2026 Spark Challenge Rulebook



The Eye of Horus

The Eye of Horus is often seen as a powerful protective symbol. Amulets featuring the eye were commonly worn to safeguard against illness and misfortune. The symbol later came to be associated with protection, healing, and restoration. The Spark Challenge uses this symbol to inspire us on our shared journey toward greater health, wellness and, of course, balance.

The Spark Challenge tests the mind, body, and community.

- *Dr. Bill Thomas*

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Introduction

In ancient times, the Norwegian people worshiped Ullr as the god of skiing *and* hunting. During the 19th Century, this reverence took the form of military exercise that combined skiing and shooting. In 1960, the skiing/shooting biathlon became an official part of the Winter Olympics.[1] The Olympic biathlon is particularly challenging because it combines high-intensity cross-country skiing with precise rifle shooting, requiring athletes to manage their physical exertion while maintaining mental control to shoot accurately. The transition from skiing at high speeds to calming their heart rate for shooting adds to the sport's complexity and demands endurance and focus. If the racers ski too fast, they will be so winded they cannot aim accurately. If they take too long on the shooting range, they will fall behind on the racetrack.

In the Biathlon, as in life, balance matters.

The Spark Challenge resembles the Olympic Biathlon (But without guns or skis!). It combines tests of posture and balance with a quiz composed of questions drawn from the newly published Better Balance Book. It takes a team to win, and every team needs the support of its community. As is the case with other Spark Performances, every team needs participants who can fill a range of roles and responsibilities.
Every team can make use of Athletes, Quiz Whizzes, Statisticians, Scouts, Coaches, Captains, Cheer Squad members, fans and supporters.
May the best team win.

[1] Bø, Olav: *Skiing throughout history*, translated by W. Edson Richmond. Oslo: Samlaget, 1993.

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The Spark Challenge Competition

- Each match lasts for 40 minutes (1:10 to 1:50)
- The competition requires teams to balance two distinct skill sets:
    - *Super Nova* measures the balance and agility of a group of *Athletes* working together.
    - *Quiz Questions* examine the knowledge and insights of a group of *Quiz Whizzes*.
- Each Match makes a total of six levels available to competitors. Each Level:
    - Begins with a Super Nova competition
    - Levels one through five ends with a set of five Quiz Questions
    - Level six is a “Bonus Level.”
- Super Nova
    - Definitions:
        - A Super Nova is a powerful and luminous explosion of a star.
        - A test of balance and agility that forms one part of the Spark Challenge.
    - Premise– Athletes use wearable technology to add energy to stars floating across the Opticon screen. When a star absorbs enough energy, it explodes into a Super Nova.
    - Competitors:
        - Super Nova Athletes:
            - Up to four Athletes can compete at the same time.
            - The Athletes are Olders only– sorry Youngers!
        - Super Nova Athletes work to enhance:
            - Balance and core strength
            - Teamwork as they co-ordinate their efforts to transform the stars on the screen into Super Novas.
        - **Do not assist competitors by moving them into position to burst the stars.**
    - Gear
        - Super Nova’s wearable game controllers are called Amulets. Amulets:
            - Do not require the use of hands.
            - Can be used while sitting or standing.
        - Opticons– All models of Opticons can be used to run the Super Nova competition.
    - Tape on the floor

    - Scoring– Teams receive points for each Star they transform into a Super Nova.
    - Spark Challenge Duration: 40 Minutes
        - Faster transformation of Stars into Super Novas leaves more time for answering Quiz Questions and Level 6
        - Slower transformation of Stars into Super Novas leaves less time for answering Quiz Questions and Level 6
        - When all the Stars on the screen have fully charged and gone Super Nova, That Level's Quiz Question appears on the screen.
- Quiz Questions
    - Competitors
        - A competitor who helps handle the Quiz Questions portion of the Level is known as a Whiz.
        - Each team can recruit and prepare as many Quiz Whizzes as they wish.
        - Whizzes can be Youngers or Olders.
    - Gear
        - Opticon
            - One Quiz Question appears on the Opticon screen at a time.
            - Quiz Questions can be answered using the Opticon's keyboard
        - The Beyond Better Balance Book is the text used to formulate Quiz Questions. The Beyond Better Balance Book is available as a:
            - Printed book
            - PDF file that can be printed and distributed in the Community
            - eBook that can be used on any eBook Reader
    - Scoring– teams receive points for each Quiz Question they answer correctly during each Level.
        - Whizzes work together to arrive at their answer
        - The Quiz is an "open book" competition
        - Answered questions are final they cannot be skipped or returned to.
        - Duration
            - The faster the Quiz Whizzes go the more time the Sparkers will have during the next Level.
            - The slower the Quiz Whizzes go the less time Sparkers will have during the next round
            - When all five questions have been answered, the Super Nova screen for the next Level appears on the Opticon.

