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ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS

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ISSUE 25





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Welcome to the 25th Edition of Ultrarunning World magazine. This issue features more interviews than usual as we moved focus slightly and have taken the opportunity to highlight interesting athletes that have made the headlines in their own way recently.

We start off with Bristol based coach Joe Wenman offering some effective workouts to help build strength and endurance. We have an entertaining article by mountain bike racer and reigning 24 hour Singlespeed World Champion Andy Howett musing on individual/social conditioning.

Triathlete Lorna Cullen took on the Lakelands 55k and Jason Dickson went to the Brecon Beacons for the 50k Blade Runner experience. Adam Rykala survived Storm Dennis to tell the tale of his journey from Brecon to Cardiff.

Robert Bramall shares some reflections on the Cotswold Way Century and a bit farther Southwest, Rich Foster went to Somerset for Albion Running's Ham & Lyme 100k.

Farther afield Nicole Schwarz brings images from her Trans Bavaria adventure and Leila interviews Poland's 5000k finisher, Paweł Zuk. Our Graphic Designer, Marcella Dragan procures a Q&A with Romanian 1000 mile record holder Mara Guler-Cionca and we had the opportunity to have a conversation with Nicola Love, currently ensconced on a treadmill in her garden in a virtual crossing of Australia - only 40 days to go...

Emily's book review is Run to Save Your Life, a collection of stories and poems edited by Amy Mower. Naomi Moss and Tom Crofts reviewed the new INOV-8Terraultra G270's and were fairly impressed. We round off this month's issue by paying tribute to Eleanor Adams Robinson as a new member of the Ultrarunning World Hall of Fame.

16-8-2020 Breaking News - Dan Lawson reached John 'O' Groats in 9 Days 21 hours 14 minutes 2 seconds surpassing Richard Brown's time set in 1988 of 10 days 2 hours.

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- Beth Pascall at Moot Hall Keswick after setting a new Bob Graham Round record.
Photo by Sam Benard

• Back cover

- Damian Hall during his successful record attempt on the Pennine Way. Photo by Nikki Lygo

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Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the above email address. Last dates for article submissions:
September 5th , October 2nd.

Adverts received will go in the next available issue. Please include a 40-50 word bio with articles/race reports, some accompanying photos (if you have any) and a headshot for the contributors page.

More details on request. Thank you.

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A poster for the 3 Días Trail Ibiza 2020. The background shows a female trail runner in red gear running on a rocky trail with a city skyline in the distance. Another runner is visible in the foreground. The text "3 DIAS TRAIL IBIZA" and "ULTRA IBIZA" is prominently displayed. Below it, the dates "27, 28, 29 NOVIEMBRE 2020" are shown. Logos for ITRA (International Trail Running Association) and various sponsors like Ibiza, Port de Balears, and Ports IB are included. At the bottom, a banner lists the race distances: "VIERNES NOCTURNA 10 KM. | SÁBADO MEDIA MARATÓN | MARATÓN | ULTRA | DOMINGO DIURNA 10 KM." Logos for local government bodies like Consell d'Eivissa, Ajuntament d'Eivissa, Ajuntament de Sant Antoni de Portmany, Ajuntament de Sant Josep de sa Talaia, and Ajuntament de Port de Balears are at the very bottom.



IAU 6H Virtual Global Solidarity Run

29th - 30th August 2020

#IAUVirtualRun #IAU2020Run #IAUSolidarityRun #IAUVSR

'The Presidents Club team signals to the global ultrarunning family that we are all in this together. It also serves as a motivation to all our athletes to see their Federation leadership participating with them in this endeavor' - Nadeem Khan, IAU President

*

This year has seen a substantial increase in the number of Fastest Known Times being recorded on the website and being talked about in the media. CNN produced a fairly long article on **Coree Woltering** who set a new Ice Age Trail record on June 22. **Coree** started running June 1 at the western terminus of the Ice Age Trail in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin to Potawatomi State Park, setting a new men's supported fastest known time (FKT) of 21:13:35:00 on the 1,147-mile route.

Since then there has been a number of high profile FKT's especially on the UK ultrarunning scene.

In California 47 year old **Helen Pelster** set the Fastest Known Time for women on the Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT). She began June 30th and ran 171 miles, solo, unsupported, on the TRT in 76:32 breaking the record by over 25 hours.

Less than a week after **Helen's** record was set, **Candice Burt**, the RD of Destination Trails, broke that record by a 15 hours finishing in 60:47:34 on July 6th. Also at that time **Kyle Curtin** who holds the Tahoe 200 record set a new unsupported record of 41:09 on July 4th breaking **Kilian Jornet's** 2009 FKT.

July 3rd saw Scotland lift the five mile limit for leisure travel and ultra runner **James Stewart** set off on the **John Muir Way** from Helensburgh, Argyll Bute in the west to Dunbar, East Lothian in the east establishing a new FKT covering the 134 miles in 21:53:22.

July 11th **Kim Collinson** broke a 23-year-old record set by **Mark Hartrell** in 1997 for running up and down the most Lake District peaks in 24 hours, covering 78 fells in the time frame.

John Kelly set off from Edale at 10am on Monday 13th July and set a new FKT on the Pennine Way completing the 268 miles in 2:16:46 minutes beating **Mike Hartley's** time by 34 minutes.

[John's race report A New Pennine Way Record](#)

A week later **Damian Hall** improved **John Kelly's** recently-set the Pennine Way FKT by more than three hours, starting in Kirk Yetholm on the 22nd of July in 2:13:34:00 for the 268-mile route.

[Inov-8 have a Q&A with Damian](#)

This issue's cover features **Beth Pascall**, a Paediatrician who lives in the Peak District and has proved herself to have tremendous capacity. Labelled Britain's top ultra-trail runner by Trail Running magazine, Beth has placed 4th and 5th at UTMB and 4th at Western States in 2019.

Starting on July 24th **Beth** set out to break Jasmin Paris' 2016 Bob Graham Round record of 15:24 from Moot Hall in Keswick. The 65-mile challenge (106km) features 42 fells and ascends about 27,000ft (8,200m) and **Beth** cut 50 minutes off the record to arrive back at Moot Hall in 14:34:26, the fifth-fastest time ever.

Carlo Molinaro sets a new LEJOG record, TBC. The GB 100k runner and Comrades top 10 finisher left Cornwall on July 16 reaching John O'Groats on the 28th having taken 12:00:30:14 breaking **Sharon Gayter's** previous mark set in 2019 of 12:11:06:07.

live.opentracking.co.uk/carlalejog20/#/lejog#jogle

LEJOG

On the 6th of August ReRun founder **Dan Lawson** set off on his quest to run from Land's End to John O'Groats a total of 835 miles in under 10 days. This is not the first time he has attempted this, having failed two years ago, starting in John O'Groats and reaching 620 miles before stopping.

At the heart of ReRun is a commitment to reduce waste. As a community, by buying pre-loved sportswear we are having maximum impact in this area of sustainability as the most sustainable piece of clothing is the one that already exists and **Dan** is encouraging people to SHOP STOP. This is where you only spend on absolutely essential items.

Since dropping his sponsorship he has bought nothing new for the last 2+ years. He is passionate about raising awareness around over consumption and the negative effect this has on our planet and our own health.

Dan is currently slightly ahead of schedule on Day 6 and is in

Scotland. Live tracking. [ReRun](#).

Wales Coast Path Record Attempt

Rhys Jenkins has just successfully completed his attempt to set a new FKT on the Wales Coast Path, a designated footpath which follows the coastline of Wales after setting out on July 21st. Launched in 2012, the path is 870 miles long and was claimed to be the first dedicated footpath in the world to cover the entire length of a country's coastline. The path is 870 miles (1,400 km) in length and follows the coast from the mouth of the River Dee to Chepstow in the Bristol Channel. The previous record was held by James Harcombe from New Zealand, who set a time of 20 days 12 hours and 55 minutes on 2nd May 2017. Rhys brought the record back home to Wales finishing in 20:10:38:00 on Monday August 10th while raising money for three charities close to his heart; The CF Warriors, NSPCC and Maggie's Cardiff. **Rhys** is a Welsh ultra-endurance athlete who, over the last 10 years has not just grown a fabulous beard, but has also raised a staggering £100,000 for various charities. In 2019, **Rhys** became Wales' first-ever competitor in the notorious Badwater® 135 ultramarathon, largely considered to be the hardest footrace in the world. Husband and wife team **Cerys** and **Rhys** organise [Pegasus Ultra Running](#).

July 20th **Sabrina Verjee** attempted to set a new record for ascending "All of the Wainwrights". There are 214 mountain peaks in the Lake District in the UK that Alfred Wainwright wrote about in his 7 volume book. Sabrina's route covered some 318 miles and over 4 times the ascent of Mt Everest. Last year **Paul Tierney** took the record from **Steve Birkenshaw**. **Sabrina** completed it but said it wasn't a record as she had sustained an injury and had to accept help descending one of the later peaks.

[Listen to Sabrina's interview with Kev Robinson](#).

Sasha Chepelin has broken the 24 Hour Munro Record. 32 Munros in 23:10. His route was an extension of **Jim Mann's** 2017 round in the Cairngorms in the eastern Highlands of Scotland. On August 5th, **Andrew Skurka** set a new unsupported Fastest Known Time (FKT) for the Pfiffner Traverse in Colorado. Running on just four hours of sleep, **Skurka** covered 76 miles and 28,000 feet of elevation gain in 38 hours and 50 minutes. His time bests the previous record, held by **Suzanne "Sunny" Stroeer**, which was 54 hours and 41 minutes. Check out [Andy's blog](#)

American ultrarunner **Harvey Lewis** has lowered the fastest



time from the lowest to highest place in the contiguous United States, Badwater to the Whitney Portal. Starting on August 9th, **Harvey** took 22 minutes off Marshal Ulrich's record covering the 146 miles in 33 hours and 32 minutes.

Claire Smith (photo below) will be setting off on her self-supported JOGLE on August the 16th, some 870 miles or so. **Claire** will be raising funds for the [Forest Holme Hospice](#) and attempting to break the current record for a self-supported JOGLE (17 days, 22 hours and 56 minutes), **Claire** will need to cover more than 50 miles a day.

You can follow **Claire's** progress via a live link to her tracker here: www.brutalclaire.co.uk

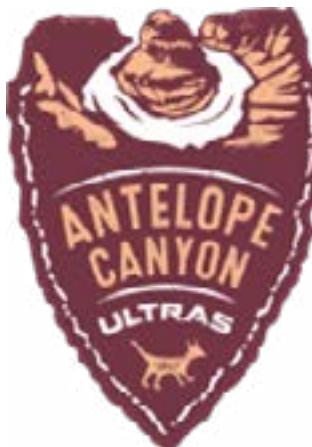
We've covered a few of the latest FKT's and for more news and what's happening where, checkout the website run by **Peter Bakwin**, **Buzz Burrell** and **Jeff Schuler**, the best resource for [Fastest Known Times](#).



Photo courtesy Claire Smith

Skye-born ultrarunner **Donnie Campbell** (photo left) is just over two weeks into his human powered attempt to climb Scotland's 282 munros in 33 days. **Donnie** started on August 1st climbing **Ben More** on the Isle of Mull before kayaking to Glenfinnan passing through the Cairngorms and is currently in the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. After the most southern Munro, Ben Lomond, he turns round heading north up the west coast hoping to finish on Ben Hope in Sutherland by early September. By the end of day 14 he had climbed 124. One of Scotland's most respected ultrarunners, **Donnie** became only the seventh person to complete the Winter Ramsay Round –a 56 mile route of 8,500m ascent and 23 Munro peaks in just 23:06 for a new record in December 2016. Since last summer he's been planning to lower the record set by Staffordshire runner **Stephen Pyke** in 2010 of 39 days and 9 hours. The self-propelled #MunroRound (run, cycle, kayak) is supported by a crew following in a motorhome with his wife Rachel, fellow runners and cyclists.

The challenge is raising money for the [British Red Cross](#) and there is live tracking by [Open Tracking](#).



14.03.2020 Antelope Canyon 100/50 Mile/55km (USA)
Antelope Canyon starts at the Page Shores Amphitheater in Page, Arizona near the shores of the Colorado River. The event takes place in a sacred region for the Navajo people. First held in 2015 this year's winner, Joshua Lund (USA), crushed the course record by nearly 5 hours finishing in 15:21:53. First woman was Alexa Hasman (USA) in 24:34:36. 36 finishers in the 100. Full results on [Runsignup](#)

14.03.2020 Om Die Dam 50km (RSA)

Billed as "the largest inland ultra-marathon in South Africa", the Om Die Dam offers a 50km and a half-marathon, it has a reputation for its scenic route with a high standard of organization. The date of the event is handy for the build-up to Comrades and the Two Oceans Marathons. First to cross the line was Juan van Deventer (RSA) in 2:52:55 and Caroline Josten (RSA) was first woman in 3:33:38 2728 finishers. [Full results](#).

1.05.2020 Koolara 6 Day Race (CHN)

A new multiday in China, the Koolara 6 Day Race began on May day in Nanjing City. A road race on a 1609m loop course, the event also featured 7 other events with 24 hour races and shorter held everyday. The 6 day event was won by Lu-Cong Geng (CHN) with 637.164 km. 7 finishers. [Full results](#). [Race website](#).

23.05.2020 Tärnsjö 24/12 hour Invitational (SWE)

The Tärnsjö 24/12 hour Invitational was a 348m cinder track race that took place at Furuvallen in Tärnsjö. The race was won by Elov Olsson with 263.746km, the second best Swedish 24 hour performance. Gunilla Axelsson was the first woman with 173.547km. [Full results on the DUV](#). Race report on [www.ultradistans.se](#)

13.06.2020 A Bridge Too Far Ultra 60km (GBR)

One of the first events to test the waters after several months of lockdown in the UK was A Bridge Too Far Ultra organised by Ryk Downes, creator of Punk Panther Races. The event follows the Six Dales Trail, a 38 mile footpath in North Yorkshire, from Otley to Pateley Bridge and back to Pool-in-Wharfedale. First held in 2017 the race was won by Keith Wigley in 5:20:00 and first woman was Jenny Jakeman in 7:57:00. 30 starters. [Full results](#).

14.06.2020 7th MilKil - 1000 km de France (FRA)

The 7th MilKil, the great adventure across France non-stop from Saint-Malo, a port city in Brittany in northwest France and fin-



ishing on the Mediterranean coast in Sète, a major port city in the southeast French region of Occitanie. The course follows the route of the late Transe Gaul for nearly 600 km between La Loire and the exit of Rodez, with a few differences and runners had 336 hours to reach the finish line on the beach in Sète. Event Director Jean Benoît Jaouen had refused to contemplate the event not taking place and kudos are in order for his tireless efforts in keeping the flag flying in very difficult times. First to reach Sète was Stephane Mathieu (FRA) in 7:09:31:10 followed closely by Annie Paringaux (FRA) in 7:17:21:45. 19 starters. [Full results](#). [Website](#).

18.6.2020 The Last Annual Heart of the South Road Race 326 miles (USA)

Conceived as an alternative for those unable to be part of the Last Annual Vol-State Race, HOTS, as it's affectionately known began in Arkansas, crossed the Mississippi River and finished at Castle Rock, where LAVS finishes in Georgia, high atop Sand Mountain, the 340 mile course travels across rural Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama. The race was won by Beverley Anderson-Abbs in 4:23:37:30 just ahead of husband Alan Abbs 4:23:37:45. 66 starters, 49 finishers. [Full Results](#).

27.06.2020 Klosterfelder Open 24/12 hour (GER)

Held on a 2.6 km road loop in Klosterfelde, this small event saw Anke Schülke win the 24 hour with 201.480km. First man was Patrick Roß with 129.759km. 9 finishers. [Results on the DUV](#).

3.07.2020 Merrill's Mile 48 Hour Run (USA)

Also featuring 24/12/6 hour options, Merrill's Mile, first held in 2014, takes place at Camp Frank D. Merrill, Dahlonega, GA on a 12' wide 1 mile paved loop. This year's winners in the 48 hour event were Chris Head who covered 247.003 km and Liz Bauer who finished second overall with 240.629 km. 29 runners. In the 24 hour first man was Jacob Moss with 203.977 km and first woman was Lauren Cortjens with 160.950 km. 17 finishers. Full results on [UltraSignup](#).

3.07.2020 Olympus Mythical Trail 100K (GRE)

The 9th edition of the Olympus Mythical Trail 100K (OMT) is a 100K endurance ultra-trail footrace which passes through Mount Olympus, the "abode" of the ancient Greek Gods. Starting at Litochoro, OMT is a challenging event for experienced trail runners. The ITRA-certified loop course is 95% on technical



paths, with a total of 6840m ascent. The course circumnavigates almost the whole Olympus massif in a 106 km loop with 6,840m of gain and a 30 hour time limit finishing back at Litochoro. This year's winner was Robert Hajnal (ROU) finishing in 13:34:51. First woman was Niki Zioga (GRE) in 19:44:56. 120 finishers. [Full results.](#)

4.07.2020 The High Life Ultra 130/105/80/50km (GBR)

High Life Ultra also organised by Punk Panther Races started at the Otley Methodist Church and finished at the Pool-in-Wharfedale Methodist Church on Main Street taking in the highest points surrounding Otley including Baildon Moor, Skipton Moor, Askwith Moor, Lindley Moor, The Chevin, Rombalds Moor and others.

