

# The bigHalf

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Sir Mo Farah at the end of The Big Half, his final ever race in London

# SIR MO OVERCOMES ILLNESS IN FAREWELL LONDON RACE AT THE BIG HALF

- **Farah almost forced to pull out of capital goodbye but still manages fourth-placed finish**
- **Crowds line the route to say goodbye to British athletics great**
- **More than 16,000 people take part alongside Sir Mo in London's community running festival**

Sir Mo Farah refused to let illness prevent him from saying an emotional farewell to London today when he took part in The Big Half 2023, his final competitive race in the capital.

The greatest British distance runner of all time revealed he had been unwell in the days leading up to today's race and had even considered withdrawing. But he was determined to compete in London for one last time before he retires next week.

The crowds came out in force to show their support for the Olympic legend, cheering him all the way along the 13.1-mile route from Tower Bridge to the iconic Cutty Sark in Greenwich, while his wife Tania and three of his children – Aisha, Amani and Hussein – started the race.

Sir Mo, who was joined by more than 16,000 people taking part in London's community running festival, wasn't able to make it a fairytale ending as he finished fourth overall in 62:43 in a race won by Jack Rowe [61:08].

"I wasn't feeling too well yesterday and I wasn't even sure if I would be able to run," said Sir Mo.

"But I had so much support and as it was my last race here in London, I just felt I needed to do it. If I hadn't run, that would have been it. I got up this morning and was feeling OK but the guys at the front pushed the pace and it was a bit of a struggle.

"London means so much to me. It's always been part of my journey, from taking part in the Mini London Marathon as a kid to this race today, so I wanted to come out here and give it my best.

“I am so pleased to see Jack [Rowe], who I met three years ago, win. He has come on so well and is doing brilliantly. He is grabbing that opportunity.

“Throughout my career, I’ve always had passion for what I do and I’ve never seen it as a job. I’ve had great support from my family and my wife and kids have put up with so many years of me being away for six months of the year. I wouldn’t be here today without their support and everyone else who’s believed in me, so I want to say thank you to everyone who’s come out today to support me.”

Sir Mo was presented with a special award after the race by Hugh Brasher, Event Director of London Marathon Events, the organisers of The Big Half.

Brasher said: “Sir Mo is quite simply the greatest endurance track athlete we have ever produced. He has been taking part in our events since he was an under-15 athlete running for Hounslow in the Mini London Marathon and has gone on to have the most legendary career.

“Today is just another example of the character and courage he possesses. He was not well and many other people wouldn’t have run today, but he was determined to say farewell to London and to all the supporters who lined the route and he still finished fourth in a quality British field. He has been an incredible competitor throughout his career and we wish him all the very best in his final race at the Great North Run next week and then with his retirement.”

### **British Athletics trial race**

Rowe’s victory in the elite men’s race came after two successive runner-up finishes at The Big Half and it gives him a confirmed spot on the Great Britain team for the World Athletics Road Running Half Marathon Championships in Riga, Latvia, on Sunday 1 October.

The Big Half was the official British Athletics trial race for the World Championships with second-placed Mahamed Mahamed [61:16] and third-placed Andy Butchart [62:15] also confirming spots on the Great Britain team.

The women’s race was won by Calli Thackery in 69:15, followed by Rose Harvey [70:02] and Abbie Donnelly [70:31], who all also earned themselves selection for the World Championships.

In the wheelchair events, David Weir took his fourth win at The Big Half, finishing in 47:26 to beat Danny Sidbury by one second. John Boy Smith was third in 47:30. In the women’s

wheelchair event, Samantha Kinghorn won on her debut, setting a new course record of 52:05 to beat last year's winner Eden Rainbow-Cooper on the line. Mel Woods finished third in 58:50.

For the official results of The Big Half 2023, [click here](#).

## **#WeRunAsOne**

Behind Sir Mo and the elites, more than 16,000 participants started The Big Half in glorious September sunshine, as Londoners came together in a celebration of running and community. Many were fundraising for charity and supporting the We Run As One campaign, to inspire runners of all backgrounds and experiences to enjoy the mental and physical health benefits of running, and to celebrate and represent London's diverse population.