- Level Six
    - Bonus round of Super Nova
        - Stars burst during level six are worth 0.25pts
        - All stars in level 6 are unique
        - Partially charged stars do not count toward the total score.
        - Level six has “unlimited” stars that will regenerate until the game’s 40min timer ends

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Super Nova

Super Nova is an Opticon-based physical challenge that measures the combined balance and coordination of up to four team members as they transform the stars floating across the screen into Super Novas.

- During each Level up to four Athletes are equipped with Amulets that control on screen cursors that we call “Sparks.”
- Athletes may sit however if you can stand must stand beyond the rubber floor mats positioned eight feet from the Opticon– not on them. Identical Athlete-Opticon distances by all teams help ensure fair competition.
- How it works:
  - Each Athlete is equipped with a wearable “Amulet” and uses it to control an on-screen “Spark.”
    - Each team is equipped with four Amulets.
    - Each athlete uses body motions only (no hands) to control their own on-screen Spark. This is a balance-based video game that is controlled by the Sparkers’ body motions.
    - Each Spark is a different color and shape.
    - Athletes can switch out at any time during the competition
    - No Assistance in moving competitors to the stars to burst them.
  - When an Athlete uses an Amulet to position a Spark over a floating Star, the Spark adds energy to that Star and we:
    - See the color brighten.
    - Hear a distinctive tone from the Opticon.
  - When a Star is Sparked we:
    - See the Star go “Super Nova.”
    - Hear a sound.
    - See a shower of sparks that fades and disappears
  - The Super Nova portion of a Level is complete when all the Stars on the screen have been made into Super Novas

Quiz Questions

- ***Quiz Questions*** *offer competitors a mental challenge consisting* of multiple-choice questions from material from the cleverly titled, “Beyond Better Balance Book” presented as a seven-week series of 30-minute lectures presented on the Opticon network. The Beyond Better Balance slides are delivered in a digital format that enables easy printing by Spark Challenge Teams.

So, a team that:

- Is great at Super Nova but struggles at answering Quiz Questions correctly– is unlikely to win.
- Is full of Quiz Whizzes but struggles with the Super Nova is likely to lose.
- Balances its Super Nova challenges with its and the Quiz expertise is likely to WIN!

The 2026 Spark Challenge is all about Balance!

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Competition Format

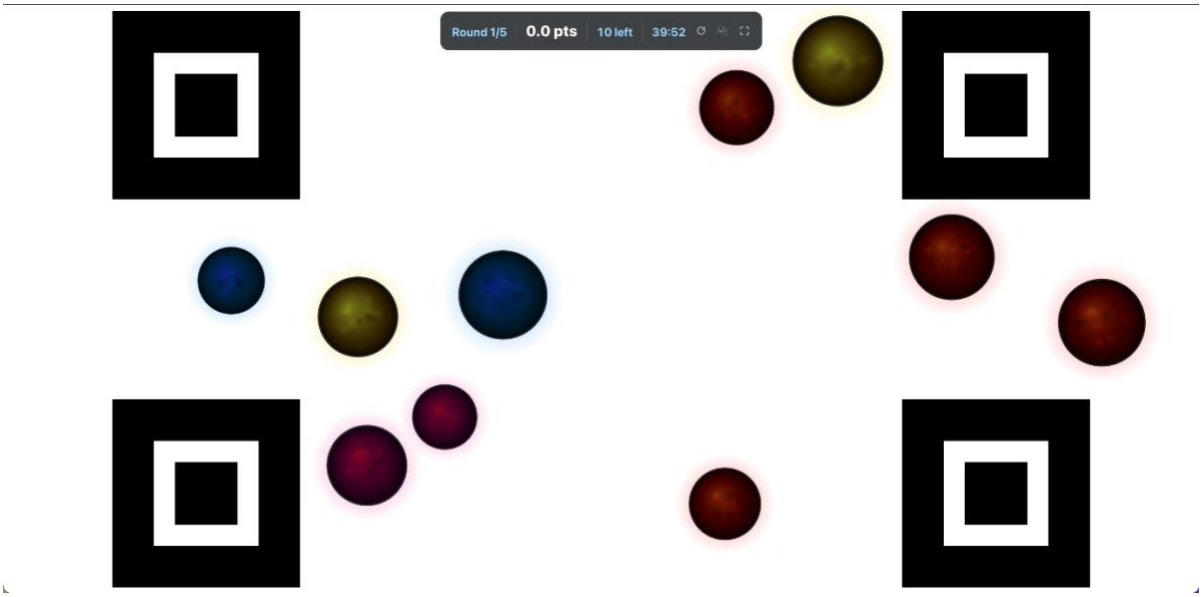
In past years, teams competing in the Spark Challenge had to complete the entire physical test before moving on to the Quiz portion of the competition. This year things will be more– challenging.