First held in 2017 the event saw 10 finishers. The event has grown since and this year perhaps due to the paucity of opportunities, the event across all distances, 31/50/65/80 miles, saw 60 finishers. Distance winners were:

James Ashworth 17:09 130 km

John Harpham 16:11 105 km

Jonathan Young 8:36 80 km

Caroline Turner 9:06 80 km

Michael Harris 5:05 50 km

Claire Howard 7:14 50 km. [Full results](#)

04.07.2020 24/12 hour Stundsen Lauf Bad Blumau - Open Race (AUT)

Also featuring the Austrian and Styrian 24 hour championships, the Bad Blumau 24 hour is a flat AIMS surveyed 1181m loop, 70% asphalt/30% gravel. The race winners were Petr Valek (CZE) with 241.990 km and women's winner was Mara Alexandra Guler-Cionca (ROU) with 222.790km. The Austrian Champions were Wolfgang Michl with 225.740 km and Karin Augustin who finished with 218.810 km. 87 finishers. [Full results.](#)

10.07.2020 24/12/6 Hour Summer Stampede 24 Hour Ultra Race (USA)

Changed from its originally scheduled venue due to the Covid situation, the event took place at Allendale Christian School, Allendale, MI on a paved, 400-meter track. Race winners were Abraham Kane with 168.981km and Callie Lauren with 82.076 km. 12 finishers. [Results on UltraSignup.](#)

24.07.2020 Brisbane Valley Rail Trail 200/100m (AUS)

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) starts at the Yarraman Her-

itage Centre, Yarraman, the 100 mile event travels the entire BVRT to Brassall and finishes at the Ipswich Grammar School Playing Fields (IGS). It picks up the start of the 50 mile at Toogoolawah and then the marathon at Coominya. The 200 mile event starts at the IGS a day earlier and heads out to Yarraman. Upon reaching the Heritage Centre they turn and head back with the 100 mile participants. Three finishers with winners being Ryan Crawford in 48:08:26 and Susannah Harvey-Jamieson in 56:43:24. Neil MacNeil was second man in 52:17:21. In the 100 miler, first home was Nick Bamford in 16:47:55 and first woman was Kathleen Judge in 19:04:23. 32 finishers. [Full results.](#)

25.07.2020 Australian 24 Hour Track Invitational (AUS)

The Australian 24 Hour Track Invitational is an invitation or qualification only elite level event for record setting and as a qualifier for the Australian 24 Hour team. Located at the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra the race had 7 participants and was won by Joe Ward (AUS) with 239.529 km and first woman was Joasia Zakrzewski (GBR) with 236.561 km. Jo set four records (tbc), a new Scottish 24-Hour Record, the 100 miles Scottish record previously held by Debbie Martin Consani which Jo set at 14:47:45, the British 200 km (124.5 miles) mark with a time of 18:53.22 (TBC) which was previously held by Eleanor Robinson and a Scottish 12 hour record as Jo covered 133.4 km in that time to also beat a total set by Fiona Ross of 130.96 km [Results on the DUV.](#)

9.7.2020 The Last Annual Vol State 314 m (500k) (USA)

The Last Annual Vol State "is a journey, an adventure, and an exploration of inner space. It begins at Dorena Landing, MO with a ferry ride across the Mississippi River, from Missouri to Kentucky, and finishes at "the Rock," high atop Sand Mountain in Northeast Georgia. What lies in between are 314 miles of the great unknown". Runners have 10 days to run across Tennessee to The Rock either aided or unaided. This year's race was won with an absolutely phenomenal performance by Francesca Muccini (ITA) who buried Bob Hearn (USA) in second place with a time of 3:10:49:40, the second best time ever. Bob's time was 3:12:03:12. Full results on the race website, [Vacation without a car.com](#). Podcast on the Pain Cave [Episode 65 - Domination at Vol State with Francesca Muccini](#)

Effective Training Methods for Ultrarunners

Joe Wenman

Many runners, particularly long distance runners get into a habit of running more and more, further and further, and it ends up consuming their entire week with sub-optimal benefits. While it is true that increasing your distance and pace is important and beneficial, it is certainly not going to be hugely effective without some varied training and exercise. When I create a training plan for an ultrarunner, I always vary at least one to two runs a week with something a bit different, to benefit cardiovascular fitness or muscle strength. Here are a few workouts that you can add to your training plan to mix things up, vary your training and excel as an ultrarunner. Remember to always take plenty of rest days, and not to carry on training if you think you have overdone it. This will do more harm than good.

The Press -Up & Squats Pyramid

Press ups and squats are excellent exercises for runners. Promoting full body conditioning for good form and strength will increase your endurance, speed and energy drastically. Try this workout for improving speed and strength.

1000m warm up run and stretches

500m fast run, 1 Squat Jump, 1 Press- Up

500m fast run, 2 Squat Jumps, 2 Press -Ups

500m fast run, 3 Squat Jumps, 3 Press-

Ups

500m fast run, 4 Squat Jumps, 4 Press-Ups

500m fast run, 5 Squat Jumps, 5 Press- Up

500m fast run, 4 Squat Jumps, 4 Press-Ups

500m fast run, 3 Squat Jumps, 3 Press-Ups

500m fast run, 2 Squat Jumps, 2 Press-Ups

500m fast run, 1 Squat Jump, 1 Press- Up

1000m warm up run and stretches

The above routine will have you doing a 6.5km run with a total of 26 press ups and 26 squat jumps. Keep working on the routine and progressing until you can get to a 10 squat jump and 10 press up pyramid. This would mean a fast 11.5km run with a whopping total of 100 press ups and 100 squat jumps. It's going to hurt! Enjoy and take a rest day after if required.

The Warrior Run

Try this workout on similar terrain to your race goal. For example, if you are training for a race

with lots of elevation, choose a route with lots of elevation. If it is somewhere like Snowdonia, choose a training location with many rocky and hilly trails. The Warrior Run is a workout designed to mimic race conditions and style to get you more comfortable at race pace.

Start by warming up with a 10 minute jog and some stretches.

Hit the trails at your 10km race pace for 45 minutes.

Speed up (try and cut 30sec/km off of your pace) for 10 minutes.

Then run as fast as you can for 5 minutes.

You can progress this over time by changing the splits to 60 minutes, 20 minutes and 10 minutes.

The David Goggins Test

If you are training for an endurance event, you cannot beat this one. Ultrarunner and extreme athlete David Goggins completes this test every year and you should too. All you need to do is run 4 miles, every 4 hours for 48 hours. If





you
cannot
run 4 miles,
walk it. If you cannot
walk it, sub it out for 40
press ups or something similar
to that. You will run 12x 4 mile intervals totalling at a whopping 48 miles. In between runs, be sure to eat plenty of balanced food and rest. It will also help to stretch a lot between runs. You start at 08.00 and complete a 4 mile run at each interval:

08.00, 12.00, 16.00, 20.00, 00.00, 04.00,
08.00, 12.00, 16.00, 20.00, 00.00, 04.00

Good luck!
Joe Wenman
Founder of
www.overthefells.com



CONFORMITY

By Andy Howett

Like ninety nine percent of people I like to think of myself as of above average intelligence. Obviously forty nine percent of those are wrong but that can't possibly include me. For instance, I am far brighter than the people who have taken part in the Asch Conformity Experiment.

So anyway, changing the subject entirely, I was doing the Two Breweries fell race a couple of years ago. This is an 18 mile hill run from Traquair to Broughton, starting and finishing in the breweries. The weather that year was terrible, strong winds and a lot of rain, but it was still oddly enjoyable, especially charging down Trahenna unable to run in a straight line due to the gales sending me three feet to my left every time both feet came off the ground (Beware Trahenna...)

As the route approached Stobo Castle I found myself following a man in a white top, I have no idea who he was so I shall call him "A". He was about 30 yards ahead of me. A similar distance behind were two other runners, whom I shall call "B" and "C". Please don't laugh at my naming, I once spent seven months living with a cat called Cat and two sheep called Sheep and Sheep. The owl is still called Owl.

Anyway, there I was running along a farm track following A when B (or maybe C, I forget which) shouted to ask me if I knew where I was going. I shouted back that I didn't but that I was just following him, pointing at A. The aforementioned A obviously heard us as he stopped and looked back and made the shrugging gesture which indicates that someone is completely clueless as to where they are and that they had simply assumed they were going the right way because everyone else behind them was going that way too.

I stopped, just by a junction in the tracks, I knew we were supposed to turn somewhere around here. The track we were on came from my six o'clock position where B and C were and carried straight on at my twelve o'clock, where A was. There



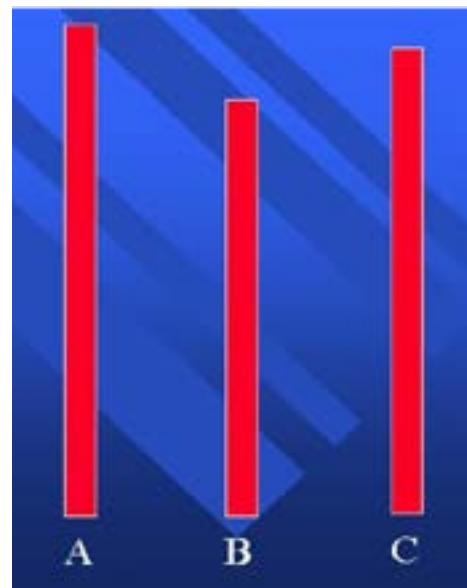
were two tracks off to my left, at my eight o'clock and, over a gate, to my nine o'clock.

B and C ran up and joined me as I was getting my map out but B already had his to hand. We were all standing there looking at it as A ran back down the hill and joined us.

I decided that the correct route was the track at our nine o'clock, over the gate and then along the left-hand side of the woods we could see in the distance. B decided that the correct route was the track at our eight o'clock, down towards the other woods. I insisted that I was right but A and C both agreed with B.

The three of them set off down their chosen route. I looked at my map again, sure that I was right, but not wanting to lose valuable time proving it with a compass bearing, I had just lost two places to B and C and time to make up. I set off following the three of them down what I had just convinced myself was the wrong route.

I have absolutely no idea why I did that. I again refer you to the Asch Conformity Experiment, google it if you haven't heard of it, it's quite interesting..



After about five minutes we came to a small loch. B stopped and looked quizzically at his map. There shouldn't be a loch. He pointed at some trees up the hill to our right. "We should be over there" and then to me "You were right mate."

They set off towards the forest. He had sounded confident so I just followed...

Wendy Whearity (nee Shaw) BSc

GB team bronze medallist, experienced ultra-runner and coach. Specialising in customised remote run and general fitness coaching. From beginner's to experienced ultra-marathoners. All goals, abilities and experience welcome.



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- ◆ BSc sport, coaching & fitness
- ◆ Level 3 Personal trainer
- ◆ 1-to-1 sessions available

Email: wendy.whearity@gmail.com

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Finding Peace

By Lorna Cullen



I suffered from a period of depression in my early 40's and found that running helped me to repair and feel good about myself. After a few years of running 5ks, 10ks and a few half marathons, I decided I wanted to run an Ultra. Everyone thought I was mad since I hadn't run a marathon but in all honesty as a slow runner a marathon just didn't appeal. I wanted to do something where the clock didn't matter but I would find it challenging in other ways. For some reason when people run marathons everyone's first question is, ooh how long did it take you? Run an Ultra and everyone's first question is, ooh how far was it?

After looking through many Ultras in terms of places, terrain and distances I settled on the 55k Lakeland Trails Ultra. It was set in the beautiful hills of the Lake District and I was a little naive, it was truly hard but so rewarding.

Not long after I had signed up for the race, a fellow friend and runner also decided to enter and we became training partners in crime. We both had different strengths to bring to the party; Kay was faster and stronger than me and I was good at planning. I put together a training schedule for us and ensured we got the minimum training needed to complete the event.

The race itself is amazing with breathtaking views, I highly recommend it. Although race day was far harder than expected due to the stifling heat and humidity, I would love to participate again, ideally on a cooler day but also with a backpack



that actually fits properly. Running with a backpack is a huge learning curve. Having it fit you correctly is vital, I soon learned to apply Vaseline liberally everywhere following some very painful chafing experiences. I would also ensure that my next backpack has fluids that can easily be reached rather than trying to dislocate my shoulders attempting to grab the small bottles at my sides. The day started at Ambleside at 11am. We waited nervously at the start line and were lucky enough to see the leader of the 110k race cross the finish line. Everyone clapped and cheered and slapped him on the back. It was so emotional I started to tear up and this was before the race had started! Our race started with an immediate, uphill run out of Ambleside. Apart from this first hill we generally walked most of the ascents in order to save our energy for the rest of the course. We'd read that walking roughly 1 mile out of every 6 or so miles was the usual technique and had practiced this during training.

During the race there were 5 feed stations packed with all sorts of goodies. Thankfully we had sensibly practiced eating different foods whilst running to get our bodies used to doing this without suffering any GI issues. We both favoured peanut butter sandwiches, flapjacks and mars bars for when we got really tired.

Doing an Ultra changed me as a person. Not just the chafing burns and lost toenails but it inspired me to believe in all my foolish dreams and I have many. Following the Ultra, running took a back seat for about a year due to back issues. I started seeing a physio, getting regular sports massages and realized that in order to be injury free I needed to start working on my strength.

Once my back started to recover a little, I started doing triathlons as doing multi-disciplinary training is less vicious on the body. One sport can almost be a chance to take a break from another. After a few sprint distances I decided to take on my first Half Ironman.

The Half Ironman is an odd distance. At the start you pace yourself as it seems like such a long way but in fact I got to the end and wished I had pushed harder. It is much easier than running

an Ultra, probably because you break from one sport and then go to another. Don't get me wrong, you get tired, but it didn't require the same level of mental strength that the Ultra did.

I'm now on a journey to train for my first Ironman. Due to covid-19 this will not happen until 2021 so I'm taking the time to really build a solid strength base and work hard on my weakest sport (cycling) as well as making my runs longer and taking them back to the beautiful hilly trails where possible.

The last few years have been a journey in which I have gained so much knowledge about myself as a person both physically and mentally. I know that my mental strength and drive has often been leaps ahead of my physical strength during races but I'm working on catching up the latter now. I know that it's easy to injure yourself when you do distance training and races. You must build slowly and consistently and it's essential to work on strength particularly in the core.

Although I'm 51 and my Ironman will not be until I'm 52, I fully intend to go back and do some Ultras in 2022 and bring my experience, new strength and inhaler with me. I have a score to settle.

Ultimately, I have a dream to do a longer self-supported run. It's probably a pipe dream and would be extremely hard to do for someone with far more experience than myself but I can't help but aspire to this. I'm a dreamer and I believe if you focus on something you will achieve.

These days I have started writing a blog which I wanted to do so I could motivate myself. In fact friends have now been in touch to say they are following it and can I please keep on writing. This is incredibly humbling and encourages me to continue with it. Through doing the blog I have found a new positivity and focus on what is good in life rather than what is bad. My journey in sport, endurance, training and now writing have brought me truly to a point in my life where I feel mentally at peace with the world.

Checkout Lorna's blog for more of her adventures.

<https://lornatri.wordpress.com>

BLADE RUNNER | 50K

By Jason Dickson

6am, January 11th 2020.

Run by Avalanche Endurance Events (AEE), cost £65

Brecon Beacons Mountain range starting at Storey Arms Car Park

[http://thefandancerace.com/
blade-runner-registration/](http://thefandancerace.com/blade-runner-registration/)

I left Bristol at 3:30am for the 1:30min drive to the Brecon Beacons National Park, which is an early morning drive I have become familiar with over the last couple of years. The winding roads from Bike Park Wales and Merthyr Tydfil into the range give you a real sense of what's ahead as you begin to glimpse the slopes of the mountains, the telling part 'of how your run might go'.. is whether you can see the mountain tops or whether they are shrouded in clouds, that morning they were none existent, visibility was very poor.

Arriving at Pont Ar Daf car park, you exit the car with your flask of coffee and like most people head straight for the toilets, it's dark windy and could only be described as cold and miserable conditions. Being an experienced runner of this range, I was more than aware that if it's like this in the carpark the conditions on the peaks must be awful.

For obvious reasons the event organisers take safety very seriously. It's fair to say that people much fitter and more experienced than me have come unstuck in the Brecon Beacons. The compulsory kit list for the event (see photo) contains a long list of safety kit which covers the basic principle that if you were to pick up an injury you can survive on your own until recovered by mountain rescue. That means that you will be carrying things like a bivvy bag, food, water, spare

change of clothes and so forth. There is a kit check before the race begins and if you don't have the kit you don't run, it's pretty straightforward and there is no messing about.

I had decided I was running the event many months earlier but had suffered a slight injury in December which was lingering, however I was given the green light to run by my physio, which

From the phone box, in the dark, the trail went straight up the mountain side into the clouds, the trail was marked by fluorescent snap lights and visibility was down to 3-4 meters, so you were literally moving from snap light to snap light with your head torch on, straight up. The range is famous for having multiple climates, so as we climbed higher the wind got worse and the temperature dropped significantly. Eventually, I realised I was completely alone, all I could see through my snood/balaclava was the faint glow ahead of the next marker, shrouded in cloud/darkness and with the wind blowing, the rain started. I reached the peak in about 45minutes, which is at 885m. At this point you become aware just how dangerous the situation is, there are steep drops off of the side of the range which are very dangerous and being up there in these conditions probably wasn't the best idea, however the glow of the next light gave some reassurance and I continued on.

As I approached the first checkpoint a runner came back down the mountain, he must have seen the conditions and given up straight away, this was going to be a theme for the day. At the first checkpoint at the top of Pen Y Fan, I was met by 3 people who I had to shout my number to because I couldn't hear them over the wind, they noted my number down as having passed and I continued on my way.

From the peak of Pen Y Fan we dropped down a steep path towards Brecon. I was wearing Innov-8 trail trainers for this event which worked very well as it was wet and the downhill was very fast and steep, so the grip on the trail trainers was excellent. Running down off the range



hindsight was a bad idea. It turned out to be a deep tissue hamstring injury which I wouldn't recover from for 2-3 months.

The race started at the red phone box, Storey Arms leisure centre, made famous as the starting and finishing point for SAS selection. Before the starting gun went off we were warned that the officials at the checkpoints (who themselves are ex SAS/SBS) had reported absolutely shocking /Baltic conditions on the peaks and that we should prepare ourselves for that.

I caught up with the majority of race leaders and got back into a respectable position. Once we made it off the range I looked back up the trail we had come down and it was impressive to see a long line of head torches snaking back up Pen Y Fan. There must have been a trail behind me of 50 head torches, which was an arresting sight. From there the sun started to come up, but it didn't get any warmer.

I ran for the next hour with 3 others along farm roads until we picked up a trail which would lead up to Windy Gap, this was a long winding trail road and again the higher we climbed the colder it got. At the top of Windy Gap was the second checkpoint, I was met by a guy in a small tent who looked absolutely frozen, which wasn't surprising, he didn't even want to come out of the tent and waved me on. At his point people had to turn left and up towards the famous Diving Board rock at Fan Y Big. There was a fairly obvious opportunity here for anyone who wanted to quit to turn right and head back over Pen Y Fan to the start, which was still a long way back, I thought at the time that a lot of the head torches I had seen heading down the mountain behind me that morning would almost certainly take that option. I doubt a lot of those runners had realised just how tough this race could be and to be fair even I hadn't seen conditions this bad before.

At this point I really started to suffer, however I remembered that my wife had packed me a USB hot rock, which was basically a fully charged warm rock I could switch on to heat my hands, as I climbed Fan Y Big I put the charger inside one of my gloves and just that slight warmth gave me the extra motivation I needed to keep going. I recommend taking these with you on similar events, it made a huge difference.

From the peak of Fan Y Big, I ran round the Horseshoe which has some spectacular scenery and again down off the range to a reservoir. As I ran off the range for the second time I could see another mountain on the other side and thought I hope to god I don't have to climb over that, I'm sure there's a trail around the bottom, which was obviously wishful thinking. I checked into the third checkpoint, which was also a food stop, where I had some Haribos, banana and flapjack and continued on my way.

