



2025 RACE DIRECTORS CONFERENCE

SPEAKERS & FACILITATORS

Steve Fleck (Emcee): Professional race announcer and sports commentator for running, cycling, and triathlon events across North America. Brings high energy and keeps the day moving. [LinkedIn](#)

Keynote: Ihor Velys: Canada's first finisher of the Barkley Marathons (2024), Ihor is one of the country's top ultra-runners with multiple 100-mile wins. His keynote explores resilience, pushing limits, and how lessons from extreme events can shape better, safer, and more inspiring event delivery. [Running Magazine Profile](#)

Nicole van Zanten, Chief Growth Officer, ICUC Social: Leader in digital growth, marketing, and community building. Nicole specializes in brand strategy and creating scalable systems to engage large audiences. [LinkedIn](#)

Darren Rayner, Head of Creative, Magnafire: Creative director and filmmaker focused on brand storytelling and visual engagement. Darren has extensive experience creating content that connects emotionally with participants and partners. [LinkedIn](#)

Aaron Billesberger, Senior Director, Event Safety Alliance Canada: Level 5 Crowd Safety Manager and security professional with Live Nation and ESAC, Aaron brings practical insights into incident management, crowd dynamics, and safety planning. [LinkedIn](#)

Jordan Myers, Project Manager, City of Vancouver: Public safety and emergency management specialist, supporting stadium events and music festivals through to grassroots art projects and mass-participation sport events. [LinkedIn](#)

Alyssa Reyes, Event Operations & Inclusion Specialist: Event professional with a focus on inclusion, accessibility, and volunteer engagement. Alyssa facilitates the Diversity in Sport panel, helping organizers embed equity and representation. [LinkedIn](#)

Dave Michael, Race Director, Peach Classic Triathlon: Penticton-based organizer who revitalized one of Canada's oldest triathlons with deliberate growth strategies and a strong community focus. [LinkedIn](#)

Kevin O'Connor, Non-Stadia Program Manager, BC Athletics: Manages road, trail, and cross-country programming for BC Athletics, supporting over 200 sanctioned events annually.

Allan Prazsky, Executive Director, Triathlon BC: Senior provincial sport leader focused on sport development, federal and provincial partnerships, and governance. [LinkedIn](#)

AGENDA

Note: While conference organizers make every commitment to the schedule listed below, on-the-day realities may require updates and changes.

MORNING – INSPIRATION & FOUNDATIONS

- 7:45 – 8:30** **Registration, Coffee & Networking**
- 8:30 – 8:40** **Welcome & Housekeeping, Steve Fleck (Emcee)**
- 8:40 – 9:00** **Keynote: Ihor Verys, Lessons from the Barkley Marathons;** Resilience, pushing limits, and the importance of staging great events.
- 9:00 – 9:30** **Nicole van Zanten, Marketing & Brand Growth;** Strategies for building community, aligning sponsorship, and driving participation.
- 9:30 – 10:00** **Darren Rayner, Creative Storytelling for Events;** Visual storytelling techniques and emotional resonance in endurance events.
- 10:00 – 10:15** **Nicole & Darren Q&A / Joint Discussion;** Moderated discussion tying marketing + creative storytelling together.
- 10:15 – 10:30** **Morning Break**

MIDDAY – RISK TO REALITY

- 10:30 – 11:15** **Crisis & Risk Management, Aaron Billesberger & Jordan Myers;** Case reflection, and group takeaways.
- 11:15 – 11:45** **Group Debrief / Key Insights;** Creating an actionable checklist.
- 12:00 – 12:45** **PSO Roundtable (Lunch Session);** Kevin O'Connor (BC Athletics) & Allan Prazsky (Triathlon BC) lead updates and open Q&A on policy, sanctioning, and collaboration. Steve moderates.

AFTERNOON INCLUSION, COLLABORATION & GROWTH

- 1:00 – 1:45** **Diversity in Sport Panel, Facilitated by Alyssa Reyes;** practical accessibility strategies and representation for events.
- 1:45 – 2:10** **Problem-Solving Circles;** Breakout discussions with panelists and facilitators.
- 2:10 – 2:20** **Afternoon Break**
- 2:20 – 2:55** **Case Study: Dave Michael, Peach Classic;** Deliberate growth strategies, sponsorship alignment, and revitalizing a community event.
- 2:55 – 3:15** **Lightning Lessons & Open Forum;** 5-minute “quick wins” from peer organizers, with Steve and Dave moderating.
- 3:15 – 3:30** **Closing Reflections & Commitments**
- 3:30 – 4:30** **(Optional) – Flex Time & Networking;** Informal discussions, sponsor conversations, and follow-up with speakers/PSOs.