathon will earn a £10 voucher from title partner TCS (Tata Consultancy Services) for their school to spend on PE or IT equipment. Last year, schools that benefitted from the £10 donation were able to purchase new PE equipment, including brand-new basketball posts, gymnastics mats and jumping tables, badminton rackets and footballs.

Schools can also still sign up to be part of the TCS Mini London Marathon in schools, which is aiming to create a new Guinness World Records title for 'the most pledges received for an exercise campaign in one month'.

This is a free-of-charge challenge for children and young people to run, jog, walk or wheel one mile in their schools any time between Monday 17 April to Friday 12 May. [Schools can enter for free now.](#)

**ENDS**

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#### **Notes to Editors**

##### **About the London Marathon**

- The 2023 TCS London Marathon will take place on Sunday 23 April.
- The London Marathon was first held on 29 March 1981 and the millionth finisher in the history of the event crossed the line in 2016.
- Since the first London Marathon in 1981, the event has raised more than £1 billion for charity.
- The 2023 TCS London Marathon Official Charity of the Year is Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity.
- London Marathon Events gifts its surplus each year to the London Marathon Foundation (the operating name of The London Marathon Charitable Trust, a registered charity (283813) and a

company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales (01550741), registered office: 190 Great Dover Street, London, SE1 4YB).

- Since 1981, the London Marathon Foundation has awarded £100 million to more than 1,600 projects that inspire activity in London and across the UK.
- For more information, visit [tcslondonmarathon.com](https://tcslondonmarathon.com)

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