I crossed the reservoir and started the climb up the third mountain which was one of the toughest things I have ever done. It was off trail, through heather, straight up and took almost an hour. I simply focused on a bush at the top and pushed on, running at this point was completely off the cards.

From the top there was a long winding trail which joined a farm trail which eventually came into Torpantau railway line

and checkpoint 4. At this checkpoint I noticed a runner who had passed me early that day sat in the minibus, he looked like he had quit, he smiled at me and I checked in and continued on my way. The weather seemed to have improved and it was now a simple 10k to the end. As I made my way back up the Roman road to Windy Gap the wind again got worse and worse and the temperature became colder. I noticed that waterproof gloves and socks in these conditions collect the water as it runs off your body, so there was water sloshing around inside my gloves and socks, was it better to take the gloves off or leave them on, I couldn't decide so left them on.

As I went up Jacobs Ladder to Pen Y Fan for the fourth and final ascent of the range that day, the wind was close to 100mph and stopping in those conditions had a serious risk of hypothermia. Reaching the final checkpoint at the top I promised myself I would run down as fast as I could and when I got to the end I would change into my spare clothes, put the heating on full blast in the car and drive straight home, where I would make a roaring fire and eat steak and chips.

That day only 21 people finished the course.

This is a great course/race, but shouldn't be underestimated, if you are up for the challenge then give it a go.





Brecon to Cardiff

Or "How I outrun Storm Dennis and yet still survived"....

Adam Rykala

Photos by Andy Gale

It seems odd in the current climate to talk of an ultra. Almost seems like a lifetime away, yet it was less than 2 months ago that a group of loons made their way to Theatr Brycheiniog to brave Storm Dennis and its rage to run the 44 miles down to Nantgarw. The start was auspicious as one of the buses bringing runners to the start broke down and we waited in the Theatr for another 45 minutes to start. All crammed together, not something we'd comfortably do now.

We also found out that weather had damaged the route at Pontsticill and so a slight diversion was in place, leaving out 1.5 miles of route due to a bridge being washed out, that did nothing to ease the challenge we were facing.

The start down to CP1 near a pub in Talybont was along a canal path. Now, I remember hearing some conversations about whether this section could be done in road shoes. Well, if anyone had decided to chance it, they would be sorry. This 7 mile-ish stretch was on a narrow towpath that was alternating between deep mud and 200-300m sections that were ankle deep in muddy water. It would probably be the same if you'd decided to run in the canal. Part of the way down we were amazed to see a small shed floating down the canal.

Not particularly surprising as the gale force rain was driving in this section. We also saw the first couple of trees fallen onto the path (a common theme of this race) and by the time we got to CP1 we were left in no doubt that Storm Dennis was intent on ensuring that we would suffer. I heard there was an approximate 50% attrition rate over the race and I can believe it. CP1 was merely a quick water stop before turning off the towpath and heading up the Brynoger Tram road towards Torpantau. Torpantau is a stop on the Merthyr Mountain Railway, and was once the highest railway station in the UK (I believe). The path

up to it is a wide (as in almost dual carriage way width) gravel track with a consistent climb profile and it goes past a Navy Outward Bound type centre on the edge of the Talybont Reservoir. You then drop down past Dolygaer, crossing over the reservoirs to reach CP2.

It's exposed, and the wind and rain were biting. Waterproofs could only do so much, and the challenge was to keep moving, keep warm and do the 6K. The headwind meant progress was slow and sure, head down and fight through it, telling yourself at CP3 there was a change of shoes and clothes. I decided to use my Adidas Galaxy Trails for this section. They're not expensive, but they've done several ultra's and I find them supremely comfortable and reasonably multi purpose. The mud was mostly on the flat and this section had good grip.

I trained for the race on this section and it showed. I kept up reasonably fair progress only slowing to a walk at the very top as the full force of Dennis bore down on us. Apart from losing my temper at some people trying to rush us down an immensely muddy section, it was quiet. From the top down to CP3 was through a forest path chewed up by large vehicles and this is where my waterproof socks earned their keep. Slowly we hit CP2 and I was informed of the full nature of the diversion, which was fortunately just keeping to the road to Pontsticill and through it to northern Merthyr and CP3.

A simple descent to navigate, but as the group photo's show the weather here was unbelievable. Dennis threw it all at us at this stage, and I said a silent thanks to the Tailwind I took as I kept sipping away and kept all possibility of water ingress under the waterproof to a minimum. The community centre and CP3 was one of the most welcome sights in my life.

I got my drop bag, and I had packed an almost complete change



- February 2020 -

of clothes. However my modesty in a large room meant I left my tights unchanged (and in all fairness they did reject most of the water) and only changed my upper layers completely. Changing into lighter trail/hybrid shoes for the rest down the Taff Trail, and taking in a warm cup of tea as fuel, I felt so much better. A lot of people DNF'd here as the brunt of Dennis hit home. From here on the storm started to die down and for the rest of the race the wind and rain was far less troublesome.

The route was now following the Merthyr Trail half I did in 2018, and so I felt quite comfortable navigating down the Taff trail towards CP4. Even though the rain and wind had lessened, the sight of fallen trees and flooded paths had not. Kudos to the people of Merthyr where several people had grouped to offer sweets and encouragement as we went down through Merthyr and Aberfan.

Sadly the most picturesque section was so difficult it did not encourage sightseeing, and although the Taff Trail is quite pretty it wasn't as beautiful as the first bit, now the climb was all downwards to Nantgarw.

CP4 was a small layby and after some sweets, and the feeling of a full bladder approaching, I merely briefly stopped and continued on down to the next CP.

Some of the Taff Trail at this point runs alongside the Taff, now it was largely IN the Taff due to the conditions. Some time was taken picking my way through the water here. No map or GPX can prepare you for this! It was cheering that we were now heading off the more isolated parts and into civilisation with many people egging us on and giving the encouragement one needed after the first half which wiped out the soul.

CP5 was in a working mens club. With real toilets! After the relief of that, real chips and fried food! I am surprised that people didn't just stop here, although I did wish someone well who decided to retire here as you could see at this section he was done. Hope you're ok bud!

The end was in sight, so dragging myself away from this wonderful spread I left the club and aimed for the end. A mixture of road, cycle and footpaths above the area, climbing a little and so

with fatigue I nearly made a few mistakes but the nagging from the watch helped. The last few kilometers was a climb above the valley where I met up with a fellow science tech so we chatted work related guff as we dragged our tired bodies home. I hope you do get the chance to do the UTMB Catherine.

Thankfully we saw the final 1 kilometer drop towards the Coleg, and made it. Even after having to climb over a fallen tree on electric wires that very much focussed the mind.

Hitting the Coleg we crossed the line together and the sight of my wife egging me on, I had done it. After all that doubt, all that wind and rain I had survived.

It seems odd that I may have to wait months for my next ultra. I hope that when this is over we can do this thing we love, and do it in confidence. In these times I'm restricting my mileage to balance physical and mental health. Here's to seeing you all at the next one!



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Cotswold Way Century Race Report

By Robert Bramall

A while has passed since the Cotswold Way Century back in September but the memory of this race still remains fresh almost as if it occurred yesterday. This race report will be the first time that I've opened up my thoughts about something which has been long overdue through procrastination and ultimately disappointment with the outcome of the race. Twice I've started the Cotswold Way Century and twice I've had to DNF due to injury.

Race Day, Saturday 21st September 2019: It was a perfect late summer's day; 25°C, blue skies and not a breath of wind, although hotter than I'd prefer I was grateful that it was dry compared to the last year. As I stood on the start line reconnecting with familiar faces trying not to recollect what happened the previous year the nerves, soon to be mixed with adrenaline, started to set in.

As we counted down the final ten seconds before the start I reminded myself of my race strategy (not that it goes to plan – essentially rough guidelines for nutrition, hydration and pacing). The clock hit 12 noon and we were off. I'd positioned myself towards the middle of the pack to avoid being caught up with what the leaders were doing but knew I wanted to move further forward so as to avoid the inevitable bottleneck that occurs going through gates and stiles. I soon found my rhythm as the opening miles passed by to our first iconic landmark, Broadway Tower, and onwards to Stumps Cross (CP 1).

A quick restock of food and water and I was on my way again. Halfway in between CP 1 and CP 2, I noticed something wasn't quite right. The oppressive heat coupled with dehydration was beginning to get to me... my legs felt abnormally lethargic for such an early stage of the race but also small things, like constantly needing to adjust the tightness of my hat, slowly began to consume my thought processes. Despite being told on multiple occasions from the race director, Kurt Dusterhoff, and the pre-race

information booklet stating that "unless you are a camel" bring 2 – 2.5L of fluids for the first 26 miles of the route – this advice was not heeded. I knew I was walking a fine line. At Aggs Hill (CP 2), 27 miles in, I started playing catchup by consuming content gulping litres of

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my luck began to change, by putting an emphasis on fluids and liquid based foods at CP 2 in addition to carrying an extra water bottle, I gained a second wind, the dehydration which was plaguing me had cleared giving my legs a somewhat "new" lease of life. The bonus came from being told by a race organiser that I was on for a sub 24-hour 100 miler.

By the time I got to Birdlip (CP 3) the sun had faded and attentions turned towards the night shift... or at least part of my attention. Shortly after leaving CP 3 an old problem reared its head. My knee, a recurring issue which was the reason for pulling out last year, was flaring up. At first it was nothing more than a slight discomfort but things quickly deteriorated. What started off as a run was becoming a hobble, any surface that wasn't flat became a challenge; impossible on a course that is renowned for being hilly. The stimulus of pain and discomfort was wreaking havoc and having knock-on-effects particularly with navigation. Emotions; the thing I was trying to keep at bay until I crossed the finish line were creeping in, I was becoming flustered. A fixation on how far to the next aid station so I

could sit down meant I was missing turns and going through gates/stiles and thus losing time to those around me.

Arriving into Painswick RFC (CP 4) I knew I needed to find a way to ease the pain. My options were either to take painkillers or strap my knee up. Normally I'd save painkillers for a last resort and given that there was over fifty miles remaining I opted for the latter. Knee taped up; foam rolling was the next logical move. A change of shoes to something more cushioned, in the hopes of softening the impact forces with the ground, and I decided to press on. Regardless of my best efforts the knee still continued to cause me grief. The hobble had now morphed into a limp and I was losing time to those in front and behind me. Flustered was an

understatement, anxious; checking over my shoulder every second at the thought of having people breathing down my neck. With around three miles to Coaley Peak (CP 5) that's when it happened, I turned around and saw the headlamps of other runners drawing nearer. In eight miles I'd lost a half hour gap and proceeded to watch the group of six runners pass me as if I was standing still.

Mustering something that vaguely resembled a running motion I was now at Coaley Peak. As I sat down inside the gazebo planning my next approaches, subconsciously still wanting to keep going and get to the finish, I informed race officials that I needed medical assistance. The standard routine of being asked: when the pain started and how the pain manifests itself? When I was told to head towards the ambulance for further assessment reality set in. The words nobody wants to hear "We're pulling you out for medical reasons". Hope had well and truly abandoned me. Mentally I was broken. As I stepped outside the ambulance the thought of time invested, physical, mental and emotional felt all for nothing, tears streamed down my face. A race of what could've been.

Learning Points

- 1. General Race Information/Advice:** If race organisers/directors and the pre-race information booklet tell you to carry additional items especially water they're doing this for your benefit. In planning and organisation of the event they've recceed the course numerous times in addition to witnessing first hand, participants who've gotten it wrong.
- 2. Post-Race Blues:** As I said at the beginning of this race report this is the first time that I've spoken about how the race transpired. I've spent many a month letting the result fester in my subconscious hoping I'd forget about it. To this day it still bothers me knowing I could've prevented it (having consulted with a physiotherapist). We all have races that don't necessarily go to plan and whilst it is normal to feel disheartened genuinely DO NOT follow what I did! The best thing to do is to, a) rest: switch off your mind to anything race and running related, b) talk to people and c) analyse your race: by this I mean objectively breakdown the event into sections to focus on and answer questions such as: what did you do well? Was your pacing strategy correct? Were

you eating and drinking well and not getting gastrointestinal problems? How was your training in the lead up to the event? What would you change in the race and test in training?

3. Injuries & Strength: As runners and athletes in general sometimes we become hyper-fixated on achieving specific race goals. Training at set paces and trying to hit exact mileage we forget to listen to the most important marker to how we're responding to a training stimulus, our body. Rest is equally as important as training itself, it allows us to cement the adaptations we have developed. Since consulting with a physiotherapist it has made me realise the importance of strength training for injury prevention but also seeing improvements in running efficiency. I used to be of the mindset that because I did so much running in a week that there was no possible way of fitting strength training in.

First two images courtesy [CM Running Photography](#)



Ham & Lyme | 100K



By Rich Foster

I finished. As a runner, for a good few years now it has been about where I have finished, was I in the top ten, did I make the top 1% in bigger events? I have been well and truly humbled and have never been more proud of the 'finish' I achieved on Saturday in the Ham and Lyme 100km.

It all started well, 4.30am alarm for porridge and pre-race prep:

- * Coffee – feel I need it to perk me up and wake me up
- * Shower – same as coffee really
- * K-tape – to support a slightly iffy Achilles heel
- * Final decisions on which head band to wear!
- * Eating. Obviously an important one – I had porridge for breakfast with a banana. I wanted to start fueling but not take on too much.

By just after 5 my amazing supportive wife and I were on the road for the hour or so drive to Lyme Regis. I was feeling more excited than nervous and really pleased the day had come and I was not injured or ill.

We pulled into the car park and it was a great feeling to see other runners and the organiser with race numbers ready to give out. I always have that little anxiety that maybe I'm in the wrong place or have got the time wrong until seeing it all set and ready.

My first lesson of the day was how to attach the number. Now, I've raced many times before and have put many numbers on but looking around the car park I saw a few with numbers attached to shorts. I folded my number to reduce the size and on

my leg it went, much comfier for a long race. In my pack I had a 2 litre bladder of water, some High-5 energy gels, some flapjack, a few jelly babies and some pieces of a Trek Bar.

Dave, the organiser, gave us a talk about frisky cattle, where we finished and other key points and then it was three, two, one, and we were off. Down hill through some of Lyme Regis then round a corner and off onto the trail proper.

The things that really struck me during and after the event:

- * Yes, we did walk up what I would have normally run up, and yes it was worth it.
- * Taking on fuel was not always easy. I tried to have a plan but I didn't find it easy to stick to. My peanut butter rolls and wraps stayed in the car. I had some ham and cheese rolls, some jelly babies, some amazing watermelon, Jaffa cakes, caffeine and non-caffeine gels (high-f and SIS), rehydration tabs in water bottles at aid stations and in my bladder at one point, but that was about it. With hindsight I could have taken on more and given more time for it to settle.
- * Company is a great thing. For most of the first 50km I ran in a great group of 4. The navigation was not always easy so having 4 pairs of eyes to spot the next piece of tape to follow was a great help. It was when this started to happen that I increasingly felt worrying about a time was no longer the thing to be doing.
- * Cows are really big! I know this sounds silly, and I live in a farming area and have even run a small holding so I'm not saying it as someone who has never seen one before, but when they are up close, personal and looking a bit too frisky, they really are



big creatures. Thankfully the first herd that were lively, we got past before they really noticed what was going on. The second was coming up the road towards us, we went to step into a field to let them pass only to see the farmer running towards us in the field shouting, "Stop the cows!" We did and he in his 4x4 and his very noble dog herded them a mile or so to where they were meant to be. This was rather a delay in the running but did provide some entertainment and broke up the day. The third encounter involved two of us runners shouting at one cow that was starting to remind us of what we'd seen in Pamplona, and thankfully by the fourth and fifth it was getting so late the cows seemed to be happily grazing and getting ready for sleep.

* Stick to a plan and don't forget that you are not actually superman. I think a big part of what went wrong for me at about 85km was that I applied my marathon and shorter distance logic to the longer event. At the 50km mark I was feeling strong, so I pushed on, only a tiny bit, nonetheless bit by bit. This meant I did not take quite as long at the aid stations, did not give the food I was eating a chance to go down, and that, despite drinking as much as I could, I was still not getting enough fluid.

* To have a crew. Have someone there to help. I am lucky to have an amazing wife who is also running nuts. She pitched it perfectly. I texted her to say; 'walking slowly to the aid station' (rude word to indicate how bad I felt), she texted back full of positivity and that she would meet me. My next text about throwing up didn't reach her due to signal difficulties. However when she saw I was really not feeling good she knew rather than say "Come on, you can do it," she said "Count steps to get to the aid stations," she also said about having some fluid, then it was the next step to take, most importantly there was nothing that was too much to handle. This was the brilliant thing that I needed. When she said, "Walk to the car to sit down there." I felt yes, I can do that. If she'd said at that point 'let's finish this race' I don't know if I would or could have.

* Have support for your support, my dad helped with the logistics of getting a car and my wife where they needed to be so she could run the last 4 miles with me.

* Social media, while it can get a bad press, is also amazing. My wife read messages from friends around the country giving me support after she had put up a Facebook post saying that I needed encouragement.

So, the first 50km was really pleasant, a sensible pace, rarely out of breath, feeling wonderfully strong. Halfway, I had some food but hurried it too much to try to catch up with the group I was with, this also led to me running faster to catch up, something I

shouldn't have done as it got me in a faster rhythm. At the first two checkpoints on the return leg I was strong and feeling really positive. I was narrowing a gap on those in front and started to think it would be great to catch them as that would help with navigation.

Then, shortly after the second return aid station it became harder work. It was hot, really hot. While running through dusty, dry mud and fields of corn in the hot sun was fun at first, it became less and less so. It was not so much my legs that were tired but it was my body that hurt. It started on the hips and lower back (heat and dehydration I think) then it hit the stomach and my throat. My chest started to hurt and I ached. I tried to shuffle where possible, and to walk other parts. Eventually it became more of a walk. Looking at the elevation on Strava this was when I went up the biggest climbs which makes sense. I kept expecting people to pass me but no one did. I remember leaning on a gate, head down, trying to get myself to keep moving. Shortly after that I threw up all that I had worked really hard to get down. This was demoralising and made me think that was it. In fact, in my head, that was it, game over. I thought, "I'm suffering from dehydration and in this heat there is no way I can go on. I will not finish, and I'm ok with that. In the book I'm reading (Rich Roll's Finding Ultra) he DNF his first race, I'm Ok with that." I made my way slowly, and with grunts and moans I stopped strava on my phone. It really was a case of every step was a battle and if I could have lied down, crawled into a ball and stayed there I would.

