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Thousands Expected At Moscow Fun Run

By Anastasia Solovieva

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Runners turned up in the hundreds on Sept. 10 to take part in a night run organized by Nike at Vorobyovy Gory.

Runners will take over downtown Moscow on Sept. 26 as sporting-goods manufacturer Nike holds a five-kilometer race around the Kremlin, with a free concert by British pop star Sophie Ellis Bextor and others afterward for all those who take part.

"Our main objective is to combine and inspire a large number of people to make running a part of their lives," Nike Run manager Olga Koroleva said at a presentation of the run at the redeveloped Krasny Oktyabr chocolate factory, where local celebrities like MTV video jockey Irena Ponaroshku mingled with athletic star Yury Borzakovsky, the 2004 Olympic gold-medal winner in the 800 meters.

"We are confident that the route through the most beautiful part of Moscow and the appearance of cool musicians on the finish line will help us inspire experienced athletes —

and those who are only beginning to run — to their best results," Koroleva said.

The race will start at Vasilyevsky Spusk and go along the embankment to Park Kultury and then back again.

In the buildup to the run, Nike has sent trainers every day to Moscow parks to help prepare anyone who wants to run.

To encourage runners to take part, Nike has arranged practice runs every day until the race. The runs take place at 7:30 p.m. on weekdays and at 10 a.m. on the weekend at various parks around the city.

Wednesday's training takes place at six different parks. See www.newrunners.ru for details.

The web site also provides Google maps with laid-out runs in different Moscow parks.

The free T-shirts handed out to all participants to run in will also, of course, provide a wonderful marketing and advertising opportunity along with an attempt to boost a sport that in Moscow usually brings to mind stray dogs, aggressive drivers, steep pavement and a suspicious public.

"You always hear of Carrie Bradshaw [in "Sex and the City"] running in Central Park in New York or see pictures in glamorous magazines of Madonna jogging the streets of L.A.'s Beverly Hills, so why not Moscow?" said Ponaroshku, who obviously has never been chased by a pack of rabid dogs while running through air thicker than syrup.

"There will be no VIP runs for 'elites.' Everyone will have to run on equal terms," joked another MTV video jockey, Alexander Anatolyevich.

Borzakovsky, who deejays in his spare time, said the best way to get set for the run is to choose the right tunes for the race.

A five-kilometer night race — organized for Sept. 10 as part of the preparation — drew nearly 600 people.

Anyone who wants to take part in the race should register at www.runmoscow.com . Places are limited. The run starts at 4 p.m. on Sept. 26, with the concert starting at 8 p.m.

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