



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 Verys: 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.