



ULTRARUNNING WORLD

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ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS

// ISSUE 27





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Another lockdown and its turning into an ultra size kind of challenge, just what all our training has been preparing us for and as we all know there's a finish line ahead of us, somewhere, in some shape or form.

Meanwhile there's inspiration in these pages with people finding ways to live their dreams despite outer restrictions.

As always, work on the foundation provides the platform for everything else to rest on and Susan Lister's article on Yoga is a nod to ancient teachings that are still applicable today. Adam Rykala finds help in a technology that may have a new lease of life as another layer of safety for those who go really out there.

We have a cover story this month, an interview with Katie Schide and Germaine Grangier who feature in a new short video on their summer adventure in the Alps, while further north in the UK we have stories from an actual Hardmoors race where our friends Christiane James and Tina McIver took on Ultra North's 55km race on Tyneside (more on this event in the next issue).

Further afield Tyler Andrews talks about his Everest FKT attempt, from Brisbane, Australia, Jess Willis shares her River Run 100 experience and Tim Hardy introduces the Pine Creek 100 from Wellsboro, PA.

Richard Brown is in this edition's Hall of Fame, Thomas Garrod reviews David Kempston's new book, Lessons Learned on the Run, and Freetrain's new V1 running vest is tested by Laura Johnstone.

You won't have to wait long for issue 28 which will be out in early January 2021 if the New Year can bring current plans to fruition, on time, for once. And on that note I wish to express my gratitude to the team, to all the contributors and all the subscribers who have made everything possible and with almost double the downloads this year, almost 20,000 and counting we are delighted with our progress.

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- Helen Hayes	Copy Editor
- Emily Adams	Book Reviews
- Laura Johnstone	Gear Review

• **Front cover**

- Katie Schide and Germaine Grainger by ©[Mountains Legacy](#)

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**Ultrarunning World
December 2020**

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Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the email address above. Last dates for article submissions: January 15th, February 12th, March 12th.

Please include some accompanying photos (if you have any) with articles/race reports, a 40-50 word bio, and a headshot for the contributors page. More details for submissions on request. Thank you.

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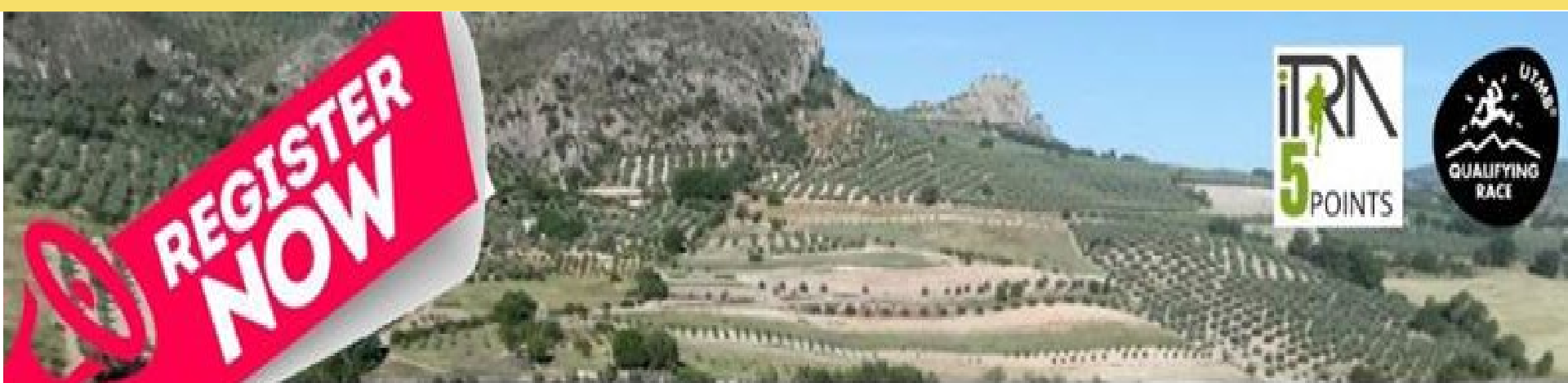
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Jan Vandendriessche retires from the IAU Executive Council

Jan Vandendriessche has retired from the IAU Executive Council as IAU director after more than 16 years of service. Jan decided to retire from his position due to personal reasons effective as of November 1st 2020. More on the [IAU website](#).