My wife got my text and came down the 250 yards from the aid station to find me. She had more fluid for me and walked up with me. At first she just felt I needed a bit of a boost but then saw it was more than that. She walked with me for most of the way then headed back faster to get stuff ready at the car. She told me to count steps, like she had read Paula Radcliffe does, Paula goes to 100 then starts again. I got to 4 then started again, then 4 more, then 4 more and so on.

Eventually, I arrived at the aid station and was directed to the paramedic and sat by the ambulance car and the aid station. I said what had happened and the paramedic did not seem too worried. I was fully lucid at this point and this was the first glimmer of a change of my mind. Maybe...

The brilliant marshal at the aid station offered me a range of food and drink, nothing at all sounded remotely like it would



stay down until they said 'flat coke'. It actually sounded tempting. I took a sip. Then another. Then another. Slowly, very slowly I was not feeling completely awful. Maybe..

A fantastic, friendly women runner who was being crewed by some equally brilliant people were incredibly supportive, asking if I would carry on, saying I could do it. All the time, when actually asked I now realise I could not bring myself to say 'I was not going to finish'. It's a lot harder to say those words than to say 'I can't go on'. Again, maybe, just maybe...

My wife said she had put a chair by our car and she was going to get her bag ready to walk with me. Walking to the car was manageable, getting out of the chair by the ambulance car was hard, but doable. She had broken it down enough for me. Suddenly, it was different, I felt awful but I was not going to stop. Why should I, the paramedic had not told me to stop. The guys at the aid station had been really upbeat and so encouraging. I could walk, I remembered one of the things I'd read about ultras: "It's going to hurt, it's ultra! Don't be a wimp."

So, with help from my wife, I changed some clothes, put on a few more layers as I was quite shivery, and started up the hill. I immediately felt better. I had my watch back on and back on went strava. After about 20 minutes we met my dad and my wife had a plan for getting cars where they needed to be. I was then on my own for about three miles to the next checkpoint. I tried a shuffle, a lot of arm movement and I think it just about constituted a run. 20 shuffle steps, then walk for 20, then shuffle for 20. Slowly, 20 extended to shuffling the rest of a section of downhill. I caught up with a guy who'd done his ankle in and was walking with his wife. We chatted and with them I made it to near the next aid station. My wife had sorted cars and came running to meet us and after a brief stop at the next aid station for a bit more flat coke she and I were off!



It then became a lot of fun! It was getting dark so we put on head torches, it's the little things sometimes but running through the woods with a head torch on is a fun adventure. It kept me going. I was jogging the downhills and flats and walking the ups again. We gradually counted down the miles and eventually closed in,

one last cow encounter and then finally into Lyme Regis. My wife had said the cut-off was 10.30, I knew I was feeling better as I thought with a push we can get there by 10. I found running on a Saturday night through Lyme Regis as most people are heading to have a night out very funny. There were cheers as we went past, I think there was even a shout that included the word inspiration (thinking back it might have been about perspiration but I'm happy to favour the former).

My wife said nearly there, go on, so I stretched the legs and headed on. Another runner, who was going home in his car helped direct me and I was at the clock tower, by the sea and eventually nearing the end. There was Dave, the finish sign lit by a gas camping lamp.

I did it. I made it to the end. I thought at one point that I couldn't, that I was finished and didn't have it in me. Thanks to amazing support, I discovered that actually I did.

Ham & Lyme 100k photos courtesy of race hosts, [Albion Running](#).





KAUHAJOKI ULTRA RUNNING FESTIVAL



5.-11.07.2021

TRANSBAVARIA

355KM - 3500Hm

By Nicole Schwarz
Translated by Elaine Pearson



I was alone on the first stage of my run from Garmisch-Partenkirche to the Odenwald. I chose this run because my family live in Odenwald and I live and work in Upper Bavaria, in the foothills of the Alps. Each stretch was planned to be between 40 and 65km and to finish at the beautiful accommodation that I had arranged for myself. This is my 4th year of running races and I usually do trail runs. I plan competitions of differing levels of intensity over the season and also in the off-season. So far competitions have not only kept me in good shape physically but also mentally. How does one learn how best to know one's body, the various types of terrain for running and above all how to learn from one's mistakes? By simply doing it.

My greatest hobby defines my purpose in life, to travel. Combining them both, running and getting to know new countries, new places and above all islands, has become a passion.

This year should be quite different. 2020 was planned as Das Laufjahr (the Run Year). After a short shock phase, after everything that defines my life was cancelled, I tried something new, so that now 4 weeks later it has become as completely enjoyable as I had hoped, and even more so.

After the idea came into my head, I couldn't let it go. I wanted to run home. It would be about 400km and gradually I became aware of the scale of the task and what I had still not thought about. How much luggage can one run with? How much would I drink each day? Is 60km a day utopian, or is it something I should be able to manage though I am not used to such high altitudes. Can I actually only run on flat terrain? Which shoes shall I run in and how the hell will I find my way through Germany? That was my biggest problem. I have been running for just 9 months with a watch and have run wherever I wanted and regularly got lost. Which app, file, navigation and street view to choose and above all, where to plan that? On the mobile phone, like the last few times, or on the IPad and computer? How to link my watch to the computer? Many questions and I had to carefully work out the answers, because each answer gave rise to new questions.

That was just the beginning, I still had the run to do. The awareness only gradually dawned on me.

I had experimented with my rucksack a couple of days earlier and the greatest



problem, 'would everything fit in?' quickly became the least of my problems. On a test run I sought to test whether it would be worthwhile for me to fit in a special pole bag so there would perhaps be room for a rain jacket and long trousers in my rucksack. After 1km the bag was getting on my nerves and was jettisoned. On this test run things went wrong, in fact, everything went wrong. The navigation didn't work, the mobile didn't connect, the pants were too short, the rucksack was too heavy and the shoe-sock combination was a bad choice.

I am so happy that I had only spent 4 weeks trying to work on this tour, because after 10 weeks of planning I would probably never have started. I emphasise once again during these 4, I was fully occupied with the organisation, arranging the accommodation and above all the navigation. There is so much going around in one's head when one undertakes such a project, that it would have been wonderful not to have been aware of these thoughts. The worries alternated. At the beginning it was the worry about the corona virus and if the whole thing could take place (I therefore probably planned it "I can anyway not start

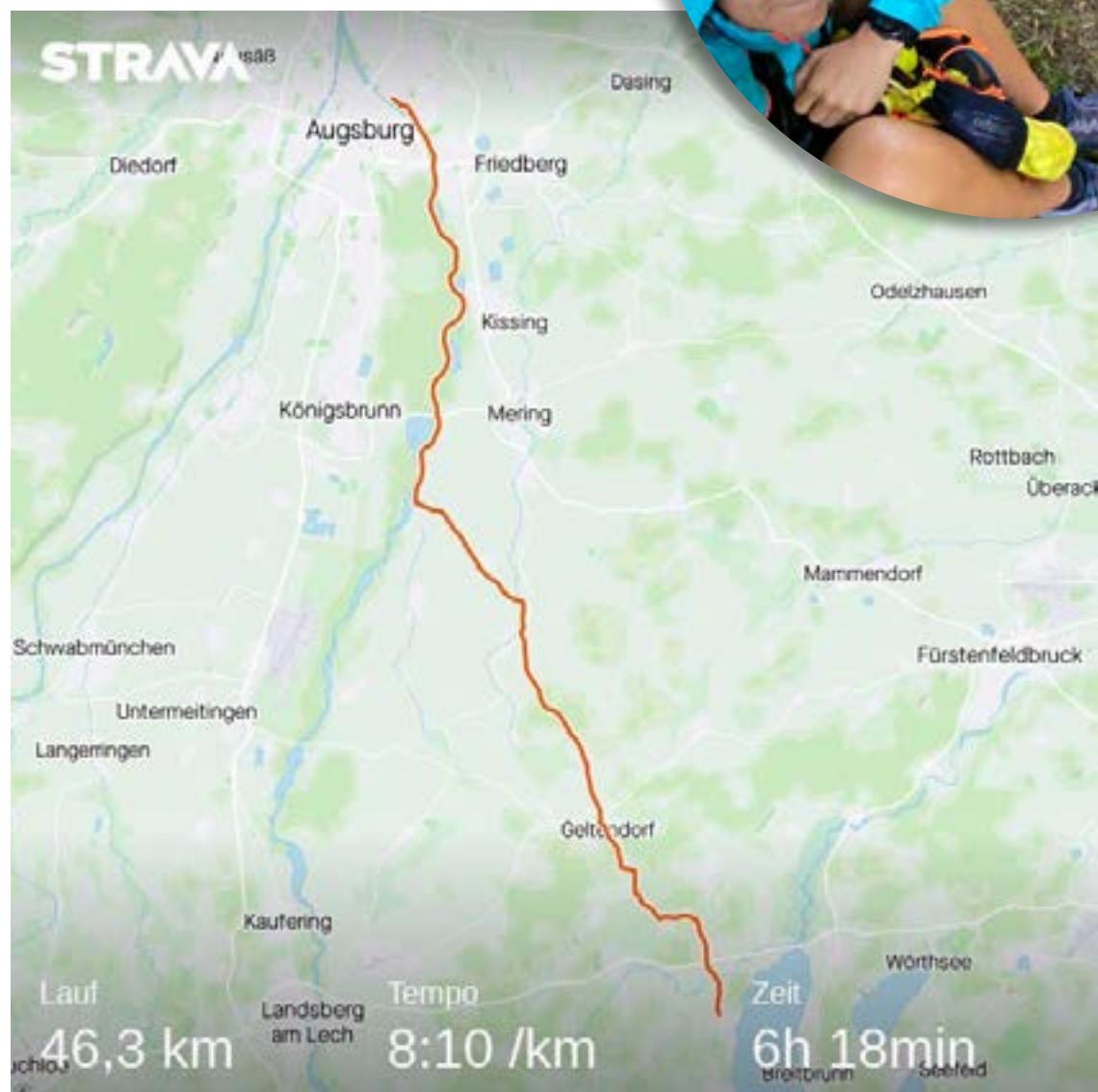
running"), then I would worry whether because of shift working, my training was not optimal or was totally inappropriate. Then came the worry that I couldn't influence the weather. I literally just went for it and always had the option to be able to take the train if things weren't going well. I had sent my luggage home and optimised my mistakes, and after a sleepless night I set off at 7.40 on a Wednesday morning. It is a privilege to be able to live here in the Alps and I enjoyed every single meter of the first stage. Almost.'

The first day one must actually run, but one must also establish a certain routine. It was a wonderful, cool morning as I ran the 62km along the rivers to my first overnight stop on the Ammersee. By midday I found it incredibly warm (in retrospect I know it was perfect weather) and therefore I realised I must plan more stops with friends and take things more slowly. I now know my first day was my fastest. In the midday heat, after 33km, I arrived breathless, at the home of a friend where there was everything I needed after a day's running. I must say, I normally have a very, very good appetite, however a couple of days before the tour I had a slight loss of appetite and that happened

after any further strenuous activity. Already on the morning of the first stage I had to force myself to eat breakfast and unfortunately, I had to manage with many small snacks in the first few days which is why after relatively short stretches I was completely burnt out. The pause after 33km was heaven on earth. From there I went along another beautiful river to my best friend's home 12km further on. Here I hung my clothes in the sun and topped up my carbohydrate store (we talked while eating, people were interested in what I had to say). I recharged my batteries with a midday sleep and bound my feet that had swollen with the heat. Unfortunately, for the next 16km I felt physically exhausted and could find no more energy than to drag myself through the first 4 stages. I still had no overview that evening of the extent of an 8 stage tour. To tell the truth, I guess I was in self-preservation mode, I always had in mind my aim to get home and to somehow get through my daily stages.

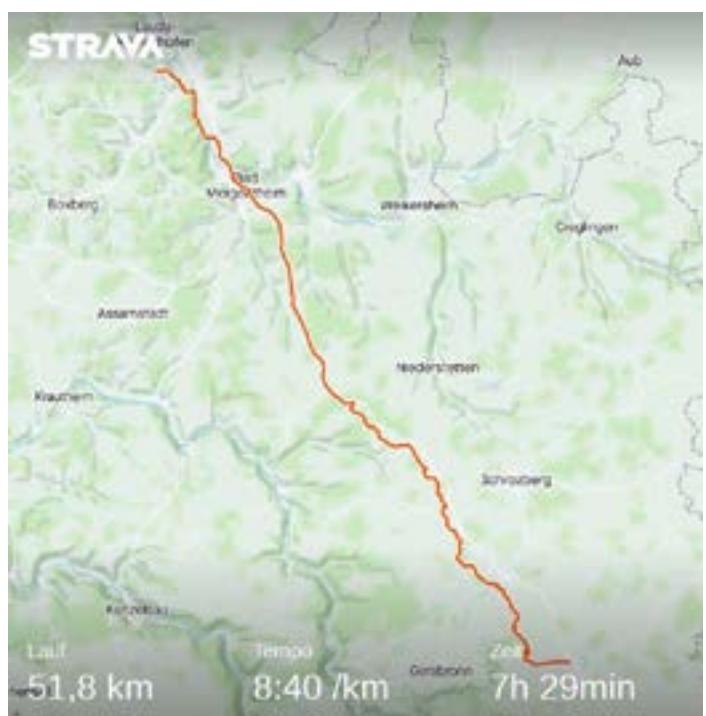
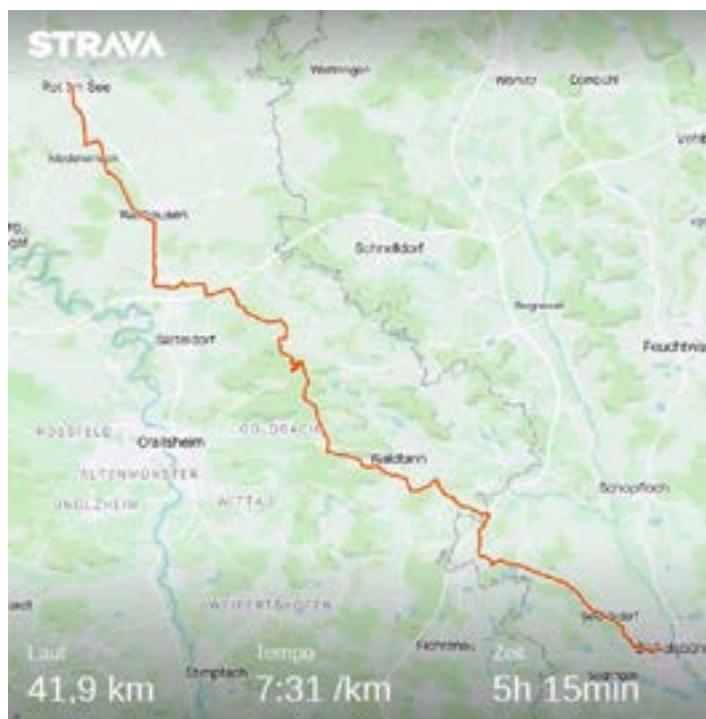
For the first 2 stages I slept in private accommodation and so I had to see to my own breakfast and midday meal that unfortunately affected the quality of the food I ate. I was sometimes asked whether I did something special to help my recovery. If I am honest I recovered quickly, got done what I need to do, also I showered, washed my clothes and got everything ready for the next day. Then I put my legs up and put my feet in the fresh air and once again looked at the images of the day's itinerary. I hadn't many contacts. Family and a few friends kept me up to date and then quite soon sleep. 3 hours in the

evening goes very quickly and the next morning at 6 o'clock the alarm went off. I was aware that I would win no prize with my time and that I had nothing to lose, but my sleep and recovery for the next stage were very important to me, therefore I always tried not to waste time by dawdling. Running stages are actually like pilgrimages only faster. The good thing is that over the



whole day one can see new and exciting things, and I was always curious about what was coming next but one can only see things once and then they are gone. Also, on the second day I realised that I took my breaks as they came and I was not looking for the perfect stopping place to optimise my running distance, so that I didn't miss a stop.

On the 2nd day the trail went many kilometres on soft forest floor along the Lech, through wonderful forests, passing Roe deer and foxes to Augsburg. It was a 40km stretch ideal for the day after a long run. The first few days it was below 10 degrees in the morning, really fresh and pleasant to start running. On the third



day there were a few heavy downpours. One of them brought me to my knees. Literally! I had to save my biscuits and dry hankies. You might wonder what became of my biggest problem? The navigation was so brilliant right from my doorstep that I didn't even have to think about it. Before the 3rd stage I was fine. I don't know whether I told myself or someone triggered it, but the fact is on the 3rd day things went flat. Not mentally, no, not that, but physically things simply didn't work. It's true that if one wakes up in the morning feeling crushed, there is time during the day to recover but I dragged myself through that 3rd day. It should actually, scenery wise, have been the most beautiful day. A day of rivers, mountains and old towns... it was no 65km stretch, that is the point, because next time I will plan things differently. My feet weren't hurting, but there were a few blisters. My stomach wasn't happy and was probably wondering why it was being pushed from above when it was no use. The body can manage without energy, but not if it has run 60km and needs time to recover. It would not be a crime to take a small short cut. I had only certain rules in my head about what works and what I would not do. It never actually occurred to me to stop, only when others would stop, say, for medical reasons or according to how one felt. It was always about runners, not really about me. Through the problem with eating and my stomach I developed something I hadn't experienced before, cramps in my calves. I thought on the first day my knee would be the problem, until after 120km I realised that I might not have taken enough sodium and magnesium? That is unfortunately a drawback when you try to do everything yourself, you must deal with things on your own, one must always have in mind where one gets what and above all one must be able to do this when one can no longer think clearly or make connections. I am not stupid... actually. That day, without hesitation I went to a bus station and enquired about a bus to take me to my next overnight stop. A bit aimlessly I wandered round the old town of Donauswörth, grabbed an evening meal to go and with no appetite ate a liver sausage bread roll, I am sorry about how I behaved when I arrived at my accommodation. I just wanted to go to bed, not even to shower. This 65km day became a 43km day that ended in a wonderful chateau. Once again, I ate, lying in bed and not going out to explore this wonderful place, but the castle that I could see from my bed was enough and fully compensated for the stresses of the day.

The next morning and once again I was happy to be alone and above all to be on my way without a camera team. The start of the run was not much fun, but it was the kind of beautiful stretch that I had previously done and it was such a nice day. I had my audio book and had nothing else to do other than to run and listen to my body. By midday I was enjoying the run and seeing the little things. A pleasant chat with some cyclists who rode past me and the freedom to see nature and towns, without looking at them through a mobile phone. After a couple of days I had got into a routine, which I spoke of at the beginning. By 11 o'clock I had normally run 20-25km and could allow myself a lovely break. It was hard on those days when 20km was not half the distance... almost every day.

