



# GREAT PUMPKIN RUN



Date: Monday, October 31, 1983 (Halloween)

Time: 12:00 noon

Place: Rose Bowl (south side)

Distance: 5-K, or 1.9 to 4.3 miles (see below)

This year runners can choose between the traditional 5-K race and a unique event designed especially for Halloween, the 'Bring Back the Great Pumpkin' Run (BBTGPR). The BBTGPR is a variable distance, 'self-handicapping' race. This race is approximately a 5-K in length, but faster runners have to run farther than slower runners. As a special Halloween treat, the Great Pumpkin itself will be on hand (actually, in hand) to see that everyone runs the proper distance!

Eligibility and Awards. The race is open to all JPL employees, contractors, family, and friends. All participants in either race will get ribbons. Since we'd like to encourage runners to try the BBTGPR, most of the awards will be presented for that race. For the BBTGPR, there will be a minimum of 2 medals in each of 3 divisions (Women, Seniors, Open). Medals for the 5-K and/or additional medals for the BBTGPR will be determined on the basis of turnout. There will also be two special BBTGPR awards: Staunchest Friend of the Great Pumpkin and Peerless Pumpkin Prognosticator.

## BBTGPR Details

Have you ever raced over an out-and-back course...struggling to hold your pace...and then along comes the race leader...on his way back toward the finish...looking fresh as a daisy...and your spirits sag...because you still have half a mile to run before you can even turn around? Well, then, have we got a race for you! In the Bring Back the Great Pumpkin Run, the turnaround point doesn't simply sit still in a premeasured position on the course. Instead, it starts moving back toward the finish line (not too far behind the leader), thus shortening the course for all succeeding runners! So you can cheer up when you see the leader -- you'll soon be turning around, too!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL  
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### BBTGPR Details (cont.)

Here's how it works: Runners follow a circuitous course, totaling 3.1 miles, out to a turnaround point. The turnaround point is marked by none other than the Great Pumpkin! From that point, it is 1.2 miles via direct route back to the finish line, for a total course length of 4.3 miles. However, only the lead runner will cover the entire course. When the 1st runner reaches the turnaround point, he must pick up the Great Pumpkin and carry it with him back toward the finish line. Upon encountering the 2nd runner, the 1st runner passes the Pumpkin to the 2nd runner, and both head toward the finish. Then the 2nd runner passes the Pumpkin to the 3rd runner, and so forth. In this manner, the Great Pumpkin is eventually carried all the way back to the finish, and all the runners thus take turns helping to 'Bring Back the Great Pumpkin'.

For their participation in the rescue of the Great Pumpkin, all BBTGPR runners shall be declared 'Friends of the Great Pumpkin'. The runner who carries the Great Pumpkin the farthest shall gain special recognition as 'Staunchest Friend of the Great Pumpkin'.

Before the race, all BBTGPR runners will be asked to predict the time it will take the Great Pumpkin to cover its 1.2 mile course. The most accurate forecaster will earn the title 'Peerless Pumpkin Prognosticator'. (Note: The Staunchest Friend of the Great Pumpkin and/or the last runner to carry the Pumpkin may be ruled ineligible for this award.)

You won't know ahead of time exactly how far you'll have to run. The following table gives an estimate of the approximate distance you can expect to run, as a function of your normal pace for a 5-K. The estimate assumes that everyone uses optimum strategy and that the fastest two runners in the race are capable of running a 5-K at a 5:30/mile pace.

| 5-K pace (min/mi)    | 5:30 | 6:00 | 7:00 | 8:00 | 9:00 | 10:00 | 11:00 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| BBTGPR distance (mi) | 4.3  | 4.1  | 3.7  | 3.4  | 3.1  | 2.9   | 2.7   |

As you can see, the slowest runners can expect to run a 5-K or less; faster runners will run farther, up to a maximum of 4.3 miles. You also have the option of running as little as 1.9 miles, if you run slower than the times given in the table. We will attempt to record both distance and time for all BBTGPR runners, so you'll have something to enter into your log books.

## BBTGPR Concepts and Strategy

The Bring Back the Great Pumpkin Run is primarily intended as a Halloween 'fun race'. After three weeks of 'serious' NASA Intercenter competition, we should all be ready for a modicum of frivolity. The unrehearsed process of passing the Pumpkin from one runner to the next is sure to provide some comical surprises.

For those of you who take all your races seriously, the BBTGPR is also a 'legitimate' race concept, in the sense that it pays to run your best, and the best runners should win. However, it doesn't pay to run at a constant pace throughout the race, and there's less margin for error, so you might easily find yourself losing to a slower runner who employs superior strategy.

You have less margin for error, because the main effect of the moving turnaround point is to compress the gap between successive runners. BBTGPR runners who differ by 1 minute/mile in ability should finish around 15 seconds/mile apart in the BBTGPR, a 4:1 compression. This should produce more than the usual number of close contests.

Your optimum strategy for running the BBTGPR is impossible to calculate ahead of time, because it depends on the strategies that all the other runners choose to employ. In this sense, the BBTGPR has more pure 'race' elements than a normal race, where your optimum strategy is simple: Run to the finish line as fast as you can get there. In the BBTGPR, this is sound strategy only after you get rid of the Pumpkin. Before that time, you're confronted with a dilemma: Run too fast, and you're just shortening the course for all the runners behind you. Run too slow, and all the runners in front of you will get to pass off the Pumpkin and shift into high gear long before you do. If you can resolve this dilemma more propitiously than your competitors, you'll gain an advantage.

Of course, the BBTGPR also welcomes those of you who don't give a hoot about strategy and just want to go out and run. In fact, it gives you a rare opportunity to run alongside a faster runner, who would normally be long gone right after the start, but now is conserving his energy for his finishing kick (after he gets rid of the Pumpkin).