



## The Running Bug

The Running Bug is a website devoted to runners and the joys of the world's greatest sport and pastime. The goal is simple: to help people get the running bug and once they've got it then to help them keep it.

Created by running enthusiasts, The Running Bug offers a wide range of features, including articles packed with useful tips and advice, real life stories, running news and interviews with professionals and celebrity runners, as well as forums and blogs that attract lively updates from runners and event organisers throughout the world.



When Joe and Ian decided to launch their own website, they turned to Ballard Chalmers. "We don't have the technical expertise to develop websites ourselves," explained Ian. "We had worked with Ballard Chalmers on an eCommerce project some time ago and were impressed with their knowledge and expertise, so we asked them to partner with us."

Both Joe and Ian had very firm ideas about their new website. Many other sports oriented websites are static and do not adopt a community approach. "We wanted our website to be different," continued Ian. "Our website had to encourage people to interact with each other, share news and information, post details of events, request and receive advice and so on. We also wanted the website to be a 'one-stop shop' for information on training, treating injuries and general fitness."

Joe and Ian had identified four objectives for their website: The site had to function as a community website for runners; it had to provide wide-ranging content (including articles and training programmes); it had to provide facilities for users to publish information about forthcoming events; and it had to encourage interaction between registered users.

"Joe and Ian had a very good understanding of e-commerce and e-marketing," said Geoff Ballard, Ballard Chalmers' Chief Technology Officer. "We were excited about the concept of a social website for runners and although there was a very limited budget, we met with Joe

and Ian on several occasions to discuss their requirements and objectives and refine these into a workable model."

Joe and Ian had already worked with a designer to create the visual side of the new website and provided the Ballard Chalmers development team with a set of visuals and templates. "This speeded up the development process as it meant that we could focus on developing the functionality and features," continued Geoff. "But that didn't stop Joe and Ian coming up with new ideas and suggestions to expand the social side of the website even further."

Working closely with Joe and Ian, Ballard Chalmers developed the initial version of the website, incorporating as many features and facilities as was practical. Aside from third party Blog and Forum software, the entire website was developed from scratch in ASP.NET Version 2.0 and SQL Server 2005. "It made no sense to develop the Blog and Forum elements of the website as proven and widely-used solutions are commercially available," added Geoff.

Now live, The Running Bug has already attracted well over 60,000 visitors and boasts a membership of 7,500. The site also handles over half a million page refreshes each month. Thanks to the flexible design, almost all webpage content updates can be managed by Joe and Ian Running Bug staff, reducing administrative costs and ensuring that the latest information and news is rapidly available to site members and visitors.





"We know that we are pushing the boundaries with our website," commented Ian. "Instead of following the norm, we sat down and thought about what we really wanted from our website and then asked Ballard Chalmers to turn it into a reality. The site had to encourage interaction between members and Ballard Chalmers have been able to provide extremely powerful and easy-to-use Blog and Forum interaction capabilities without stretching our budget."

Plans for version 2 of The Running Bug website are already well underway. The new site will offer members more integrated social functionality (as provided by web 2.0) and an increased range of services including an expanded running events directory, improved control of advertisement placements, and a facility to allow runners and event organisers to draw maps and share these with other community members.

"We have a very good relationship with Ballard Chalmers," concluded Ian. "From the outset, we wanted a partner that would work with us and develop a platform that we could rely on. Ballard Chalmers has a great team that has delivered a visually impactful website that meets virtually all of our requirements. Without their help and advice, The Running Bug website would not be half as good, and we are already working closely with them as we develop the next version of website."

## Technology

Microsoft ASP.NET 2.0

Microsoft SQL Server 2005