The American Ultrarunning Association (AUA) is winding down at the end of 2020 and its role will be assumed by the USATF body MUT, Mountain, ultra and trail.

Upcoming events are the February 12, 2021 USATF 100 Mile Road Championships Henderson, NV USA and the March 07, 2021 USATF 50 km Road Championships East Islip, NY USA.

The American Ultrarunning Hall of Fame (AUHOF) has been transferred to Ultrarunning History.com. The AUHOF has existed since 2004 under the leadership of Dan Brannen and Davy Crockett has agreed to take over the leadership of this aspect of the Association.

AUHOF currently has 17 inductees, including ultrarunning legends such as Ted Corbitt, Marcy Schwam, Frank Bozanich, Roy Pirrung, Lorna Richey Michael and others. Ann Trason is the latest inductee. Visit the Hall of Fame at: <https://ultrarunninghistory.com/hall-of-fame>.

The 9th Annual US Trail Running Conference will return to Fayetteville, Arkansas, October 27 – 30, for the second year in a row. The Conference is held in partnership with the non-profit American Trail Running Association. Registration opens January 1, 2021 on Race Roster.

The Trail Running Association, the TRA, has announced that the next British Trail Running Championships will take place in 2022 due to the continued uncertainty. More on their [Facebook post](#).

The community lost a sister in a fatal accident on November 28th when Andrea Huser, a Swiss professional ultrarunner, slipped on ice and fell 140m above Saas-Fee in the Oberi Schopfen area whilst out running trails.

inov-8 has donated £9,600 towards the planting of new trees and the restoration of peat habitats in the battle against climate change.

The Lake District based brand, who specialise in running, hiking and fitness gear, raised the money through a Green Friday sales initiative on its website.

The donation has been made to Cumbria Wildlife Trust, a local voluntary organisation devoted to the conservation of wildlife and wild places in the county. It will be spent on the trust's carbon reduction projects, which include planting trees and restoring peat bogs.

RIVER Run 100

Brisbane, QLD

By Jess Willis
Photos by Post Race

River Run 100, a course consisting of either 5k or 10k loops. Just enough to play with your mind at about the 40k or 80k mark depending on the distance you are racing.

Held in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia in the middle of town along the pathway of the Brisbane River. River Run 100 is an event that was established in 2014. On the scale of running events, River Run 100 is a small event but that is what makes it so special. It was established to ensure all runners, young or old, novice or professional could come together and challenge themselves with a group of amazing like minded people. There are many distances to choose from ranging from 10k to 100k solo or team events. Generally the 100k event starts on the Saturday night and the other distances start on the Sunday morning however this year they decided to include a midnight marathon and midnight 50k start. This definitely brought in more people. The weather in Brisbane in October can be quite hot and humidity generally can get up to 85% + which does not make for ideal race conditions.

I first competed in this event in 2016. I had just completed my first marathon and was hungry for something more so I started looking around for a longer event and that is how I came across River Run 100. After a bit of investigating and reading the reviews from past participants I soon realized what an amazing bunch of people facilitated this event, how well it was run and how great the community was.

I've run the 50k race three times now. I have placed 1st female each time and had huge PB's in doing so whilst also holding the female on course record. This race really brings out the best in me. A lot of people struggle with the fact that it's a loop course and I totally get that but for me it's one of the things I love about the race. I don't think of it as 50k, I think of it as 5 laps and forget about the distance.

