

## Joggling: for the people who think running is too easy

A combination of juggling and jogging, joggling has caught the attention of fans around the world.



Michal Kapral, the Canadian Guinness World Record-holder, is practicing before an upcoming race. Typically, jugglers use three balls during their runs, but sometimes they use five like in this photo. The saying "don't drop the ball" has taken on an entirely new meaning for those who practice joggling.

Photo courtesy of Michal Kapral.

Michal Kapral's joggling journey began when he was flipping through the 1987 Guinness World Record book and saw the record time for joggling. He was 15 at the time.

"I was captivated by it—I just thought it was such a funny thing," Kapral said. "So, I grabbed my juggling balls and went to the local park to try it out."

Now 52, he still remembers the "mesmerizing, awesome feeling" he felt when he first put the two activities together.

"There's nothing quite like the juggler's high," said Kapral. "It's like the runner's high on steroids."

Kapral holds the 2007 Guinness World Record for the fastest marathon time by juggling a 2:50:12 marathon. To add to the challenge, if the juggler drops a ball, they must pick it up and continue from where they dropped it, ultimately adding to their end time. In total, they must carry more than three balls to be considered "jugglers."

"When I first set the marathon juggling record back in 2005, it was just going to be a one-time thing," Kapral said. "But here I am almost 20 years later, still juggling."

Invented in the U.S. in 1975, juggling's popularity has ebbed and flowed. Kapral said the sport is currently seeing an upswing.

Google searches for the word 'juggling' have been on the rise. As of June 30, 2024, juggling hit its peak popularity in Google searches, according to [Google Trends](#).

"Now I probably get an email every week or a message on Instagram from someone who's taken it up," Kapral said. "Five years ago, [it was] maybe once a month."

To confirm this growth, Scottish juggler Scott Jenkins, 27, created a [website](#) that records the number of jugglers, their race times, where they are from, and who they have competed against.

Jenkins' journey has been quite different from Kapral's, but they agree on one thing: the main reason for juggling's slow growth is that most people get frustrated and give up too soon.

"No one can juggle after 10 minutes," Jenkins said. "That's the point of a skill. But as we become adults, we're less good at channeling that sort of resistance and determination necessary. That's a big barrier."

Even so, his website's statistics show that the number of jugglers is on the rise.

With more jugglers, the need for an international competition arose. In 1980, the International Juggling Association introduced its IJA World Juggling Championship to promote the growing sport. Since its start, the number of jugglers that compete has gone from 12 in 1980 to 29 in 2024, with its peak occurring in 2011 with 82 competitors.

Though there's a very slow growth rate, there are many factors that may have caused the minimal increase, said Sterling Franklin, 41, a juggler and the director of juggling for the IJA.

One factor, the pandemic, greatly reduced the number of participants. Having to switch to solely virtual, the IJA lost many competitors during this time.

"The pandemic year was the first year we did virtual and that had 16 jugglers," Franklin said. "It was a big decrease from the year before." Now, with a virtual and an in-person option, the competition is gaining back momentum.

Juggling has also grown from a strictly U.S.-oriented sport to a worldwide event. Franklin said that now more countries are participating in the events than ever before.

"We have three new jugglers from India who were super excited," he said. These new jugglers are a testament to the increase in the amount of jugglers worldwide. "We're getting better and there's more interest, so there's more people participating."

Kapral encourages everyone to give juggling a shot no matter where they live.

"The more people who take up juggling the better," he said. "I would love to see it become a mainstream sport that millions of people enjoy."