The new Spark Challenge Super Nova game assesses the ability of up to four athletes to maintain posture and core strength while they wear specially designed amulets that each control a cursor (called a “Spark”) on the Opticon screen. The amulet allows them to use their posture and core strength, rather than their hands, to control their Spark on the Opticon screen.

A Spark Challenge competition will run on the following timeline:

- 1:00- 1:10– Welcome and team introductions – **Mute microphones before beginning.**
- 1:10- 1:50– The Spark Challenge
- 1:50 to 2:00– Good wishes and goodbyes

The Spark Challenge itself consists of Five Levels plus a possible Bonus Round. Each Level includes a Super Nova game and five Quiz Questions. If a team completes all 5 rounds in under 40 minutes, there is a bonus Super Nova round.



Note the Stars on the screen.

- At the start of each Super Nova challenge the screen contains ten floating Stars.
- When an athlete uses their amulet to position the cursor inside of a star, the star absorbs its energy.
- The longer a cursor remains positioned inside a star, the stronger the star becomes until it goes Super Nova and disappears.
- As is usual in Spark Performances, it takes a team effort to excel. So…
    - When two cursors are inside a star at the same time the rate of star strengthening is accelerated.
    - When three cursors are inside a star at the same time the rate of star strengthening is further accelerated.
    - When four cursors are inside a star at the same time the rate of star strengthening is really fast!
    - Teamwork makes the dream work.
    - There is no bonus points for stars charged together

Each time a team clears a screen of stars, the Opticon will then present that team with a series of five quiz questions. After the team answers those questions, the screen returns to the Super Nova game. After the 5th level of quiz questions, if there is time remaining there is a bonus Super Nova round (with no additional quiz questions).

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Competition Timeline

A Spark Challenge competition will run on the following timeline:

- 1:00- 1:10– Welcome and team introductions
- 1:10- 1:50– The Spark Challenge (Hard start time of 1:15)
- 1:50 to 2:00– Good wishes and goodbyes

The Spark Challenge itself consists of Five Levels and a possible Bonus Round. Each Level includes a Super Nova game and five Quiz Questions.

Timing

- Timing in this challenge is more important than ever.
- Before you start there is calibration that needs to be done with your amulets. Join your competition link early to get this step completed!
- Teams will decide which team will start the timer for the match.
- If opponent is not there by 1:15pm the team that is there will start the competition clock and when the other team joins the remaining time is all that they will have to compete.
- Teams can communicate with each other prior to the match if there needs to be an adjustment in when they compete.
- Both teams must be present and you are not able to compete separately this competition.

Levels– The first five Levels include a Super Nova game and a set of Quiz Questions.

- Super Nova game
    - Each Level's Super Nova game lasts as long as it takes a team to clear the stars on the Opticon screen. The athletes use body-mounted Amulets to pop the stars floating on the screen.
    - There are ten stars per Level
    - When the stars are cleared, the Level's Quiz Questions appear on the Opticon screen.
- Quiz Questions
    - Each Level consists of a set of five multiple choice Questions
    - Level ones Questions are the easiest to answer
    - When the Questions have been answered (correctly or incorrectly) the next Level's Super Nova game appears on the screen.
- The sixth Level is a Bonus round with Super Novas only– no more Quiz Questions.

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Scoring

Scoring is explained below but the most important thing to know is that the Opticon records all the scores and does all the math!