I've always been very active since I was young. My whole family has been and that has never really changed but I didn't get into running until about 8 years ago. Since then I have done countless running events and enjoyed every single one of them. River Run would have to be one of my absolute favorite events. I remember I went for a run around my block where I live. It would not have even been 4k. I didn't make it. I stopped and started so many



times and just thought to myself wow this is harder than it looks. Still to this day I remember the first time I made it without stopping and how proud I was. The rest is history. No matter how long the run, I just get into my zone, it calms me, it keeps me grounded, it makes me appreciate what I have, it's my happy place. No music, no podcasts, no thinking about anything, I just run and I love it. It isn't and never really has been a hobby or chore for me, it's part of who I am and who I am proud to be. It's so important for me to stay fit and healthy and I want to promote this with my kids as well. It's so important to me to teach them that exercise doesn't need to be a chore. It can easily be a part of your life.

During my first pregnancy I kept up my running and gym work going, I just toned it back. I remember so many people judging me for exercising while pregnant. Unfortunately there is a big stigma around that and I definitely think it needs to be broken! I had my first baby a year before my first River Run. After having him I wanted to get back to feeling good about myself again so that's when I signed up for my first ultra. That was 2016. First overall that year with a time of 4hr15.

My second River Run was in 2018, less than a year after having my twin girls. The running did stop through this pregnancy as it's basically impossible to run with 2 little humans growing inside of you, so once I was ready to return it was really only 6 months of training for this one. I was so determined to run sub 4hrs and that year I ran 3:58. 2nd overall and 1st female. I was so happy with this run. I still to this day remember crossing that line.

2020, I had so many races on the cards this year with so many times I wanted to hit. Then BOOM covid hit. Everything was cancelled. So many people just stopped. I couldn't stop. Instead I just started running for running. No races in sight, nothing to train for, just running for the love of it. I have never been happier. Did I struggle with nothing to aim for, not at all. I really was just in my happy place.

I went to watch a friend in a trail race a few months ago and it put the fire back in my belly. I had heard that River Run had been postponed but wasn't 100% sure when it was. I'm also a single mum so I have to plan these events according to my schedule. I was really hoping River Run fell on a weekend I could attend. After looking into it the dates they matched up so I entered into my third 50k. Quietly hoping I would get the three win hat-trick but nervous as hell as I thought I hadn't had the best prep.

Race day, 4:30am start for the 50k so I was up very early to eat and get everything sorted. Arriving at the race there was such a great vibe with everyone there. The 100k was well underway and there were still a few people out on course for the midnight marathon and midnight 50k starts.

20 degrees and about 85% humidity so it was tough going before we even started. As I said, generally this race is in September but due to COVID it was moved to October and it's crazy the difference one month can make to race conditions.

We kicked off after a quick race debrief. It was October and it was my first race of the year.... Haha, I was actually nervous for once. The course was as expected. I do a fair bit of running in the city as that is where I work so the course was not new to me. An early start meant not many people out which was actually nice. As I said before this run is a loop course so the 50k was 5 loops of the 10k course.

We took off and there was a group of 6 guys in front of me. Literally after 10k my stomach churned. This has happened before the

previous year in a marathon and I just remember the battle I went through. I had only had two gels and that was my only race nutrition besides some coke and an electrolyte drink. I remember thinking it's either that or I risk another gel and see how I go. I didn't risk another gel. As this is a loop you get to see everyone in front and behind you on every lap. I love this about this race as it really keeps your head in the game mentally. You know exactly where people should be when you turn on the loop and it becomes such a mental game to see if they are ahead or behind the last mark. All I remember thinking is the two guys at the front

of the pack looked great but the rest of them were questionable. One by one they dropped back behind me with just the two guys left in front of me after about the first 20k. Lap by lap we kept going. By the last lap the two guys in front were running so well. I came in 3rd overall and 1st female on this one, just off my time I wanted. I ran a 3:50 for this race which again was a huge PB and I got my winning hat-trick which I couldn't have been happier about.



I will definitely be back next year for a fourth river run. This is just one of the most well organised events I've ever attended. The people that arrange this event are amazing and they really have the participants at the front of their mind. They also have some really great sponsors that have been with them for a long time now so that in itself shows how great this event is.



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HARDMOORS 60

By Dan Walker
Photos by Laura Walker

On the 19th of September, this year the Hardmoors 60 single stage ultra-marathon got underway. A hilly coastal run with a cut-off of 18 hours from the market town of Guisborough to the seaside town of Filey a simple 62 miles or 100km along the beautiful Cleveland Way.

