

# Mud racing governing body adds protection

By Elliott D. Woods, Outside

Sam Mansfield and Mark Ballas met in the autumn of 2012 when the two were visiting an investment property near Fort Benning, Georgia. Ballas, a former Army Special Forces soldier-turned-entrepreneur, had recently founded an adventure race called Green Beret Challenge, and Mansfield, a market researcher and consultant, had just started dabbling in mud races after years as an amateur triathlete.

“We started to talk a little bit about ventures we wanted to get involved in in the future, and one that continued to come up was the obstacle course space—what is it in that industry that needs help?” The two quickly hit on the idea of a governing body for the sport, and on Jan. 7, United States Obstacle Course Racing (USOCR) was born.

At present, the company’s public face consists of a website, USOCR.com, that provides the mission statement and invites visitors to join the mailing list. But Mansfield told me USOCR – heavily modeled on USA Triathlon – will begin signing up members as early as Valentine’s Day. As for event sanctioning, he said USOCR will be “certifying and working with endorsement programs this season.” He was not yet able to confirm any events that have agreed to participate in the sanctioning program, which will involve a standardized safety management planning process and on-site inspections by USOCR staff.

Mansfield said the issue of event insurance was one of the early drivers for the development of USOCR. He speculated that current insurers of OCR events will begin pulling out of the industry as they develop a better understanding of the risks. When that happens, one of USOCR’s biggest assets will be a

unique set of actuarial data compiled from sanctioned events that will help keep rates attuned to the actual risk and not the perceived risk. As Mansfield said, USOCR's data will allow the industry to "define our risk instead of having our risk define us."

**Read the whole story**