Stage 4 led me through a large town where I spent midday, over typically endless German fields, to Dinkelsbuhl, that I can now say was the highlight of my tour. The old town was a dream, I did some shopping, had an appetite and with a full stomach at 9 o'clock I happily fell into a coma in my 5th hotel bed. Every morning up to this point I asked myself what had I forgotten be-

cause I could hardly feel my rucksack on my back. Nothing was missing, and they say women pack too much!

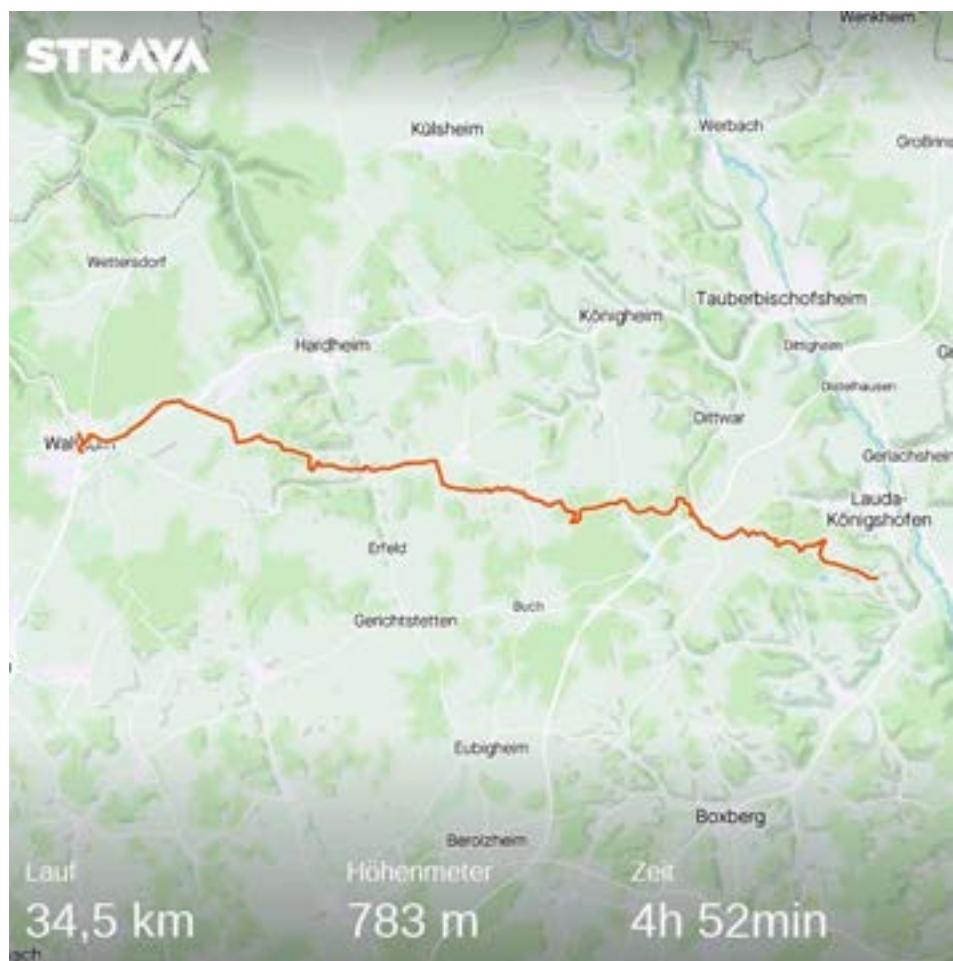
Cola turned out to be my usual drink. Navigation was a dream, which I was most pleased about. Day 5 and I slowly began to think about what I was going to do, kind of crazy! What would otherwise have taken me 4 hours by car, I had now experienced as an exciting adventure. I was running home.

Germany is so beautiful, the small things people put in their gardens, the wild creatures one sees, the history and the people themselves.

Day 5 was a Sunday and was not only the end of the week, but also the end of the month. A month with 435km and a week with 235 km. For logistical reasons I was very late starting stage 6 and hot weather was forecast, that was not what I wanted. From here the route went through never ending fields and vineyards, the last 3 stages were at higher altitudes and were the warmest stages. Unfortunately, it was here that all the ligaments and muscles in my legs threatened to go on strike.

But at least I was eating well again, and I was getting a sun tan that would last me the rest of the year. The day was never ending and behind every hill was another 2km of field paths in the sun. When I finally arrived at a tiny village I was greeted with, "Frau Schwarz, in the tower room there is a bathtub and a menu for you" I think that when I made the reservation, I had asked for a bathtub. The next day I was really happy, my sister came not only to my last stage but also came to the hotel to spend the evening of the 7th stage with me.

But day 7 was the worst day. I didn't feel like doing anything. And this blue sky!!! The way was along mown field paths and I had to run through hip high grass and I lost my way. My water had gone and my food ration was used up and to make the most of the countryside I had set the navigation to go around all the towns. It was insanely hot and that alone was enough to make me switch off. My knee was becoming more swollen. The thought came to me that I must stop running. Things weren't going well, I was almost hobbling down the path. I started running along the streets instead of through the field paths. Easier underfoot and above all to navigate. If the road had not been closed, perhaps someone would have come by. After aimlessly running and with no water I began to think about





what to do (in the few far and wide shady places) I set my phone to show the way to the next place. It sounds melodramatic, but it was much worse, I was kind of overcome and I simply approached a young woman. I think she was overwhelmed by my simultaneous need for water, food and a train. After 34km the day ended in Walldürn. The woman had driven me to the train station and there was a train for my destination. It was my train. One thing is certain, the next time I will devote the same care of planning and navigation to every stage as I did to the first three stages. The evening was wonderful, a great town that was within reach of my home and my sister and I had a lovely

meal,
chatted

and I no longer felt like a mad runner. Life was wonderful. Even with much too much sun. After stage 4, I became aware that the whole thing could work well and I could get through it. If I had only reckoned with the first 4 difficult stages, the remainder after that.. would have been



fine. As everything changed, it became reversed. The last stage brought me to the edge of madness. At the start of the run I was pleased, that though my knee was indeed swollen, it was not painful and we started at a good pace. It was great to be simply running again... that continued for 5km. The burden of the right knee went down the shinbone of the left leg. I don't believe I have ever felt such pain. If I am frank, I knew that nothing was broken, it was because I had continued running. When a pain arises from such a strain, then it's different from the pain from a fall or twisting something. I knew that I would run through it and I knew that if I could get through the last 42km, with my sister by my side, all would be ok. Right, her bike tyre was punctured and the surprise they had planned would have to be postponed for a while, but it didn't really matter. It has become evident that I would be

limping through the woods with a bike under my arm. It was a wonderful trip with some crazy adventures, but it all came to that.

Above all, though one cannot prepare for every eventuality, one should, in hindsight, always rely on oneself when preparing and planning a run and trust your own feelings.

On the last day of my 8 stage tour there was a spur of the moment pit stop with refreshments, a surprise in the Odenwald woods and a bike swap with

my sister, then we carried on to a surprise - my family had organised a small finishing line. By hook or by crook they got me there. I was home at last, on the hill above my home town, and then the thunderstorm began.



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5000KM THAT IS WHAT HE CALLS AN ULTRA!

An interview with Paweł Zuk, who completed the 5000km race in Athens 2020 attaining 2nd place.

Interviewed in Polish and translated by Leila Majewska (Tough Trails Race Director).

Photos courtesy Paweł Zuk



Success after reaching the finish line. Like the first Pole.

I started my running journey late in life, but once I realised that I wanted to be an ultra-road runner, everything I've done was well planned. Slowly, by taking small steps, first 24 hours, 48 hours and 6 day events, 10 days in New York and 1000 miles in Athens. Year after year, step after step, I took up longer challenges that allowed me to get to know my body and make decisions towards very long ultra-running challenges that I dreamed about.

Leila: Hello Paweł, and congratulations on your huge achievement! Let us kick off with a classic question: What expectations did you have before the race, and what surprised you the most?

Paweł: Thanks. This race was the next step in my running journey, not an accidental choice, but a well thought out decision followed by a long preparation.



I start the next day of the fight. After 3 hours of sleep, at 4;50 I go out into rain spinning my loops.

Listen to Nicole on the [Running Podcast](#) (In German).

Leila: Do you think that the 1000 mile race in Athens helped you in preparation for the 5000 km event?

Pawel: Oh yes, definitely! The distance was longer, but the time and place gave me a lot of information that helped me in making a decision, I had a dilemma, should I try to do a 5000km challenge in Athens or in New York? Both races offer very similar distances, but a different construction of it, therefore me and my team decided to go for Athens because of logistics. We knew what to expect weather-wise, and what kind of conditions the organisers could offer us. Both races (1000miles and 5000km) were in the Greek winter time, so strong winds and extreme amounts of rain, the 1000miles race that I won a year before gave me a lot of answers and information on how to prepare for 5000km.

Leila: What was the biggest challenge that you've faced during the race? You've mentioned the weather, I assume it was a huge factor?

Pawel: Yes, challenges like that need a well thought out tactic and it is a big logistical challenge. Me and my team, we do a lot of great work during the year to prepare for it. Even now, when the world is turned upside down, and running options are very limited, we spend a lot of time analysing what can be done better or differently, getting to know my body and me as a runner. Some things, like weather, we can't influence and we have to be ready for any possibility. As I've mentioned before, winter in Greece is very specific and we expected it would be a very difficult challenge.

Leila: How was it to work with your team for so long?

Pawel: The time limit to complete the race was 60 days and nights, therefore me and my team made a decision about the people who supported me would be changing every 8-10 days. I think it was a good approach and a right decision, because crewing for me was a huge physical challenge for my team. I think that 10 days of intensive work with 3 hours sleep each night, was the maximum time that team members

could handle by giving 100% to the challenge, any later mistakes could have happened, and each mistake could lead to huge consequences. We've set a bar high planning to complete the race 10 days before its cut-off, so in 50 days and nights, the strategy that we chose worked really well.

Leila: How did you build your training to prepare for race? What kind of distance had you been running 6 months prior to a race?

Pawel: I don't change my training and I don't follow any plan. I don't believe in strict routines calculated on a paper, and I don't have a personal trainer. Everything I do and run, is dictated by the type of challenges I want to do now and in the future, aka very long distances. Generally, I run a lot but not too fast, of course I have some fast runs throughout the year, 1 or 2 marathons under 3 hours, some mountain and trail runs. I do a lot of cycling, gym and if time allows I go swimming. Generally my training focuses on all of my body, because running very long distances exploits all of my body, and the majority of injuries aren't typi-

cal runner injuries, so not only injuries to legs or hips happen, but also shoulder girdle and back pain can lead to a huge consequences.

Leila: Do you walk, power walk or jog during ultra-running events?

Pawel: Choosing the length of stride, the speed of it, it's a very important matter. Ultra-road runners have the specific stride, we do not pull the knee much upfront or feet to buttocks. We try to use as little energy as possible, so our stride is like sliding without lifting feet much above the ground. Training in this stride is difficult, for those runners who have good faster times on shorter distances, because it is easy for adrenalin to take over. That is why we need to plan in advance and follow it. After a few days (this is different for each runner), the body breaks and thinks that running is a natural body movement, sitting or walking becomes very painful. In my case I prefer to jog rather than walk, because walking hurts me a lot.

Leila: Do you train at night?

Pawel: Not particularly at





One of the injuries. Baker's cyst. Fortunately, I could run my 100km and the service in 4 days managed with the liquid ...

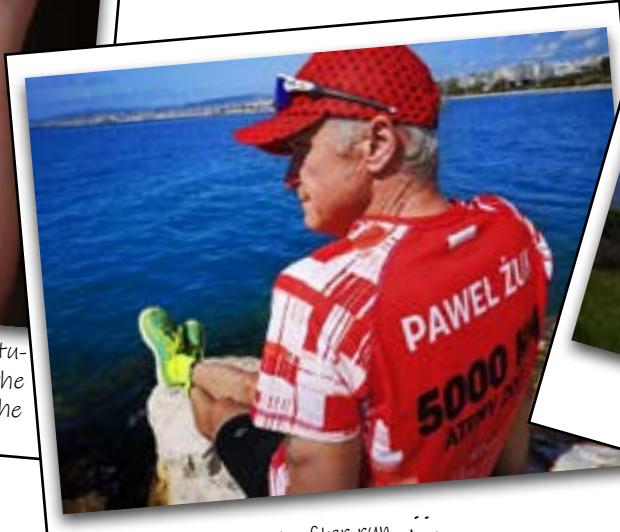
night, but I have during a year a few 24-48h events or night-time marathons. I must admit it is hard for me to run at night, especially around 2-3am, when my body is usually tired and expects a rest. It is a big fight to stay awake, but when you are determined it gives you a kick to carry on.

Leila: During the 5000 km race did you have moments when you wanted to give up? How did you overcome them?

Pawel: Weather, the weather was the hardest part, it was nearly 30 days of rain and strong winds, and tears were coming into my eyes many times. I didn't feel like I wanted to give up, because deciding to run such a long event you know that you have to be very determined, and the target to complete the race is deeply rooted. However, some thoughts to let go of strategy a little to finish a day or two later, happened. Eating something nice or getting a change of clothes usually helped with bringing my focus back.

Leila: You've mentioned eating something nice! Did you have a nutrition plan? Are you on some sort of diet?

Pawel: Oh no! From the day I started running shorter and longer races, I still experiment with food and try to choose what is best for my body. Being on the move for so long requires us to give our body food that is easy to digest, so no fried or



Rest after run ☺

grilled food. Most things are in mashed form, basically high in energy and easy to digest. I don't decline myself some treats during the races like pizza or sausage, and my favourite is homogenic cheese (mixture between yogurt and cheesecake cheese, popular in Poland), which of course is impossible to buy abroad, so we always carry 5 boxes with us, as a special treat. I am also a very specific runner, because I can't drink water during races as it goes right through me, so I mainly have isotonic drinks, either bought ones or home-made with honey, salt and chia seeds or other seeds.

Leila: Which moments in the race did you consider to be the best?

Pawel: Days when it was sunny were really cheering me up and the daily mileage that I had planned for myself (62-65 miles) was becoming much easier. I had my birthday during the race, so my friends made me a surprise and prepared a cake and champagne. Also around a week before my planned finish time I knew I felt strong enough to finish in the time I had planned.

Leila: Did you have any injuries during the race?

Pawel: Oh yes, 50 days and nights of running 100km+ non stop, with very little sleep, it's a huge undertaking for the body and regardless of training, the body's reaction is still a huge unknown. I had 2 serious injuries. I had a Baker's cyst under my knee that I struggled with for almost a week, around the 4th day of my injury I couldn't bend my leg at all as the cyst grew to the size of tangerine. Lots of creams, ice massages and tapes helped and after a week I managed to clear an injury, during all this process I was still going on the track and doing 100km a day. Around the 22-23rd day of the race I had an Achilles injury. I fell because I couldn't put weight on my other leg, and this injury was so serious that I was required to stay still and lie down for 2 days with massages, ice packs and lots of creams and tape. This is when I lost the leader position.

Leila: Do you plan to run this race again?

Pawel: For now each race is different and I don't plan to run this one soon but this may change in a few years. I do however, have some plans towards the US, as I would like to participate in a race 5000km from San Francisco to New York. However, with the current economic situation this may be very hard, as it will be difficult to get spon-

sors.
I will slowly collect all the paperwork for it and I am hoping that it will happen.

Leila: Any plans for this or next year?

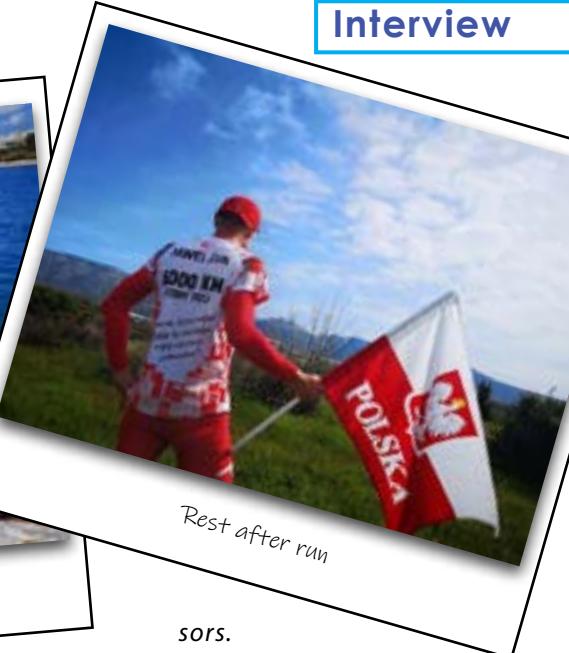
Pawel: I hope that I will be able to organise in mid-July a small 50 people race to celebrate my 200th marathon as a symbolic race. I've also heard that Greece is managing the situation with coronavirus really well, so I am hoping I will be able to participate in a race called Pheidippides Authentic Marathon, which is in the middle of November. Greeks should be able to organise it as smaller events can happen, and these types of events usually have very few participants, usually 10-30 people.

Leila: One more question, what is the best advice you can give to those who want to become road ultra runners and run long distances?

Pawel: If someone decides to run races above a marathon, they must make a decision either they want to run on roads or on trails as both are very specific and require different movements from our body. On a long event going to the toilet 2-3 times can impact on our position, because we will lose 3-5km which later on will be very hard to gain back. One of



Rest after run



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Interview

the most important things for runners are shoes! Good shoes make running easier and more efficient. Most great runners have shoes fitted to their feet, they often cut out some parts of them inside to make them fit perfectly. The other thing is your head, visualising our target and knowing why we are in this race is important. Every ultra runner needs a strong body and strong mind, to be able to be successful. Believe me, even the best of the best have moments when the mind plays tricks on them, but staying focused and determined is key to success in my opinion.

Leila: Thank you very much for your time and hopefully soon you will get a chance to complete in the next races.

Pawel: Thanks, and hopefully once it's over ...



The sunsets were sometimes beautiful. As if the whole sky was on fire.



Determination kept pushing me forward



I cried more than once during the run ...
those were hard times



And another injury. Achilles left leg. Two days without running. But this serious injury was also quickly healed



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Q&A with Mara Guler-Cionca

Translated by Marcella Dragan

In January 2020 Mara Guler-Cionca took part in the 1000 mile race during the Athens International Ultramarathon Festival in Greece setting new National records on the way to her finish in 15:21:23:50. Mara now holds Romanian Women's records at 24 hour, 48 hour, 6 day as well as 1000 miles. Her 24 hour pb is the second best all-time Romanian performance.

Ultrarunning World had the opportunity to ask Mara 20 questions about her experience at the festival which featured the world's first 5000 km race.

UW: How did you become inspired to run multiday races?