The race is now what you would describe as covid safe, a few weeks beforehand the race directors Jon and Shirley Steele sent out an email to request your predicted finish time. This allowed the organisers the time to put you into blocks of six for the start to be safe. On arrival at your start time you are temperature checked by a medic, you move on to have the tracker fitted to your kit. From then it's the simple task of waiting to be called forward for the countdown to start in your group, this happens every two minutes to ensure social distancing.

Once the race is underway you follow the path out of the rugby club and up through the gravel paths that run through Guisborough woods before the long hard slog to the top of Highcliff Nab, a climb of over a thousand feet. You then descend across the top of Guisborough woods following the well-marked Cleveland way finger posts or Acorn signs ten miles out to Saltburn on Sea.

For me is where the fun begins, the



first CP with food and water is located here at the bandstand. Again due to the current restrictions in place at each CP, runners were asked to sanitise their hands before topping up their water bottles or taking some of the snacks available which varied from savoury to sweets, coca cola or lemonade and as usual plenty of smiles and good luck wishes from the "hardshalls". This was also the first accessible location for the support crews and friends and family to be on the course. The one thing I love about Hardmoors events is the real sense of "we are in this together". The crews of other runners support one another with offers of food and drinks for each other as well as their runners. The wishes of goodwill and support are as genuine from the other crews as from your own, a real goodwill vibe.

From here it's up on to the cliff tops, a sharp hand on the thigh's kind of climb which by the end of the run you will become very familiar with. The hills and steps become a sight to fear, with the downhill giving the same thigh throbbing aches as the ups. After you leave Saltburn you will soon come across one of the many landmarks along the way which is the charm bracelet. This is a circle sculpture with charms which represent aspects of local life and definitely a good

photo opportunity.

The trail along the tops of the cliffs is usually hard packed and well-trodden. The sea is a hundred feet or so below and crashes against the bottom of the cliffs. To the right of you is mainly farmland and this is how it stays for the duration of the run. This is the fourth time I have run the 60 and each time it's been a lovely hot day.

The next CP and first major one is at about 20 miles in at Runswick Bay where unsupported runners can have a drop bag which they hand in to the organisers at the start. This gives them any extra food or goodies such as warm kit or fresh socks. The one worrying thing about Runswick is if you arrive whilst the tide is in you have to wait until it goes out before being allowed to continue. Once across the beach which is populated by happy families and dog walkers no doubt wondering why there's scores of runners festooned in backpacks legging it across the sands and back up the re-entrant to the cliff tops.

During the next few hours, we ran across the trails encountering many tourists and walkers as it is a very popular area on a nice day, passing through the small hamlet of Staithes which sits right on the coast before again climbing up countless steps. Following the winding coastal path, you arrive at Sandsend

car park. Support crews are once again here to greet their runners and give them a well-deserved boost as they begin the long climb, albeit a bit less of an uphill but more of a gradual incline to Whitby. This time as runners came through the golf course and into Whitby, we were met by an unfortunate sight of a minke whale that had been cleared off the beach and lay under a tarpaulin. The smell hit us before the actual whale was seen. The course now makes its way through the beautiful harbour town of Whitby first passing through the whale bones which form an arch at top, before following the streets full of families enjoying the many shops and amusements. A good place for fish and chips or an ice cream if you have time on your side and a welcome break from cliff top trails. The downside to Whitby is the 199 steps up to the historic abbey as soon as you leave the busy streets. For any Strava junkies out there this is a segment to push you on.

Clear of the bustle of the town its back out onto the cliffs again passing through caravan parks and the Hornblower tea gardens which is CP4 at 32 miles. Then a short but hilly section into Robin Hoods bay which is at 37 miles. This CP is a big car park with plenty of room for crews and where the unsupported runners can access their second drop bag. Once checked in and leaving to get back on to the course its an horrendously steep road down followed by a sharp right and back onto the steps, upwards again hand on thighs or running poles in hand to assist the now tired runners.

