

Everything at your fingertips

WATCHES, HEART RATE MONITORS AND GPS SYSTEMS GIVE ATHLETES ALL THE INFORMATION THAT IS NEEDED AT THE PRESS OF A BUTTON, WRITES **PAUL FREARY**

Garmin 110

SOME of our testers were a little apprehensive about trying GPS watches, thinking they would be too complicated, but when they began to use this unit their fears were overcome within minutes. One tester said: "The watch is probably the simplest unit to use – no question!"

The watch guides you through the set-up and, with a few simple on-screen prompts, you are ready to go. Information displayed is time, pace and distance, with the option of audible signals at predetermined intervals.

At the end of a run, it will present you with a summary that can be easily downloaded to a PC or Mac and you can retrace the route on a Google Earth-embedded map. This is quite simply a great GPS watch that provides the essential information while remaining very straightforward to use.

» **Cost:** £169.99
(with heart-rate monitor): £199.99
www.garmin.com/uk



Polar RS800CX

THIS heart-rate monitor has always proved popular with testers whenever it has been featured and on this occasion we tried it as a standalone monitor. Its list of features is the most comprehensive available and our testers still feel it's the heart-rate monitor that all others need to match.

Given the vast amount of information the watch can provide, the only negative comment from our testers was that they didn't have enough time to fully utilise its options. The watch is supplied with a USB computer link and software, which, if we are being honest, many users might not ever fully utilise. It can measure up to 99 laps during a session and store these in its 99 training files, so the memory should prove adequate for several months' worth of training.

Heart-rate can be measured as beats per



minute, a percentage of maximum heart rate or as a simple percentage.

The watch will also provide both audible and visible warnings of heart-rate zones, which can be set manually or automatically via the watches built-in "Ownzone" software. Options are available to add a GPS or stride sensor to the watch to further monitor speed and distance, both of which can add even more data to the vast array of graphs the software displays.

Ultimately it's a watch for those that can fully understand the data and have the time to do so, but it's also the watch all of our users wanted to take home with them!

» **Cost:** £364.50
www.polarelectro.co.uk



Garmin 410

THOUGH similar to the Garmin 110, this watch has additional features such as pacing, interval training and training within target zones. Just as some heart rate monitors will alert the user when they stray out of a set training zone, the Garmin adds the ability to receive a warning on speed, pace or distance. The watch can also be used on a bike and an add-on cadence meter is available for those that cross-train. The web-based software is again

simple to use and provides in-depth data in an easy to understand format. Functionality is amazing and once our testers had figured out how to adjust the features, they loved it – it's just that many of them felt they wouldn't use all of them to justify the higher price.

» **Cost:** £299.99 (with heart-rate monitor) £329.99



Soleus Chicked

OUR female testers loved the styling and variety of colours available in this watch. "It's great to see a watch in a colour other than black!" they commented.

The sizing of both the strap and face of the watch made it suitable for all our testers, yet the slightly smaller display was still very easy to read.

There is a 30-lap memory, which proved more than adequate for all of the speedwork sessions we tried with the watch, and the five interval timers proved to be popular too.

» Cost: £49.99



Polar FT7

THIS popular heart-rate monitor has been given the make-over treatment and is now available in two colour options, both coming with the "comfort strap", a new soft chest belt which all testers found to be much more comfortable than the old-style plastic straps. This particular watch is not specifically aimed at runners and as such is suitable for all athletes.

Heart-rate functions take priority over lap and interval timers with this device. The watch uses a unique display to inform the user of the effect of their training, be it fat-burning or improving aerobic fitness. Users shouldn't be put off if all this sounds a little daunting as all our testers found it easy to set up and use, many being surprised at the results. Overall, it's a good watch for those wanting an all-round solution to heart rate monitoring. There is the option to add a computer link to the watch, which allows users to download and monitor their training and compare sessions and progress with other athletes.

» Cost: £93.50



Soleus Ultra Sole

MORE than half of our test group did not require or want heart-rate monitoring or GPS measurements, simply wanting a "watch with laps". This watch fits the bill perfectly with a 35-lap memory (larger memory versions are available), a five-interval timer and a 10-run data storage facility, which allows you to review some of your recent runs. Most of our runners liked the ease of use and good-sized display of this work-horse running watch.

» Cost: £64.99

www.soleusrunning.co.uk



» *Athletics Weekly* has teamed up with Soleus to give athletes the opportunity to try the new watches at a venue near you. See pages 16-17 for more details or visit www.soleusrunning.co.uk/perfectpace

Suunto T6D

THIS is the only watch on the market to measure "Excess Post-Exercise Oxygen Consumption" or EPOC. Essentially, it is a scientific indication of the accumulated training load of each session. By measuring this you can determine whether the session you have just completed was sufficient to improve your level of fitness. It's a rather in-depth function, but ultimately, if you take the time to understand it via the supplied computer interface, you'll find it amazing, just as our testers did. The watch is one for the more serious user and provides an amazing amount of in-depth data.

» Cost: £370, (stride sensor £75)



Suunto T3D

THIS heart-rate monitor has a memory large enough to store around six months of workouts and up to 50 laps in one session.

Its unique function is its inbuilt "training effect monitor". This gives the wearer an instant display of the zone in which they are training and its effectiveness. The watch still demands that you have an understanding of the principles of heart rate training and for those users that do, it's a great tool and is more advanced than a simple heart-rate display. The watch has the ability to accept data from other add-on units such as a GPS, stride sensor or bike unit.

» Cost: £125 (stride sensor £75)

www.suunto.com



Timex Ironman Sleek 150 Lap

THIS watch has a unique tap screen, which testers found to be very useful particularly during track sessions. The user simply taps the screen to record intervals, which everyone found easier than searching for the correct button.

The watch has a massive 150-lap memory – so enough for a few workouts! The tap function works well but ultimately adds a premium to what would otherwise be a more reasonably priced watch. No doubt in time this function will be available on less expensive watches and when this happens it will be very hard to beat.

» **Cost:** £84.99
www.timex.co.uk



Timex Global Trainer

THERE was no denying that this watch provided an amazing amount of information about laps, distance, pace and heart rate, but our testers found it a little more difficult to set up and live with than the Garmin.

The screen can be customised to display up to four pieces of data about a session, so which you may want to change depending on what type of session you are doing and whether, for instance, you need to see the heart rate. Linking the watch to a computer is simple via the supplied cable and the web-based software is, like most, able to provide more information than many users will never utilise.

The unit is waterproof to 50 metres and as such has been popular with triathletes. An amazing training tool, its only downside is the size – it is the largest watch we tried and it dwarfed the wrists of every one of our testers.

» **Cost:** £299.99 (with heart-rate monitor): £349.99



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