Mara: I started running as an amateur in 2014 and gradually increased the number of km and, implicitly, days of running. In 2016 I ran my first 24 hour race, it was a challenge and a success for me. The first time running 181km and, further, I only tested my limits. I really love running and the feeling of freedom it gives.

UW: Are there many women running multiday or ultras in Romania?

Mara: In Romania there are a few women who run ultramarathons given the fact that there are no races longer than 24 hours but Romania has potential.

UW: Are there any women runners in particular who have inspired you?

Mara: I don't have a model of runners to inspire me, I admire a few runners and I try to take the good parts from each one, I try to make and cut my unique path in Ultramarathon.

UW: Was the 2018 Florida race a good experience?

Mara: The Florida 2018 race was an unforgettable experience for me. It was my first multiday race, especially since I had only run 48 hours at the longest. There was 653km, beautiful, 2nd place open, 1st place female, a race that taught me what humiliation means in the face of pain and the satisfaction of a job well done in the end.

UW: How did you structure your training for Athens?

Mara: I made the decision to run 1000 miles in Athens 3 months before and as such I made the training progressively with a start, a peak in the second month and unloading in the last month in mileage.

UW: Did you have a nutrition plan? What kind of food formed the basis of your diet in the race?

Mara: I always have a Nutrition plan, I am a doctor and I read a lot. I use a balanced diet based on all the nutrients all the time, not just in the races. I try to eat as clean and light as possible, I don't use gels or bars in racing, I hydrate optimally with water or electrolytes.

UW: What kind of weekly/monthly mileage did you do in the 6 months leading up to the race?

Mara: Weekly 110-120km with a max of 200km, in the peak month 800 km total per month.

UW: What kind of training did you do? Did you have a multidisciplinary approach? Run/swim/cycle or weights/yoga?



Mara: In addition to the volume in km, I had 4 days out of 7 weight training, HIIT, crossfit and TRX.

UW: What did you think would be the major challenges leading up to the race?

Mara: I left for the race in Athens with a great challenge in mind: to finish it optimally, with the smallest "damage" and a satisfactory result.

UW: What were your goals?

Mara: The main objective was the 1st place.

UW: Did you have a crew?

Mara: I did not have a personal support crew, but we were a group of 3 Romanian runners who were together for better or worse. Later in the following days we had support from Cristi Borcan (photo bottom right) who helped me tremendously with his advice and support.

UW: What were your biggest issues during the actual race?

Mara: The biggest problems were those related to the management of rest during so many days, that balance between rest-performance, which ensures you the optimal recovery.

UW: How did you overcome them?

Mara: I made a plan from the very beginning from which I did not deviate, 3-4 hours of sleep at night and 2 hours during the day.

UW: What was it like working with a crew for so long?

Mara: It was especially exciting to start a race between strangers, without knowing yourself personally and to finish it with friends with the same passion.

UW: Do you feel that you were changed by the race? In what ways?

Mara: Yes, I can say that I was changed in this race by certain circumstances and not necessarily in a good way, this race taught me to be worse, less naive ... but I'm waiting for it to pass .. I'm a cheerful runner, positive, optimistic and with potential.

UW: Did you have any mind problems? How did you deal with them?

Mara: I've never had mental problems in racing, but it's not too late ... in fact my strong point is the mental aspect in all races, in addition I have a very developed sense of humor.

UW: What were the highlights of the race for you?

Mara: The highlight of the race was the record at 1000km. It simply overwhelmed me.

UW: Do you think you can improve on that performance?

Mara: Definitely there is room for better, that's why I'm moving on.

UW: You were taking part in the Autism24 hour in May? How did you get involved in that?

Mara: Yes I ran in the charity event, for Autism24, 220km in isolation and legally, just to help these children receive appropriate treatment. It is my first longer race in isolation and every time I run, I choose to support a humanitarian cause, it motivates me enormously.

UW: What are your ultra plans for the year ahead?

Mara: Next year I would like to see a constant evolution in the races I do, to participate in as many unique races as possible, and to surpass my records and limits.

[Donate to Autism24H](#)



Mara at the Athens award ceremony



Mara with Cristi Borcan



Nikki Love is an inspirational ultrarunner, educationalist, author and speaker. She was about to embark on a Guinness world record attempt to run across Australia, these plans were postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Instead Nikki is starting a treadmill version starting August 1st. Ultrarunning World caught up with Nikki in the early days of the lockdown where Nikki reflected on her running life, reminiscing about her adventures and her plans.

Abichal: So, you are in Australia?

Nikki: No, no, I was supposed to fly out today, I live here in the UK, I was meant to travel today and it hasn't happened. Now everything has changed because I have no idea when my start date is going to be. With this run across Australia, I had intended to do it last year but I had to postpone and this year I am having to postpone again. It's been really frustrating, I know at one point it is going to happen, it's just when? The UK will change its own stance on travel and everything like that, but I still have to wait until Australia makes its changes and then if I am reading everything correctly it probably won't be until October/November. At which point it is going to be too late for me running across Australia because it will be too hot trying to run across the desert in the mid summer. So it will probably have to wait until this time next year. That's a bit of a bummer, but it's one of the things I am aware of, I do these ultrarunning challenges and it requires a lot of patience, a lot of commitment and determination. When things don't go right you have to roll with the punches. It's more training for the mental side of it.

A: What's the longest event that you've done?

N: In 2017 I ran 63 marathons in 63 days through the UK. That was the first really big one that I did. The following year I ran around Ireland. Last year I was intending to run across Australia but things didn't quite work out. So instead I did a couple of little projects, I ran across the Netherlands and I ran the length of Wales, I ran on the Offa's Dyke path. They were training runs for my run across Australia. It just means now I get another 12 months to put the work in. I will probably do something as soon as we are allowed to travel

again, to keep the momentum going, I'm not sure what it's going to be. I will try and think of something to keep the intensity up, so that I have the right mindset to still be able to run across Australia.

A: What average mileage do you do on your every day runs?

N: I have just checked my Strava for March and I did 250km that's 130 miles. I don't tend to do high mileage. I run most days but I don't do a lot of long distance because I save that for these extra long runs. I have to fall between keeping my body safe and keeping the endurance up without overdoing it when I'm not actually doing these endurance runs. When I look at my Strava, I think, how can I do these things? But something clicks inside when I go into adventure mode and the endurance is there.

A: How do you support yourself on the trans-national runs?

N: I have a partner, Sharif, who generally tags along with me. He usually drives the van and waits for me. Running across the Netherlands I took a backpack and a tent with me and I camped so I was self-supported on that one. The run Offa's Dyke, we did that over 7 days, I ran it with somebody else and we had a van with us, we ran by ourselves but the van was always up ahead. We had a couple of days where we didn't have any support but that was ok. During the running around Ireland, Sherif drove, we had a car so he drove ahead and I ran the 750 miles that way. During the 63 marathons we had a van and a similar thing happened, I either did a loop or a point-to-point but he would always be waiting for me at the end, so that's how I do these things. The run across Australia was that he was going to be in a van, my usual practice is that he will be



in PROFILE

**Nikki Love in discussion with Ultrarunning World's Editor,
Abichal Sherrington
02/04/2020**

about 10km ahead of me and allow me to run 10km then I will grab something to eat, drink and keep going. The mileage per day in Australia was going to be 40 miles/60km a day. All the things I have done prior were practice runs for that whole how do you keep moving and keep the food intake up, how does the support work? My support works pretty well, we get along fine.

A: How many miles/km per day did you do on the Netherlands run?

N: The intention was for 40 miles a day, so it was practicing what I was going to do in Australia. It didn't quite work out, the first two days went fine, well I say fine, they were not fine, I struggled through them and then I broke my last 2 days and made them into 3 days so they were a little bit shorter. Instead of doing it over 4 days, I did it over 5. The intention had been 40 miles a day but carrying my backpack made it more difficult, which I am not going to be doing in Australia. Carrying a backpack with a tent, food and water all became a bit too tough. It makes a huge difference. I made my final few days easier by shortening the distance.

A: So you ran across the Netherlands, Offa's Dyke and where else did you run?

N: I ran around Ireland, that was pretty special. That was after doing the 63 marathons, I did a few longer days in that one just to see if I could go beyond a marathon per day. So my days drifted between 50 and 55km but then I had a couple of shorter days in there as well, because I didn't have to hit the marathon target every day, the run around Ireland felt a little bit freer. If I was feeling good, I ran further, I didn't have to say, I'll run 42km. On days when I felt really good I was pushing it up to the 55km. Again it was a tester for how was I going to run Australia, was I going to set a certain distance that I have to achieve everyday? Or should I roll with it

and see how I feel? It turns out I prefer to have a set distance that I know I have got to achieve because it is very easy to say lets see how we go today, if I have a bad day and drop the distance then all of a sudden I have got a lot to make up. That was the thought behind Australia because the Australia run is going to be a world record attempt. So it means you have to hit that distance every single day to make the time frame. That was all just testing to see what works and what doesn't. How do I feel and what the plans for Australia are going to be. The plans for Australia are going to be 60km everyday.

A: What was the sequence of your ultra runs?

N: I did the 63 Marathons in 2017, the run around Ireland in 2018 and then the run across the Netherlands and the run in Wales in 2019.

A: Have you done any long distance races?

N: Yes, I have done a couple of them, I don't really race that often. I have done some multi-stage races, I did a race called the Jungle Ultra organised by Beyond the Ultimate, which was in Peru, that was 5 days, 230km along the Amazon river. That was a self-sufficient race, we had to carry everything for the 5 days.

A: Did you enjoy that?

N: It absolutely terrified me. I don't think I have done anything quite as scary but I absolutely loved it, the first multi-day race that I had done. It was that click, it was just before I had done my 63 marathons, that I could actually do this stuff. I was harder, stronger and I was tougher than I thought I was. That was the catalyst to take on and do my own things. It really was an amazing experience, absolutely terrifying but amazing.

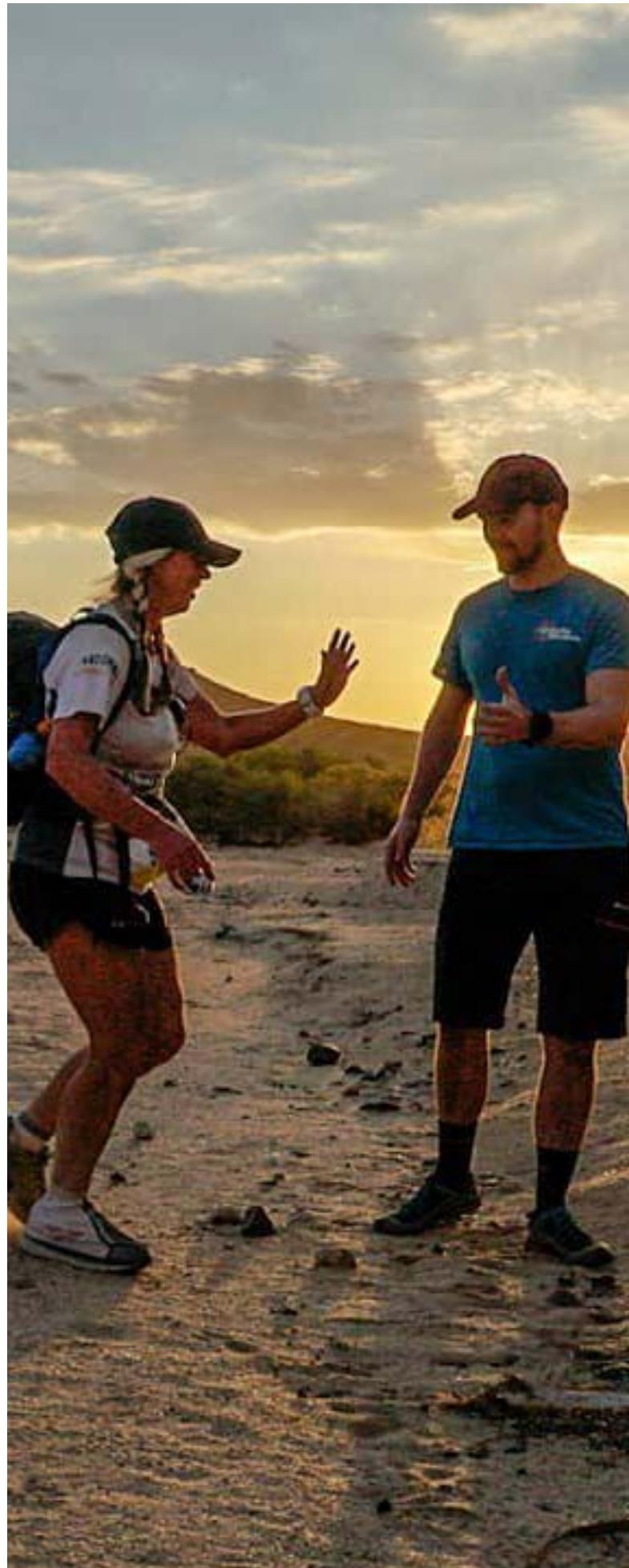
Interview

A: What was scary?

N: The terrain was scary, we were on some mountains that were so steep and the path was no wider than 2 of my feet placed side by side. There were only 55 of us, over that sort of distance doing a marathon plus per day, you spread out very quickly. I spent most of my time on my own going through the jungle and knowing what's in the jungle. Knowing that there's snakes and there's spiders and there's jaguars and there's caiman in the water. All these things that can potentially kill you and you are just out there alone doing your thing, wondering if you're going to get to the end of the day, that absolutely terrified me. It was a good experience of mental strength as well as the physical side. I still had to run the distance or stagger the distance. So that was terrifying but a great experience of being on my own and having to find the courage to keep going and not having anybody to rely on. There were always checkpoints and we had a tracker on us so we knew we were being watched, but being left to your own space and I had to keep moving was an experience. I did that in 2016. I did another one of their races, that was the Desert Ultra in Namibia, again another 5 day 250km run through the desert. That was different conditions but again it had that extreme element to it. It was extremely hot, I don't think I have ever run in that heat, one day they said it got up to 55 degrees, that's just insane. Those two are actual races that I've done. Back here in the UK I did a double marathon, a 100km, one of those weekend long distance runs. I don't tend to do many runs or races.

A: How did you start running?

N: What did I do up to the 63 Marathons in 2017? I started running at high school, I absolutely fell in love with cross country running but it was always this thing in the background. I became an aerobics and a gym instructor, running was just this little thing I did in the background right throughout my life whilst I was doing this other fitness stuff. When I came to the UK, running was the only thing I had and I used it to find my way around the country, the new home town I came to, Nottingham, then when things got really tough personally, running was the thing that reminded me of my strength. I started taking up long distance running because the further I went, the stronger I felt and the more in control, that's when I started doing the marathons, in 2001, I did my first marathon. I just kept the running going and became a running instructor and was doing the whole thing for everyone else, getting them motivated, getting them from couch to 5k, to beyond. It was like, what do I want to do with this? Where's my ambition? I'm still not doing the things I want to do, it was then I set out to do 7 marathons in 7 days, that was my very first attempt at a multi-day in 2010. I did that and it felt like I had nearly killed myself, I couldn't move on day 8. I was like this stuff is ridiculous, it's really hard but I still thought that I was capable of more because when I did that, I thought, what did I learn? How can I improve? I had that mindset, everybody around me said, you've done that, tick it off, leave it alone and don't go back to it ever again. I was like, no,no,no, I want to go back to it because I want to change or I want to improve and implement everything I have learnt. I learnt so much, I didn't do this or I didn't do that. It took me the whole 7 years from 2010 to 2017 to build up the courage to give it another go. At that point I had been to the jungle and worked out how strong I could be, it was time to do the 63 marathons. That was the timeline, there were big gaps in between but now I am trying to make up for it because I turned 50 in 2017 and it was that thing of, come on if you're not going to do it now, when





are you going to do it? The catalyst since then is wanting to do the things rather than just dream of the things because it's going to come to a point where I won't be able to do all of these things. I'm getting on with it now.

A: That's very interesting - that you had that inspiration and developed it, you saw that it was good and wanted more. I have a website called Mulitdays.com and that was started because that was what I was really interested in. I was part of a group that organised long distance races and I started helping out at a 6 day race, then I had the chance to run a 10 day race. So that was my interest and it changed me so much, I've learnt so much. I have always been interested in how my mind works and evolves and how we are able to deal with these challenges. It is not until we do them, that we actually figure out our way forward.

N: *I do a lot of talks at primary schools and talk about it in a way that the kids will get it. I talk about having found my superpowers and my superpowers are that I'm ambitious, that I'm brave, I'm committed, adaptable, persistent, determined, resilient, proud, happy and loved. I talk about these 10 things, whilst I ran, it was these things, these inside things were the actual things that helped me achieve what I've achieved. They are the things that I work on daily to improve the other things that I do because without all those internal things I wouldn't be able to do it. That's how I describe what these skills are. Not so much the running skills. It works really well with the schools because the schools generally have similar words as their values for what the schools are trying to achieve. It's not just maths and English and all that sort of stuff, it's values that they talk about. These are the things that can keep you going when you know that you have got them, these internal strengths. That's what I learnt doing these runs and that's the thing I want to talk about when I talk to people not just kids but adults as well. I get asked the questions, what do you eat? How do you train? Actually, what do you find within you? If you can find it yourself, then you are going to find how amazing you are and what you are truly capable of achieving. I like to talk about those.*

A: Do you have an approach or a strategy or a philosophy? I have lots of little sayings I use, "If you risk nothing, you gain nothing." That's the whole, come on this is the time to do this. No need to be scared about it, there are many, many risks but you won't get anywhere if you don't throw yourself at them and give it a go. I love the word "Impossible". It is actually two words, "I'm possible". You just have to come at it at a different angle. All these things float through my head when times get tough, there are always tough times when one is doing these adventures. Basically it's why? Come back to the why. That's the strategy that I use, I always start with the why. Then you can always come back to the why. I write all the reasons why I want to do these adventures. For example, why would I run around Ireland, it's interesting, it's good, it's fun. Why did I want to do it in the first place? I started with the point that I was going to raise a lot of money for some charities so that was a great why. I then wanted to see what I was capable of and I had to change my level, if I had kept going along at the same level, I would be just repeating everything so I had to change the situation, it was a change from the 63 marathons. Pulling up to the next thing, so it's a learning why. There are so many levels to the whys, I spent a lot of time writing about them, working them out so that when I'm having a tough day, I'm immediately reminded



of what it is I am out there for and is it important for me? If it is more important than the pain that I am in at that particular time or the down state I am in, then it will be enough to keep me going. Without that why, there is no point. It's being very, very, connected with the purpose of what you are there for.