The route is very easy to follow and as mentioned before well-maintained finger posts and worn paths help. The only downside is that every little stream, every re-entrant or water course that makes its way towards the coast means a climb down and back up. Sometimes you can be lucky and there have been steps made out of wood, other times the only steps are the ones that countless others have dug into the hillside over time. Some of these are very precarious and steep so extra care is needed as by now tired legs can mean a costly mistake if you fall.

By now the sight of the finish at Filey is becoming visible, still 20 miles away but visible. Ravenscar checkpoint and the evil climb up through the old Alum works is now a distant memory, as you descend the cliff tops once more to the sea life centre at the end of the promenade at Scarborough. Support crews are again waiting here to cajole and put back together their runners for the final few miles. This is the last chance of a jet boiled hot brew or to take on some warm clothes as for me darkness had already fallen long ago, and the temperature plummeted.

This is the part of the run that saps the most from you, the road leading round to Scarborough is long where the tarmac pounds already tired legs. Once in the town you are running amongst families and couples again. Fun fairs and kids with candy floss walk between you to the amusement arcades. You could almost forget for a moment you are 50 plus miles into a race.

Following the coast along you finally come across the last CP well placed at the bottom of a gravel bank. The last big climb as it again joins the Cleveland way along the cliffs. Tired legs and bodies make their way for the last few miles, head torches lighting up the dark paths as the run for some is now a shuffle or walk. The finish used to be at Filey Methodist Church but due to the current restrictions in place with covid, the finish was now further up the coast in a car park...an extra two miles nearly up the coast. Coming through the finish you were met by more happy marshals and the race directors Jon and Shirley. As I mentioned at the start, the Hardmoors events are really a close bunch of supportive runners. From the first timers to the really dedicated guys and gals at the top end, they all give their utmost at each and every event.



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Ultras are setting the pace with 'Trees not Tees'

As ultrarunners we often seek out nature at its purest, traversing mountain passes or strafing through woodland trails. As ultrarunners, we also like to think we're more environmentally conscious; many races have done away with plastic cups, and when training we have a 'leave no trace' attitude. However, the sport we love has a greater impact on the environment than we would like to admit; every gel in plastic wrapping, every new piece of gear we didn't really need, leaves its own trail behind in the environment.

One project working to counter this is Trees not Tees, who have a growing presence within the ultra running community. As the name suggests, Trees not Tees enables race organisers to offer runners the chance to say, 'I don't want my t-shirt / medal, plant a tree for me instead'; it's really that simple. On average over 20% of runners are choosing the green option, each one helping avoid the pollution of another 2KG of ECO2, which is created when a new t-shirt is produced, all for nothing if they end up in a drawer or in landfill.

For every runner who chooses the green option, a tree will be planted in the UK as part of their sustainable reforestation project, The Future Forest Company. Each runner also receives a personalised e-certificate, with a photo of their tree, the species and what3words location. Organisers just pay Trees not Tees what they would have paid for the race t-shirt, down to a base of £2.50 per tree.

It's really that simple, as James Elson from Centurion Running points out:

"There's literally no downsides. We are helping to arrest the climate change issue, helping re-wild areas of the UK, providing the option for runners to get something really wonderful when in the past they may have just taken a t-shirt they didn't need. Everyone's happy.

If a runner has finished a long-distance event and it's their first one, they can still take a tee, but for a lot of our runners they're returning year after year, so they really don't need another t-shirt."

Centurion Running were one of the first to launch Trees not Tees across all of their events this year and have already helped plant 335 trees, as well as helping promote the project with other races. In the trail space, organisations such as Big Bear Events, Hardmoors, Great Owl Running, Scafell Sky Race, SVP100, Camino Ultra, Freedom Racing, UK Ultra, The Salomon Serpent Trail, Dragon's Back and XNRG have all implemented Trees not Tees in recent months, as well as partners such as SI Entries helping spread the word to their races.

If you'd like to find out more, check out Trees not Tees on Instagram @treesnottees, their website on www.treesnottees.com, or get in touch via hello@treesnottees.com

Raised on Radio

By Adam Rykala / MW7RYK / desdinova@vivaldi.net

(Begin the day with a friendly voice, a companion unobtrusive....)

