# Refugees co-design Big Half finisher medal celebrating London landmarks and community



Finishers in the upcoming Big Half, set to take place in central London on Sunday, 7 September, will receive a specially designed medal and long-sleeved T-shirt featuring iconic London landmarks Tower Bridge and the Cutty Sark. These designs were created with significant input from members of the Coopah Refugee Run Club, a community initiative that supports migrants and refugees through running clubs, coaching, and broader social support.

The Big Half is known as the UK's most diverse half marathon, drawing over 25,000 participants, including approximately 5,500 runners from local community groups. The 13.1-mile route begins near Tower Bridge and finishes beside the historic Cutty Sark in Greenwich, landmarks that hold both symbolic and emotional significance for the runners. The finisher’s medal includes interlocking rings symbolising the various diverse journeys converging during the event, while confetti on the medal represents the celebratory atmosphere and the emotional experience of crossing the finish line.

The Coopah Refugee Run Club partners with charities to help migrants settle in the UK and offers them life-long access to its training app. Members such as Rawand Gurun, who moved to the UK from Kurdistan during the COVID-19 pandemic and now works for the NHS, describe the running culture as a vital source of community and support. Rawand emphasised how running is less about competition and more about gradually improving lifestyle and enjoying the camaraderie. He highlighted the emotional impact of passing London landmarks en route, stating that the experience of running past iconic sites like the Cutty Sark “feels big” and deeply moving.

Similarly, Paul Mwila, who arrived in the UK from Zambia in 2022 and is awaiting a final residency decision, credited Coopah’s run club with providing a lifeline during challenging times. He recounted running at dawn through unfamiliar parts of London when he first arrived, before joining formal group runs that nurtured his growing passion for running. Paul completed his first marathon at the London Marathon in April 2025 and expressed his commitment to running for life. Both he and Rawand were closely involved in the design process for the Big Half finisher’s items, wanting to reflect the connection between the city’s landmarks and their personal journeys, as well as the hope that difficult times eventually pass.

The Big Half fosters inclusivity and community engagement, with participation encouraged through discounted entry fees of £25 for members of more than 280 local community groups spanning the host boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Lewisham, Southwark, and Greenwich. The event is more than a race; it includes family-friendly activities like the Big Mile and team events like the New Balance Big Relay, which divide the half marathon distance into four segments of 3.1 miles each.

Among the community groups participating are the Sole Striders, a female-only running club founded in 2024 that champions female engagement in sport, particularly among communities often marginalised in physical activity. Sanaa Qureshi, senior community engagement manager at London Marathon Events, which organises the Big Half, emphasised the event's commitment to diversity and inclusivity, particularly in involving migrant and refugee groups as well as women’s running communities.

The Big Half itself is part of a broader movement to make running accessible and celebratory, with the course taking advantage of fully closed roads through London’s iconic landmarks. Organised by London Marathon Events, the race not only offers competitive and recreational participation but also supports various charities, including the British Heart Foundation, enhancing the event’s community and philanthropic dimensions.

This collaboration with refugee communities to design finisher memorabilia underscores the transformative power of sport in fostering belonging, solidarity, and emotional upliftment. Through initiatives like Coopah, running becomes far more than exercise—it becomes a means of connection, healing, and shared celebration in one of the world’s most iconic urban landscapes.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[2]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/putting-londons-communities-heart-big-half-uks-most-diverse-half-marathon), [[3]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/meet-coopah-refugee-run-club-designers-years-finisher-t-shirt-and-medal)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[2]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/putting-londons-communities-heart-big-half-uks-most-diverse-half-marathon), [[3]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/meet-coopah-refugee-run-club-designers-years-finisher-t-shirt-and-medal)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[3]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/meet-coopah-refugee-run-club-designers-years-finisher-t-shirt-and-medal)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[3]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/meet-coopah-refugee-run-club-designers-years-finisher-t-shirt-and-medal)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[2]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/putting-londons-communities-heart-big-half-uks-most-diverse-half-marathon)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[2]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/putting-londons-communities-heart-big-half-uks-most-diverse-half-marathon)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[2]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/putting-londons-communities-heart-big-half-uks-most-diverse-half-marathon), [[4]](https://www.bhf.org.uk/thebighalf), [[6]](https://www.thebighalf.co.uk//)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/), [[3]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/meet-coopah-refugee-run-club-designers-years-finisher-t-shirt-and-medal), [[4]](https://www.bhf.org.uk/thebighalf), [[2]](https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/putting-londons-communities-heart-big-half-uks-most-diverse-half-marathon)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/putting-londons-communities-heart-big-half-uks-most-diverse-half-marathon> - This article discusses The Big Half, the UK's most diverse half marathon, highlighting its commitment to London's communities. It mentions that over 25,000 participants are registered, with 5,500 from local community groups. The event, taking place on 7 September, features a 13.1-mile course from Tower Bridge to the Cutty Sark in Greenwich. The article also highlights the involvement of community groups like the Coopah Refugee Run Club and Sole Striders, who have contributed to the design of the finisher's T-shirt and medal, symbolising solidarity and togetherness.
3. <https://www.londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half/article/meet-coopah-refugee-run-club-designers-years-finisher-t-shirt-and-medal> - This article introduces the Coopah Refugee Run Club, which has been instrumental in designing the finisher's T-shirt and medal for The Big Half 2025. The design features interlocking rings to represent diverse journeys uniting at the event, with confetti symbolising the joy of the crowd and the emotion of crossing the finish line near the Cutty Sark. The article shares personal stories of Rawand Gurun and Paul Mwila, members of the club who have found community and support through running, emphasising the transformative power of the sport.
4. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/thebighalf> - This page provides information about The Big Half, a vibrant and inclusive half marathon that offers participants the opportunity to run part of the iconic London Marathon course on fully closed roads. The 13.1-mile route weaves through London from Tower Bridge to the historic Cutty Sark in Greenwich. The page details entry options, including charity places and own place entries, and highlights the event's community spirit and support for various charities, including the British Heart Foundation.
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Big_Half> - This Wikipedia page offers comprehensive information about The Big Half, an annual road running event over the half marathon distance held in central London. Organised by London Marathon Events, the event attracts both mass and elite participation, with runners following a course that is closed to road traffic. The page details the course, records, and editions of the event, providing historical context and statistics, including winners and times from various years.
6. <https://www.thebighalf.co.uk//> - The official website of The Big Half provides detailed information about the event, including registration details, course information, and participant resources. The 13.1-mile course weaves through London from Tower Bridge to the iconic Cutty Sark in Greenwich. The website offers options for general entry and charity places, with details on entry fees and fundraising targets. It also provides information on the event's history, including past winners and records, and features news and updates related to the event.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/tower-bridge-and-cutty-sark-on-big-half-finisher-medal-designed-with-refugees-3SYBLHNAFJMDPB637YFT2SVWMA/> - This article reports on the design of The Big Half 2025 finisher's medal and T-shirt, featuring Tower Bridge and the Cutty Sark, created with the help of refugee runners. The Coopah Refugee Run Club, which supports refugees in the UK through local run clubs and community support, collaborated on the designs. The article includes personal stories from members like Rawand Gurun and Paul Mwila, highlighting their journeys and the significance of the event's landmarks in their experiences.