A: I had the feeling there that it's like an upward spiral, you are feeding yourself. How your inspiration helps you to get over the problem. Getting over the problems gives you the confidence to move forward and moving forward brings you to new places and new challenges.

N: Yes it's a beautiful upward spiral. I have worked on my self talk and my self love because you need both of those to be able to keep going. That allows you to accomplish and when you self accomplish your self belief and confidence grows, your self talk and your self love become even higher so that you can achieve more. It is this upward spiral of you doing what you want to do and what you believe your purpose is.

A: Do you meditate?

N: I would really like to learn how to meditate. Running is really meditation. When you're out there, it really is. I can't run all the time and I would really like to learn how to get to sleep better. I haven't quite learnt to meditate whilst stopping. It's a thought process, I think, I do write a lot and the writing helps me get out the nervousness or the concerns but mainly I do this by running.

A: Do you have a particular nutritional strategy during the races?

N: I do try and eat healthily, I am very aware that I have to eat good food to keep the body working properly because I don't give it enough time to do the full recovery so I have got to make sure that I have got my proteins in there, that I have got my good fats and my carbohydrates. A fair bit of junk food gets in there too because the calorie need is so high that I would love to say that I don't eat donuts or cakes when I'm doing these runs. I eat lots of donuts and cakes because they are so high in calories and they are easy to take in and ice creams are my favourite. You will see me running along the road with an ice cream in my mouth. It looks a bit odd because most people go running to not eat that sort of stuff. I have learnt what I can take in whilst I am running and my favourite is having a chicken thigh with avocado in a bread roll. It's squashed in there and I keep the skin on as well so there's protein, carbs and fats, it's always in small chunks so that I can nibble and keep moving. What I have found is that at some point my tummy doesn't like to play nice, then I struggle to eat and I just have to keep pushing the food in because you are balancing that thing of I don't feel like eating but I need to eat because without the food you are going to run out of steam. I have tried lots of different combinations and over the multi-weeks my taste buds change so at the start I like fruit and nuts then I will go off of that and it has to be really salty. It all depends on what is going on with my body, if I don't have enough salt in, then I am going to crave salt. It really means listening to the body with the understanding that you have got to keep putting the basics in and then everything else comes and goes. I have learnt to go with whatever I am craving. If I am craving things like pork pies then I am not taking in enough salt because they are heavy in salt. There is always a reason for things and I do like to have a nice

pint of pale ale at the end. When I ran around Ireland it was a pint of Guinness. Most of the time it is just a normal diet but on these things it's packing in the things I have practiced with. I love bacon and generally that means I need salt.

A: Do you use any drinks?

N: I use electrolyte drinks.

A: Are there any that you actually like rather than sponsored by?

N: I have used Tailwind, I have been given it. It's not a high favourite of mine tastewise. My favourite is SIS lemon. That's very specific because I don't like their other flavours. I crave a lemon san pellegrino, again very specific, I want that one, nothing else is going to satisfy me. Mainly I just drink water and eat a fair bit. I do take salt tablets especially when it gets warm because I sweat a lot and you can see on my clothes the sweat stains. Rather than trying to get it from my food I do try and put in salt sticks. Again it is about being aware and watching the evidence, the cravings and the sweat marks.

A: Do you eat regularly?

N: I try and keep a practice of taking something on every 5km. If I don't do that, then I forget and I start to go bang, it's too late then, it's more a practice of eating regularly. When I train, I train differently, I train without carrying anything. I train on an empty stomach to have that feeling of being without energy so when I'm actually doing something and I have got the energy it feels better. I carry bags of already made up dried fruit and nuts, and my sandwiches. I generally always run with a backpack which has stuff in it so if Sharif is not with me then I have something to eat and nibble on along the way. Usually later on in the day I will eat during those 5km as well because that's when I start getting tired and more hungry.

A: How much do you sleep?

N: That varies, one of the upsides of doing this later in life is that you have a lot more experience and determination. I have hit the perimenopause stage of my life and on top of doing these things depending on where I am in my cycle, it impacts my sleep, it really does. I have been recording it to see how it impacts. Most of the times I would sleep pretty easily. I am writing a book at the moment, I get to the point where I pass out, I am so tired. Depending on where I am in my cycle, my hot flushes go through the night, so after I have run, I am pouring sweat and I have sleep troubles on those nights of trying to get any kind of sleep. I will go through a couple of nights where I can't sleep at all or it doesn't feel like I am sleeping and be absolutely shattered and fall back into that pattern again of not being able to go to sleep. Especially on these multi-weeks I'm going through cycles, it's yet another thing to work out and find what works for me. I have been looking and seeing what other people do. The advice that I read most of for women of my age is to take it easy (Ha ha ha!). To slow things down and to not to give myself too much of a hard time if I don't want to run at these crazy distances. That is fine but it doesn't fit into what I'm trying to do. I have to come up with a different way to deal with this. With the tiredness, with the aches and pains and the hot flushes and





with everything like that. I'm writing as well to try and explain my take on it all. It's different for everybody but when I started looking for people who had done similar distances and what their experience had been, not many women had written about the impact the menopause has on women.

A: How does your menstrual cycle affect you on a day to day basis? Also toilet stops? It's much more of an issue for women than it is for men.

N: That is what scuppered me running across the Netherlands. The night before I started, I camped up at the start point and my period started. I had stuff with me because I thought just in case but I wasn't expecting it and when it came, it totally threw me off. Not only was I heavily bleeding, I was in a country that I didn't know where things were. I had checked out supermarkets and then discovered that supermarkets in the Netherlands don't have public toilets because I was thinking I could always go to a supermarket to the toilet. I had to work out where I was going to go whilst trying to run 40 miles and carrying 10 kilos on my back. That was a stack of many things not going right. I had to keep going and trying to find places to go to the toilet.

A: Where did you go?

N: I found one public convenience and the rest of the time I just had to find bushes and I carried stuff with me, antiseptic wipes and gels. It really did have a bad impact, I didn't enjoy it. Consequently I struggled those first 2 days. It played with my head, this is horrible, having hysterics, it really wasn't pleasant. Later on in the day the restaurants opened up after 3pm so I was able to pop into some of those along the way. Other than that it was just make do in the bushes, ultrarunning is not a glamorous sport.

A: Back to nature, there's a tremendous simplicity about it but especially today the whole sanitary thing is important. We have to try and keep our standards but sometimes it is just not possible, you have to compromise.

N: I carry poo bags everywhere with me because I have a dog. It was a lesson I did learn early on, going through the jungle, I got my period running through the jungle as well and their rule was, don't leave anything behind in the jungle. Everything that I had, all my toilet paper, sanitary products, I had to pack in my backpack after using them. I was going through a jungle where those animals could kill me as I was carrying blood in my backpack. As I was saying, I was so terrified, if the animals could smell something and they might like to eat me. These are the things that the men don't entirely understand, what women have to go through.

A: Absolutely, it really just doesn't register. I have definitely spent time thinking about these kind of things because as an editor I notice that these are issues women have. Even just feeling safe, I think that it is more of an issue for women than for men. It's not very often men get attacked by women. It does happen but it's not the same kind of issue, the same kind of problem. It's something men don't often think about because they don't have to.

N: I have never felt uncomfortable in terms of my safety from other people. I do talk to other women who are always amazed and surprised that I do run on my own and run so far on my own. I think that's just a practice thing, I have learned not to put that as a risk priority. I am aware of it but I don't put it down as something that would stop me. I know other women who wouldn't run like I do because they were too scared.

A: I think that is another thing... the world is as it is and we are bringing our stuff to it. The less stuff that we can bring, the more we are able to deal appropriately with what is in front of us. Again this is connected to that upward spiral concept, it breeds that awareness and confidence in our ability to deal with life in the moment. When it is right in front of us, it gives us that space and clarity to deal with reality rather than things that are coming through your head. I think that allows you to be able to do these kinds of things.

N: Yes, absolutely.



A: If you are paralysed with fear, you are not going to go to the front door. Bravery.

N: *I am brave, it takes effort because you have to learn to quieten down all the doubts and fears, whether they are real or perceived. If they are real, you have to account for them, if they are perceived, you have to get over them. It's being brave enough to take a step out.*

Part of In Conversation with Nicola Love will be in issue 26 of Ultrarunning World magazine

Nikki's virtual run across Australia will raise money to help support Children with Cancer in the UK.

If you would like to be involved please contact Nikki at

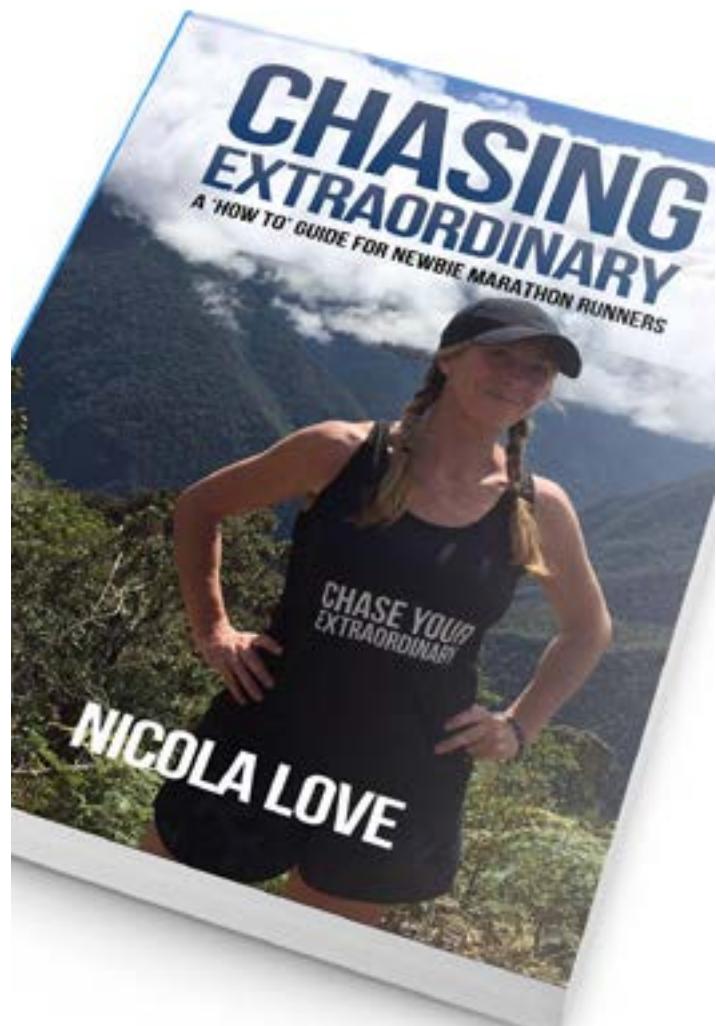
www.nikki.co.uk

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Nikki is posting live sessions from her treadmill each day on her Facebook page.





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The IBEX

**A 5-day stage trail race in
Granada province, Andalucia, Spain.
Imagine warm sunny days,
distant snow-capped mountains,
crisp nights, deserted and inspiring trails.**



Created by Sarah Whittington and Steve Farnham of Ultra Trail Spain Running Holiday, every detail has been considered in creating the IBEX multi-stage race in the historical Granada province.

The first edition was set to take place in the winter of 2020, but, well... 2020 came in like a wrecking ball. Ultrarunning World spoke with Sarah and Steve asking them to share their ideas in creating the race and some of their favourite parts.

What's behind the name Ibex?

Moclín is famous locally for its large herds of wild cabra de montes (ibex), folks often visit to try and get a glimpse of them. Ibex are a protected species and can be often seen from the village, the old males standing on the castle ramparts dominating their surroundings, particularly at dawn or dusk. Steve Farnham, the Race Director, commented,

"We're pretty sure some of the runners will get to see ibex during this race. Even though we often see them, they never fail to amaze us with their power, majesty and skills at ascending and descending over the rocks."

Many of the trails in the race were originally created by the ibex, so the name seemed like a great choice. Ibex Multi-

Day finishers will certainly need to channel some inner ibex spirit.

"We're looking forward to welcoming runners to the IBEX MULTI-DAY and sharing some of our favourite trails. The routes offer a perfect end of year adventure and something to look forward to, after this challenging year."

Can you tell us a little about the area?

The main race HQ, is also home to the village's museum which houses an amazing mosaic floor, lifted from a Roman villa 5km away on an archaeological dig in Tieno within Moclín municipality, in the mid 1980's. The route passes by the site of the villa, although there are many Roman sites on route particularly on day two. The daily race start and finish line is overlooked by a rock face decorated with reproductions of Neolithic cave paintings discovered in the municipality. Most of the original paintings are unfortunately in various states of weathering and degradation, although the cave at Malalmuerzo is well preserved and there are regular digs to discover more about the site. A couple of years ago, archaeologists discovered razor and clam shells indicating trade with coastal communities, plus signs of grain storage and consumption by the Neolithic communities. It seems that they weren't just out hunting ibex

every day. There is so much more history to be discovered in the area.... also the race will be held during the olive picking season. This time was purposely chosen as it means that there is always support (and aid should you need it!) around and about. Olive picking is hard work and all done by hand in this region. They now use tractors or 4x4s to carry the olives to the press rather than mules, but aside from that there's a lot of dragging nets and whacking trees with sticks.

"We've also tried to keep in mind that the Ibex Multi-Day is a stage race and wanted to include runnable sections, or at least smooth hiking sections if the legs are giving out."

A particularly attractive stage is Day 4 of the Ultra distance race. It's around 60km and combines a bit of everything. There's a lovely mountain descent, after a fairly steady climb, some runnable olive grove track, a little stretch of paved road, a secret ravine woodland cut through, and then an ascent of the Sierra Parapanda from where runners will see the provinces of Granada, Jaen, Cordoba and Malaga. The ascent is on an old quarry road; ideal for a steady climb. There's a beautiful woodland single track descent. Care is needed, but it's not silly steep. The catch is that with 5km downhill, you need to look after your quads. There's a

Upcoming Races

hard but short climb out of Checkpoint 3 onto Sierra Madrid, but the trail is worth it with views over to the snow-capped Sierra Nevada. In early March this route was beautiful. It'll be a long day for sure but it's how memories are made. Stunning Andalucia may be the perfect antidote for running and relaxation.

Sarah and Steve are both experienced trail and ultra runners, they wanted to host a reasonably priced multi-day event at a traditionally quieter time of the year. As an added insurance to entrants, the organisers have introduced a risk-free cancellation policy should runners be prevented from travelling by any departure countries who have travel restrictions.

The IBEX MULTI-DAY race entry includes seven night's accommodation, evening meals and airport transfers. Both races offer winners prizes, finishers t-shirts and medals for those completing all 5-stages, with a friendly and supportive aid-station crew, and full medical support. Runners may rejoin the stage the next day should they retire, and if passed medically fit to do so.

Entry numbers are strictly limited across both races, with just 70 places available. Plus, a special early entry discount for the first 20 participants who sign up. Once the spaces are filled, they are filled, so don't delay.

Find out more at ibexmultiday.com



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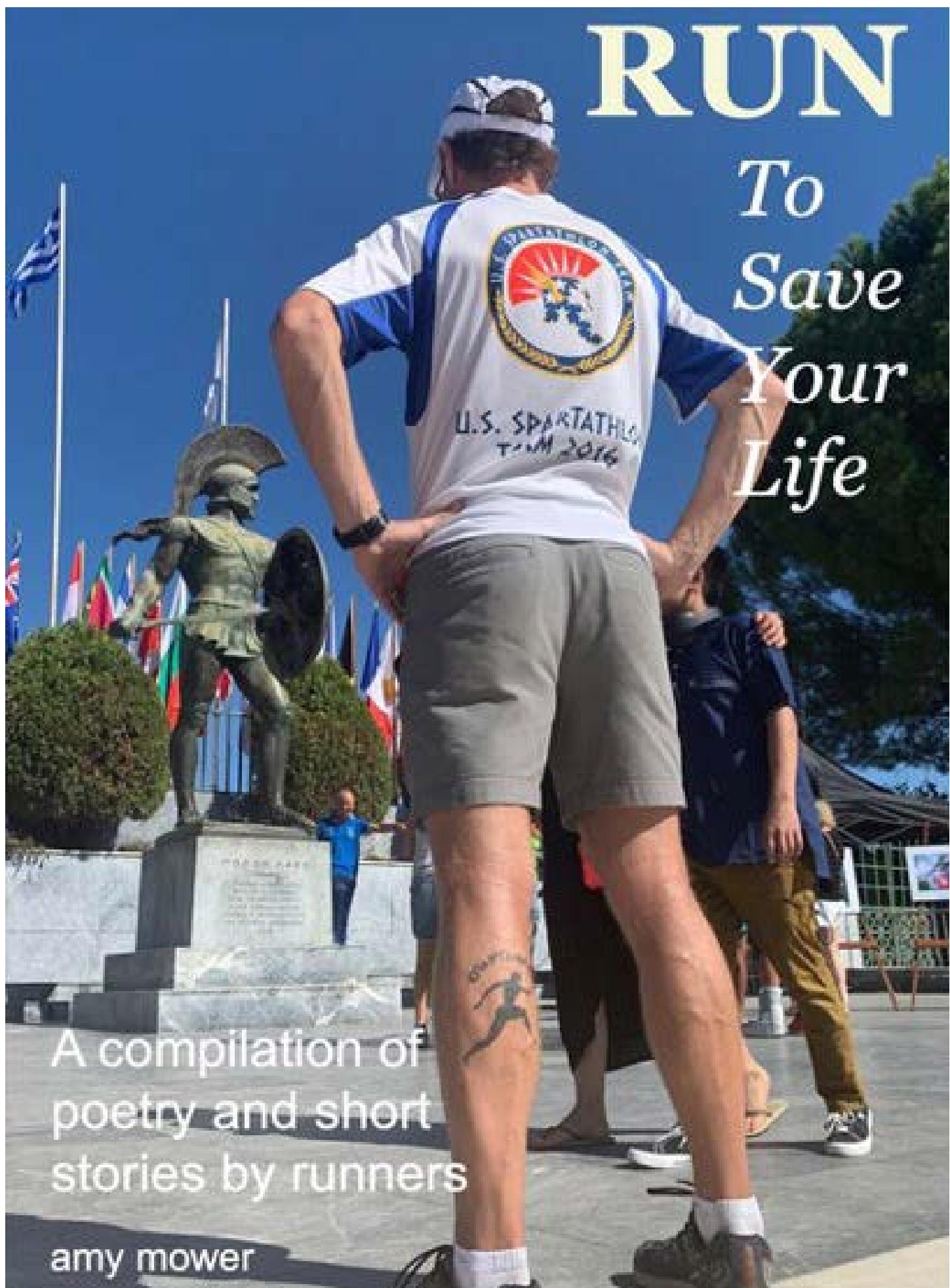
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What instantly makes this book stand out is its unique format. It's not your conventional running book, Run to Save Your Life is a compilation of short stories and poems written by runners and curated by ultrarunner Amy Mower. I was quite excited to start this book as I thought it was ideal for me as a person pressed for time with limited opportunity for getting stuck into a long read. I was easily able to read a few pages when the time suited or until my eyes became heavy and bed beckoned.