So... local lockdowns, and now a firebreak lockdown, have made ultra running a little difficult these days in Wales. That's even more frustrating when you live, like I do, in the shadow of the Brecon Beacons and I've missed Tor Y Foel! Over the summer I've managed a couple of 50K runs, one taking in some fantastic views over the Merthyr area – but it also helped bring to mind one issue.

Communication.

Running in the Beacons often means I struggle with communication. Aside from being able to be contacted by my wife (who is disabled) I also want to feel secure that should I find myself jumped by the Welsh Bigfoot(!) I am able to get help to myself quickly. I already use Garmin Livetrack for live tracking, but that is dependent on cellular coverage and there are areas where I go where such coverage is patchy. That has always left me a little nervous, as I am the sort of person who likes to have multiple redundancy in everything to allow for the unexpected.

So for a while I've considered getting a Amateur Radio license. Carrying a small radio with me adds a further level of communication and security. During these uncertain COVID19 times, being safe and secure when you go out is even more important. And becoming a Radio Amateur in the UK is a lot easier than it has been in the past.

For a start, practical's are suspended. The exam can be taken online, and Essex Ham run a fantastic free training course to get you through the exam. It costs £27, and the course takes in some basic radio theory, some electrical circuits, some etiquette and culminates in a 26 question multiple choice exam. 19 correct answers gets you a pass, and it's remotely invigilated via a webcam.

A basic handset can be had for under £60, and offers you amazing communication possibilities. I live in the South Eastern part of Wales, just shy of the Beacons and during my runs in the local mountains I've managed to hit repeaters, and make contacts, over distances up to 100 km and sometimes a little more. Repeaters, like the same suggests, are transmitters that boost your signal over a particular area and can be found online, or via apps like RepeaterBook.

After passing my exam, and getting my callsign (MW7RYK) from OFCOM... I took my radio on a run and did some testing. Not only was it great fun, but it allowed for some contact in even the quietest areas and was also unobtrusive, it was always under control. I chatted through the Ludlow repeater to someone on the other side of it whilst I sat eating my sandwiches at the Trig Point for Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn (550m above sea level).

Using a clip-on headset, it can be set up to be hands free and so always to hand. I have to admit I'm hooked and already looking at the next level (intermediate, then full!) but it must be said that for local use the first level (foundation) is more than enough to get a cheap handset radio by someone like Baofeng and get a feel for how it behaves. They're small enough to shove in a backpack with a small aerial, programmed with local frequencies and the battery life is such that it can always be to hand to allow for contact should you need it.

I always thought it had a stuffy, academic aura in the past but the actual airwaves are amazing to listen to with many friendly people, and with a digital radio and a hotspot one can transmit over the phone data signal and talk across the world on a slightly more expensive headset.

A £30-40 handset gets you started; with 5W you can get some great range, especially since at Foundation level you're limited to 10W anyway! At these frequencies it's primarily line of sight, but when you're 500m above sea level it's quite amazing how far that line of sight actually gets



MW7RYK QRT and Standing by!



you. From the Coity Mountain near me I can see quite a far distance in all directions. I did some tests on repeaters and found I could manage 100km plus with little problems.

Amateur Radio offers an important secondary contact method for times when I'm out and about. I'm surprised how many cellular dead spots there are in the mountains near me, but even in the one I was able to use the radio to chat to people from Devon! On my first jaunt I bumped into Mountain Rescue looking for an injured off-road biker. That really brought home to me how important it is to be in contact during a run. As winter kicks in, I'll look to do another 50K'er once the firebreak lockdown is over. I can't see me doing an organised event until Summer 2021 and that does fill me with a degree of sadness and melancholy.

I'll feel a lot more confident having an extra method of communication on me during my longer runs. It might have stopped my wife worrying when I was late during the Gower Ultra and I had no phone signal. For the small size of a handheld radio it offers an excellent extra piece of mind. Newer radios offer APRS and the ability to broadcast your GPS position as well.