- No pics needed
- No calculator needed

Each Match is scored as follows:

Level	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Bonus
Test						
Stars	10	10	10	10	10	Unlimited
Points/Super Novae	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	0.25
Quiz						
Questions	5	5	5	5	5	25
Points/Correct Answer	1	2	3	4	5	75

- Super Nova game
    - Each Level begins with ten Stars on the screen
    - The points scored per Stars have gone Super Nova rises with each Level
- Quiz Questions
    - Each Level includes five Quiz Questions
    - The points scored per correct answer given rises with each Level

Scoring Examples

A perfect Spark Challenge score of 150 (no bonus round) would look like this:

Levels	**One**	**Two**	**Three**	**Four**	**Five**	**Total**
Game	**5**	**10**	**15**	**20**	**25**	**75**
Quiz	**5**	**10**	**15**	**20**	**25**	**75**
Total	**10**	**20**	**30**	**40**	**50**	**150**

The team earns:

- 75 points for clearing all 50 Stars during the Super Nova game.
- 75 points for answering all 25 total questions correctly

What if a team is unable to complete all five levels in 40 minutes?

Levels	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Total
Game	**5**	**10**	**15**	**8**	**0**	**38**
Quiz	**5**	**10**	**12**	**0**	**0**	**27**
Total	**10**	**20**	**27**	**8**	**0**	**65**

- Level One
    - Test yielded 10 stars have gone Super Nova at 0.5 point per star
    - Quiz yielded 5 Questions answered correctly at 1 point per correct answer
    - Level One Score= 10
- Level Two
    - Test yielded 10 stars have gone Super Nova at 1 point per star
    - Popping all 10 stars opened the Level Two Quiz Questions
    - Quiz yielded 5 Questions answered correctly at 2 points per correct answer
    - Level Two Score= 20
- Level Three
    - Test yielded 10 stars have gone Super Nova at 1.5 points per star
    - Popping all 10 stars opened the Level Three Quiz Questions
    - The team answered 4 of the Level Three Questions correctly at 3 points per correct answer yielding 12 points
    - Level Three Score= 15+12=27
- Level Four
    - The Test yielded 4 stars have gone Super Nova (at 2 points per star) when the 40-minute competition period expired.
    - The team did not burst all 10 stars, so the Level Four Quiz Questions were not opened.
    - The Quiz score was zero.
    - Level Four Score= 8+0= 8
- Level Five was not opened because time expired.
    - Level Five Score= 0

In this example the team’s final score would be: 65 points

- **Bonus Round**
  - The 6th round is known as the bonus round where teams can gain .25 points per super nova created.
  - These points will be added to the final score as every team can make it to the bonus round.
  - This round is continuous until the 40-minute timer expires.
  - There are no quiz questions for this round.

Sample Match

A Week 3 match between the Lions and Tigers might go like this:

	The Lions					
Match						
Super Novas	10	10	10	10	3	
Correct Answers	5	5	5	4	0	Total
Test Score	5	10	15	20	7.5	57.5
Quiz Score	5	10	15	16	0	46
Total Score	10	20	30	36	7.5	103.5

	The Tigers					
Match						
Super Novas	10	10	10	10	10	
Correct Answers	4	3	2	1	2	Total
Test Score	5	10	15	20	25	75
Quiz Score	4	6	6	4	10	30
Total Score	9	16	21	24	35	105

- The Lions did well on the Quiz but lagged on the Super Nova game. As a result they did not reach the Fifth Level's Quiz Questions.
- The Tigers struggled a bit on the Quiz but did reach the Fifth Level Question set and those answers put them over the top.
- Lions 103.5 Tigers 105

Ties and Tie-Breaking

Ties are settled using Level 6. In the event that both teams get 150 points and the same points in level 6

The team that spends the least amount of time in the 5 Super Nova rounds (quickest team to complete Super Nova)

- Earns the win
- Does not earn any additional points.

Strategy

Strategy is essential to success in the 2026 Spark Challenge.

- The Super Nova game and Quiz Questions carry equal weight in scoring in the 5 levels - in the Bonus Round stars are worth 0.25pts each.
- If a team struggles with the Super Nova game, precious time will be lost, and they will have less time to consider Quiz Questions.
- If a team races through the Super Nova game, but has not done its homework, it will score poorly on the Quiz.
- A balanced approach is the most likely to lead to success.