The community groups taking part included Emancipated Run Crew, Black Girls Do Run UK, ASRA Club and Runderbolts.

ASRA Club, a London community group focusing on promoting activity among Muslim women, designed the finisher's T-shirts and medals for all finishers in The Big Half and the New Balance Big Relay (an event where a team of four can split the half marathon distance between them). The club presented Sir Mo with a finisher's T-shirt after the race. To read more about the medal and T-shirt design, [click here](#).

Rajiv Rajbhandari, 26, from Guildford, ran with 100 members of Runderbolts – a running club for the Nepalese community based all over the country.

He said: "My friend signed me up for my birthday. This is my first ever half marathon and I just wanted to give it a go. It's amazing to see such a diverse group of runners – it really encourages you to push yourself, it's a great atmosphere, I love the supporters at the sides with the drums.

"There are some barriers we are trying to overcome. Sports in Asian communities aren't such a priority; the main focus is education and fitting into the community but now we have one or two prominent runners and they are encouraging more runners. More than running, it is the social aspect which has been nice to be a part of – that's why I go each week for the community and social aspect.

"It's not just youngsters we are trying to encourage but our parents too who are at home working. We are going to start bringing parents to our weekly sessions and try and involve everyone in the family. My advice is if you want to start running, join a group, it's so much fun, we go for food after our sessions, if that isn't an incentive I don't know what is."

## **Something for everyone**

For those who want to run as a team, the New Balance Big Relay takes place on the same 13.1-mile course as The Big Half, with the route divided into four legs of around 5K each. It's ideal for participants of mixed abilities or anyone who isn't quite ready to complete the full half marathon distance alone.

Tim Pascoe, 67, from Isleworth Running Club, a small informal running club, completed the event with teammates Satish, Adrien and Matthew.

He said: "Even though I'm only doing the last 5K it's hard work but what a great event, so many people that wouldn't have been running a few years ago. You've got everybody and anybody running past. We were lucky to come out of the tube station and saw Mo Farah run straight past us.

"An author said running at my age might be dangerous, but not as dangerous as not running. That's why I run – for my health and to keep a general level of fitness and sometimes you get a great sense of achievement."

## **Free, family fun at The Big Mile**

The final event of the day saw around 2,000 people take on The Big Mile – a free mass participation event held on the same finishing stretch as The Big Half. The route is only a mile long, making it the perfect event for first-time runners or walkers, families with children and anyone looking to get more active.

Fatma Kavak, 28, ran with her niece Merve Kavak, nine, who wanted to do the challenge in memory of her brother Enes, who died at the age of two, eight months ago from sepsis after battling with a heart condition.

Fatma said: "My niece came up with the idea of doing The Big Mile. She wanted to have an impact and show people that anything is possible, you can do anything, no matter what you are going through. She is showing people that and I'm proud of her."

Radu Micel, 40, from Canada Water, ran with his wife and two children aged four and six.

He said: "We are looking forward to running today. It's a great fun family atmosphere. We want to show the kids this is good for your health and it's something we can do as a family."

## About The Big Half

Now in its sixth edition, The Big Half is London's community running festival with the half marathon starting near Tower Bridge and finishing at the historic Cutty Sark in Greenwich.

You can watch full [coverage of The Big Half here](#).

Images for The Big Half 2023 are available [here](#) (password: TBH2023).

Footage of The Big Half 2023 is available by emailing [media@londonmarathonevents.co.uk](mailto:media@londonmarathonevents.co.uk)

The Big Half 2024 takes place on Sunday 1 September and [entries are now open here](#).

**ENDS**



### NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Big Half is a world-class mass participation event, organised by London Marathon Events, over the half marathon distance (13.1 miles)
- The community event was first held in 2018 and takes place in four London boroughs: Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets.
- The Big Half is also a campaign called #WeRunAsOne. This unique event will demonstrate how sport and community can come together to inspire social change, create social cohesion and improve health and wellbeing. Find out more at [thebighalf.co.uk](http://thebighalf.co.uk)
- London Marathon Events Ltd, organisers of The Big Half, 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, EYB).
- Since 1981, The London Marathon Foundation has awarded grants totalling in excess of £100 million to more than 1,600 projects in London, Essex and across the UK.

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