WWW.RSGB.ORG is the Radio Society of Great Britain, and a great place for some information. <https://www.essexham.co.uk/train/foundation-online-resources/> is the Essex Ham free online course for the Foundation (starter level) license.

On Trail, On Mountain, On Cloud. Taming Giants

Photos by *Mountains Legacy*

As elite athletes in the world of trail running (both top-10 UTMB 2019 contenders in their respective categories), Katie Schide and Germain Grangier undaunted by cancelled events this year conceived a challenge that combined mountaineering with their love for ultra running. They conceived a quest to summit the Breithorn, a peak over 4,000m high that lies on the border between Switzerland and Italy and Mont Blanc, home to the famous series of races, the highest mountain in Western Europe at 4,808m which also straddles the French/Italian border.

The route covered around 190km with more than 13,700m of elevation gain, and was accomplished in three stages in 42 hours.

"Taming Giants" is a beguiling animated film produced by On, Studio AKA and creative director, Simon Brotherson. The imaginative film, the first of its kind by the Swiss sportswear company, tells an archetypal tale of respect between Katie, Germaine, the mountain life that has played such a significant part of their lives and the story of their Alpine quest.

Ultrarunning World editor Abichal Sherrington was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to speak with Katie and Germaine about their impressive quest to manifest a dream.



Abichal Sherrington: What made you choose this particular climb? Or this particular route for your project this summer?

Katie Schide: Originally we had a different project planned for the summer but it quickly became impossible with all the race cancellations. So we were at home trying to think of some kind of challenge that we could set ourselves for the summer. Some type of thing to look forward to since we were at home for the whole Spring. ON were still really excited to support us and help us set some type of big goal for the summer.

Part of our original plan had included climbing Mont Blanc and being in the Northern Alps. We kinda thought about different things that motivated us and the Haute route had always been something that both of us had known about but never done. We thought it could be a fun way to see the region and spend some time in a place where we were often racing so we don't usually get to do the fun touristy thing, we are more focused on racing.

A: Right so that is something that happens a lot, isn't it? When you are running, quite often we are in amazing places but we just can't stop, you've got to hammer on.

K: Yes, exactly

A: Or it's dark, it's in the middle of the night and you can't see anything.

K: It was more about when we travel to a place for a race we often are not stressed but we are thinking about the race and you're stuck in this world of the race and where the race course goes. So you are not thinking about a peak that is a little bit off the race course. You are really only focussed on the race and probably a little bit nervous. It's basically a way to be in the region without the pressure of a race.

A: Did you live in that area?

K: No, we live in the Maritime Alps. It's the mountains that are just north of Nice, so our closest city is Nice. It's an hour and a half drive from where we live, which is in the mountains, to Nice.

A: I have been there several times, that is quite close, an hour and a half.

K: Yes to Nice, yes.

Germain Grangier: Yes it's the beginning of the Alps, it's the southern Alps.

A: I read on one of the Q and A's that it took you several months to plan your route. Did you have a team supporting you with moving your gear around?

G: Part of the challenge was to approach all the risks, like the crevasses and the ski techniques with ropes, the crevasse rescues, all those things and being at the right time on the glacier, not too late, not too early. Those things took a lot of time to plan because we wanted to minimise all the risks we would take. And for the team, the video and photo crew were 2 or 3 guys. We only saw them 3 times during the whole route and there were 3 girls from ON.

K: No one was there for the purpose of helping us, they were all there for another purpose. Though they did help move some of our stuff around, the 3 people from ON were there to help with the production of the project and the film crew were there to film.

A: I understand. I saw a picture of you running up this mountain and you have your backpacks on and shorts. Then there's another picture and you are coming down and you're roped together. So you have got ropes on. I just wondered then, you needed different equipment at different points?

K: Yes, we did have.

G: We had only a short section that we ran without the rope, otherwise our backpack was almost 6kg. And there was a small section where we were only in the middle mountain area.



K: Yes, it was maybe 4 hours and it was close to the road so that's why we switched gear. The goal was more to be self-sufficient because we were far away in the mountains most of the time. We didn't want to set any record or anything on this route because nobody has done this whole route before, we were just there to enjoy the challenge.