The style of the book means that there is something for everyone. Short poems describing the feeling of a training run on a crisp winter's morning to a personal account which reads more like a blog post of a race review. However, I found that this wasn't the sort of book I'd pick up and find difficult to put down, there was no reading to the end of the chapter to find out what happens next. The content jumps from one writer to the next, it can be quite difficult to get into the flow of the book and at times it didn't hold my concentration. For me, it wasn't a captivating read, nor I guess is it supposed to be, perfect for reading a few pages here and there. Amy Mower lives in Seattle, therefore it's little surprise that most of the contributors are also American or reside in the States. Rather ashamedly, my knowledge of American races only stretches to those best known such as Hardrock 100, Barkley Marathons and Western States. As a result, I found some of the content a little difficult to follow since I had scant or no knowledge of the races featured in this book. This is by no means a criticism, just an observation. Any runner will be able to relate to the feeling of the person telling the story regardless of the context.

One contributor who I instantly recognised was Gary Cantrell aka Lazarus Lake, best known as the founder of the Barkley Marathons and subsequent documentary fame. Reading his poem 'The Dark Places' about the Backyard Ultra, I found it difficult not to read the poem in his voice and even found myself adding his wry laugh at points where I expected him to as if he were reading it to me.

My favourite story in the book came from Balazas Koranyi with his account of the 2019 Spartathlon. This race needs little introduction for most ultrarunners, 246km from Athens to Sparta following the footsteps of Pheidippides. This race I have somewhat of a personal attachment to. Success in the ballot has been my husband's ultimate running goal for years now, a race which one day I hope to be tagging along as the support crew. Koranyi is returning to the race 11 years after his first finish, after a failed attempt and a hiatus from running, he tells a very honest account of his previous shortcomings and you sense the effort involved with making sure his third attempt ends in kissing the feet of Leonidas. Whilst I am yet to experience this race for myself, I briefly felt like I was there through reading his account of the race.

Within this collection of short stories and poems there will be something which calls out to you. There were several which had me reaching for my trainers, wanting to experience the same freedom and euphoria described by the writer. It's a great book for finding that spark of inspiration, whether that's taking your first steps or pushing your limits whilst also recognising that all runners experience the same rollercoaster of emotions.

Reviewed by Emily Adams

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The Inov8 TerraUltra G270

By Naomi Moss

My testing of the G 270's was from box, to feet, to trails - no wearing in necessary! First impression out of the box was WOW!!! I love the in your face green and black colour. Also available in all black, yawn yawn.

The shoes arrived just in time for my trip to the Peak District and I also tested them out on my local Essex trails. I ran on every terrain possible.....hard packed trails, grass, rutted cow patted fields, loose stone, rock, mud, ploughed fields, river crossings and even some scrambling. My testing runs ranged from 6 miles to 30 miles.

Weight - a light 270g (which is 10g heavier than the G 260).

Fit Grade - 5 on the fit scale (1 = narrowest fit and 5 = the widest fit). This is a huge selling point for me as my feet swell in warmer weather and on longer runs of 25 plus miles so the extra room in the toe box was appreciated. The extra space in the toe box allowed my feet the room to spread out on rocky and uneven terrain where my balance was challenged and my forefoot load is greater.

Size - I normally take a size 7.5 in my trail shoes but the UK size 7 in this shoe fitted perfectly, probably down to the wider toe box.

Zero Drop - I have to admit I am a complete novice when it comes to zero drop trail shoes but I was surprised at how bouncy and responsive these shoes were. The more I wore them the more confident and agile I felt in them. My trust in the shoe was unfolding!

I even had that "I'm flying" feeling more

than once on a few runs.

The Graphene Grip and 4mm lug did exactly what it was made to do...GRIP!! I felt secure in my footing over wet rock, scrambling on ascents and descents.

Tongue Design – I just love the new tongue design which is made of a thin, light, soft material which moulded nicely to the front of my ankle with no irritation or shifting out of position. The flat, what I call "old school" laces once laced stayed laced without loosening even after water crossings.

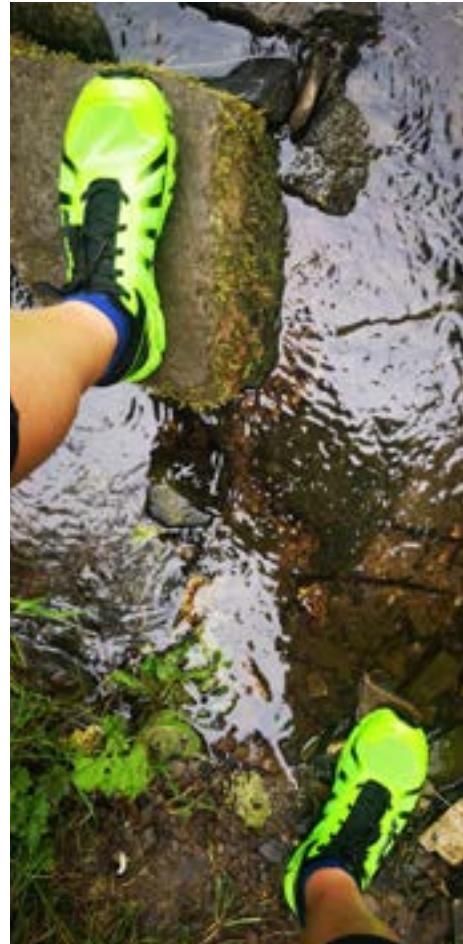
Once wet these shoes disperse water through the mesh upper more than adequately and they didn't feel heavy after running through water. Breathability was great and at no point did my feet feel hot. The toe covering material looks and feels substantial and protected my toes well.

Every trail shoe has its downside...
Cons – although super grippy I did find that on my early morning runs with dew on the grass I slipped numerous times while on descents.

In muddier conditions on my local Essex trails the depth of lugs accumulated a mass of mud and kick off was disappointing. They just don't handle heavy mud but remember this is not what they were designed for.

A little on the pricey side at £145

Conclusion - The shoes performed way beyond my expectations. Inov8 have designed this shoe for hard packed trails and rock and it definitely delivers. I will certainly be wearing them in future mountain races.



The Inov8 TerraUltra G270

By

**Tom
Croft**

The new Inov8 TerraUltra G270 shoes being a light and nimble shoe would make you think it couldn't handle longer distances or sustained running for a period of time but you'd be sorely mistaken. This shoe felt very comfortable in different situations I put it in, such as the muddy terrain of the Sandstone Trail or the rocky climbs through the Clwydian range.

First of all, the bright vivid colour is an immediate bonus for me, especially because this colour doesn't fade from long runs through mud and dust. The fit was a comfortable one with the toe box being sufficiently roomy without being too wide and seeming loose which allows you to still be comfortable over long distances. This is coupled with the new ADAPTERFIT technology which I felt first hand as the fit of the shoe naturally adapted to the swelling of my foot without feeling constricting. However do not fool yourself into thinking the comfort comes at the lack of protection, the upper of the shoe feels strong in contact with rocks and other obstacles I came into contact with.

One of the first long runs I did with the TerraUltra G270's was around 35 or so miles which tested the cushioning side perfectly as sometimes I feel shoes that appear to have less foam can be uncomfortable especially if the surface is uneven or rocky. However this was not the case here, the stack height has been increased from the previous iteration and this foam allows for a great degree of comfort and a surprisingly springy feedback especially

Graphene Grip tread which has been improved on since the last version of the TerraUltra. Testing these shoes on steep descents I felt a lot more confident to descend at speed as every step felt as if I stuck to the ground as the cleats gripped to the surface. This grip performed well in the wet with no relative difference between the two conditions. Comparing these shoes to other ones I have used, especially other brands who try to offer the same level of grip as the TerraUltra G270's, I feel these offer the best of both worlds with the level of comfort coupled with the light and nimble shoe which allowed technical trails to be handled competently but also without the pain of the odd sharp stone or whatever myriad of surface you step on.

This new offering from inov8 is another push forward towards the perfect ultramarathon shoe that can offer longevity in comfort but also can perform to a high level on a varied array of surfaces and I personally feel this shoe has definitely achieved both of those tasks admirably.

when
t h e
l e g s
start to
tire at the
end of a long
or tough run. I
felt the energy re-
turn and they definitely
helped in those latter stag-
es. I would happily use these for
the full duration of an ultramar-
athon and still feel as though the shoe is
helping me along.

The main talking point has to be the

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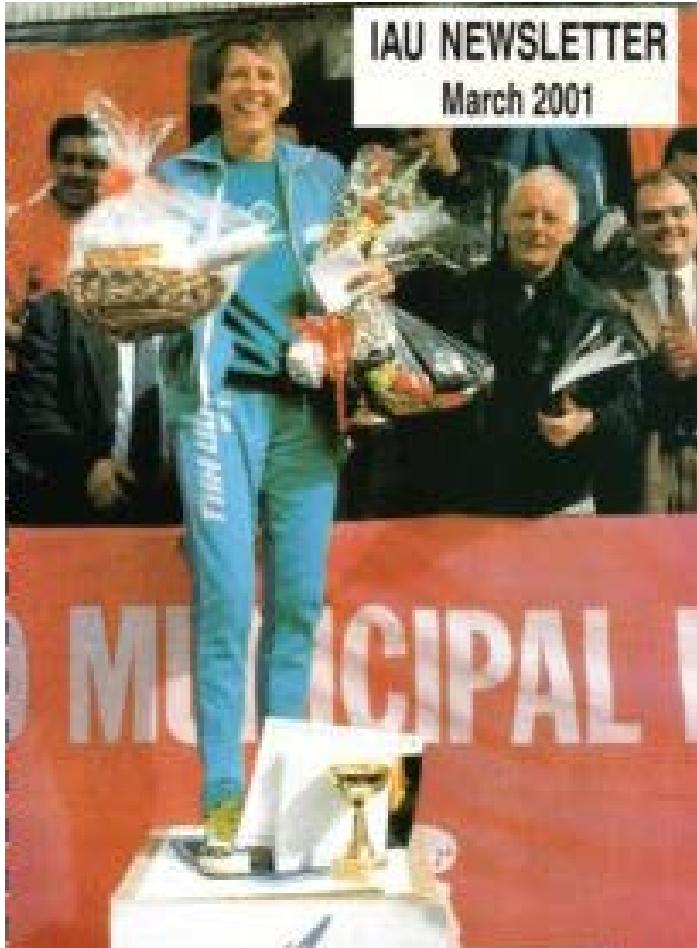
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Ultrarunning World Hall of Fame

Eleanor Adams Robinson

Eleanor had made a mistake, the ferocious 40 degree heat of the desert seared into her body as she emerged from the motel rest stop. With characteristic Northern grit, Eleanor ignored her nausea and went on to climb the road out of Death Valley to the summit of Mt Whitney.

"I never thought I wouldn't do it, it's there to be done."

During the first Badwater Ultra race in 1987, Eleanor reached the top in 53:03 and set a new women's record. One of the toughest races in the world was not going to defeat a woman from Yorkshire. Born in 1947 into a family of keen athletes, Eleanor's ultra running career did not begin until her early 30's.

Badwater was a part of Eleanor's ultrarunning fame, Eleanors attention was focussed at a 6 day race in 1982 when Ros Paul smashed the record. Eleanor realised that it was possible for women to create records at ultra distances. Training developed into a regular 100 miles a week and participating in numerous

races including Sri Chinmoy 6 day races, although it wasn't until 1985 that Eleaonor entered a 24 hour race in Nottingham and broke the record with a distance of 222.8 km (138.4 miles). From this point onwards there was no stopping her.

"My philosophy in life is never to pass up on an opportunity. If you do, you never know when it'll come again."

A formidable race schedule followed as she became a threat to the best ultrarunners in the world. Her reputation preceded her and it was why she was invited to run in the first Badwater.

In 1983 Eleanor participated in the inaugural Spartathlon in Greece. Yannis Kouros won the race, Eleanor was the first woman to cross the line in 32:37:52

In 1984 Eleanor won the women's 50 mile race in 6:19:25 and the 100km in 8:11:37 at the National Championships in Lincoln Park, Chicago.

Eleanor has held nearly 40 world records in a range of events

from 30 miles to 6 day races and 6 world titles. Progressing ultrarunning for women after the breakthrough achievements of women athletes in the 1960's and 1970's, She performed at the highest levels and still holds the records today. Eleanor produced the world's best performances for 4 years in 1985, 86, 89, 90.

First woman to run over 150 miles in a 24 hour endurance race. Eleanor won the Colac 6 day race in Australia five times between 1984-89, breaking multiple records and still holds the women's course record of 866.36km.

Two time winner of the IAU 100km World Championships in Duluth in 1990 and Faenza in 1991

"Multi-day running is a fine balance of striving to get the best out of your body without exceeding its limits and getting injured."

In 1990 Eleanor was the only runner to win the 24 hour championship and the 100km in the same year.

After a persistent foot injury in 2001 her running gradually reduced. Eleanor went on to mentor runners such as Ellie Greenwood and Jo Meek as part of the management of Team GB. She continues to be involved in running and is club secretary of her local Ripley club in Derbyshire. She is also an active member of the Belper Ten Twenty Duathlon Club and has represented GB in Duathlon.

"I was very conscious of being a pioneer and leading the way and opening it up for other women to have opportunities."

"I was doing it not just for me but for other women that might want to run."

It must be remembered that Eleanor could not have achieved so much without the challenges of equally competitive women such as Ann Trason, Donna Hudson and Hilary Walker. Their rivalry helped Eleanor towards her achievements.

In the 1980's and early 1990's, technology and the science behind ultrarunning was in its infancy. Eleanor ran without GPS and would at times have no information as to where the other competitors were in the races. Male runners would be allocated facilities and crew whereas sometimes women were not. During Badwater she would stand on a pair of weighing scales, at the side of the road, to see how much weight she had lost, that was as sophisticated as it got.

Women like Eleanor have achieved an incredible amount through sheer grit and determination, going where no women had run before, for other women to follow in her footsteps, and that is why she is included in Ultrarunning World Hall of fame.

More reading about Eleanor can be found at the links below:

Runyoung50.co.uk

[Eleanor Robinson](#) on Wikipedia



Photo Credit: Alan Young



Photo courtesy Mick Griffiths at the 2016 Colin Potter 10k

Contributors



Adam Rykala is a relatively new ultra runner. As well as personal health benefits, he runs to raise funds for disabled adaptations for his wife at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/in-the-long-run-ultra>. In 2019 he ran his first 50K, and then his first 50 miles. He is looking to do a 100K in 2020, and still can't believe he told his wife in early 2018, "I think a half marathon will be the furthest I can ever manage." Adam spends weeks on the road and weekends in the Beacons. Strava profile is https://www.strava.com/athletes/adam_rykala



Emily Adams has been a runner for over a decade but has only recently ventured into ultra-running. Having crewed for her husband at various ultra-marathons she was inspired to give it a go herself completing her first 50km race in 2018. Her aim is to crack the Arc50 in 2021 and ultimately progress to completing a 100km race. Living in the flat lands of Essex, she is strangely attracted to mountains and hilly coastal trails.



Jason Dickson is an avid distance runner and club secretary for the Bristol Trail Runners Club. He likes to run with others and generally covers an average of 50km a week, mainly trail but some faster road runs and favours The Brecon Beacons, Wye Valley and Frome Valley as trail running locations. If you live in the Bristol area check out the FB page or visit the website at www.bristoltrailrunners.co.uk.



Leila Majewska only started running in 2018 running her first ultra 5 months after her first mile. She has run Durham Dales and Rosedale Ultra and is the Race Director along with her partner of [Tough Trails](#).



Andy Howett A mountain-bike racer, originally from Lincolnshire (don't laugh, if Jamaica can have a bobsleigh team Lincolnshire can have a mountain-biker) Now living in the Scottish Borders, a big improvement topographically if not meteorologically. Will ride anything anywhere. New to this running malarkey but enjoying it so far and hungry for more. Blog and other ramblings AndrewHowett.blog-spot.com



Helen Hayes lives in a small town on the East coast of Ireland. Surrounded by majestic mountains and the ever changing sea, there are ample opportunities for running, cycling and swimming. As a regular contributor to Ultrarunning World, Helen has an interest in writing and all things ultra. she can be found most days walking or running with her dogs on the beaches and hills.



Joe Wenman is a passionate long distance runner, constantly looking for new goals to set a higher standard for himself. Currently training as a mountain athletics personal trainer and nutritionist, he is constantly learning from the best sources. Joe is the founder and chair of Bristol Trail Runners, and also Over The Fells, an online blog publishing mountain athletics articles and healthy recipes. Instagram: @overthefellsblog // Facebook:@overthefells // blog>Twitter: @OTFBlog

www.overthefells.com



Lorna Cullen I'm 51, married with a son, stepson and stepdaughter. I've been running for nearly 10 years and cycling and swimming for 6 years. I'm lucky enough to live on the edge of the Peak District with beautiful places to cycle and run on my doorstep. My husband and I also enjoy visiting Mallorca once a year for cycling and running. When I'm not doing sport I enjoy painting, good food and writing my blog :-). Lornatri.wordpress.com



Naomi Moss I have been running ultras over the last 9 years to a monthly training plan with my two dogs as my run buddies and have a keen interest in nutrition, strength and conditioning. Ultra-runners blogs and write ups continue to inspire me and give me a huge incentive to want to push myself to achieve more and run further. I am NOT the fastest or the slowest runner but I am probably one of the most stubborn Instagram-[naomimossruns](#)



Rich Foster enjoys running all distances but feels most at home when taking in the challenges and enjoying the camaraderie of ultras. He is passionate about the benefits of outdoor activity and fits his training around work as a primary school teacher.



Robert Bramall I started running with my university triathlon club where running was my weakest discipline. In a quest to improve, I learnt of the elite runner, Sage Canaday and his experience in ultras. Seeing people's determination to push through mental and physical adversity inspired me and ever since my first ultra in 2017, my love of the sport has grown.



Tom Crofts My name is Tom and I'm based in Wrexham, North Wales. I have been involved in the trail running scene for about a year or so with my first ultra being the Chester Ultra in February 2020. My favourite place to run is in the Snowdonia range for the amazing views.



Nicole Schwarz is 35 years old and works as an ICU nurse in southern Germany. She has lived in the Bavarian Alps for 8 years. Nicole found trail running as a new way of discovering beautiful places and her own limits.

Follow [Nicole on Strava](#)

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