A: That's amazing, it really is. It was something you really wanted to do. I'm really moved by that. It's a challenge in itself and that's it, that's amazing.

G: Cool

A: I live at sea level. I don't do a lot of running at the moment. I have a problem with my knee so I'm not running much. I have climbed a mountain that was 4,000 metres and I really, really struggled. You went up two 4,000 metre plus peaks, was it difficult? Physically? That transition so quickly?

K: Yes, I think it's definitely difficult to move at altitude but we stayed in the region 3 weeks ahead of time. And we were on the planned route. We were at pretty high altitude already. We had to climb to the Mont Blanc 2 or 3 weeks before. So, actually the second time we were on the Mont Blanc it was way easier than the first time. Yes, it's definitely hard but it's something that if you are prepared for, it's less hard.

G: Also we live at 1,500 and sometimes 2,000m, we are pretty used to it.

K: Our normal altitude is higher than sea level.

A: Did you have any difficult moments when things didn't go to plan?

G: The most difficult moment was to find a long weather window, I would say, because we started from Chavignon and then we needed 3 days in a row of good weather. At the end of the 3 days we didn't really have good weather and it was not really easy to get orientated on the glacier in the whiteout. I think the most difficult thing is moving in the mountains in pretty poor conditions.

A: Have you spent time running on a lot of glaciers before? You mentioned earlier about crevasses. That's obviously something that's really serious.

G: Yes, it took a few months before we ran on normal ground. We have been running a lot on glaciers together for most of the time, a mix between climbing and running on glaciers. It's quite a particular way to move fast in the mountains. I was born in the Central Alps in the French Central Alps. I grew up with the snow and the glacier. In winter most of the time you don't see the crevasses because they are full of snow, you only see the very big ones. In the summer the advantage is that you can see them. Sometimes there is a snow bridge between a few of them and that's

the most dangerous thing. That's why we didn't want to pass some glaciers when it was really warm outside, particularly after 11 am. That's why we took small breaks during the route to be at the right times on the glacier, to be early in the morning or late at night when the snow would freeze and the bridges would be solid.

K: Hopefully more solid!

A: That's amazing. I didn't see that earlier when I watched the movie. I did like the movie, it gives you a very quick flavour of the intensity that you were moving with. It's really nice to talk to you, to expand this. So there are little details... actually, it's not a little detail! It puts the little movie thing into a clearer picture of what's going on. This is such a nice story. What did you bring back? Was there anything you learnt that really stood out?

K: In general, for us it was an appreciation of being able to do these things together. We realised that not everyone has the opportunity to go out and do a big adventure like that with their partner. We realised

that this is a special situation we have and just being really grateful for that.

A: Before you went you had a time frame for everything. Did it take you as long as you thought it would?

K: *At the very, very beginning we wanted to do it all together in one go but when we were on the route ahead of time we saw that we couldn't cross some of the glaciers at the time that would be required to do that. We adapted the plan to stay at the Schonbielhütte that you saw in the movie. So that we could cross the most dangerous glacier first thing in the morning when it was really cold. There were a couple of other places where we stopped where our timing was good. So if anything we were slow, we did it in a longer amount of time than we originally thought about but that was the only way to do it safely. But then on the last day we had to take an extended break because the weather on the Mont Blanc was really bad. We made the decision with the help of a mountain guide that we should wait and do it later to try and have a better weather window.*

A: That definitely makes sense, you have to be safe.

It's a rare thing to have someone interested in the same things with similar capacities. Has your relationship enhanced your capacities? Your running or your climbing ability? Has your relationship been bettered by being on the same page?

K: *It would be hard to compare since we have always had that but it's definitely an important part of our relationship and it's what it's built on already.*

G: *Yeah, I think we realise we are really lucky to be able to do things like that but it's clearly a strain for us when we race. We do the same race but at our own pace, we always think about each other, it pushes us to do better. Most of what we do together strengthens us but sometimes it's also a bit hard to manage the stress that we can have before a race because there is no way to let it go because we are both racing. So we have to be focussed on each one to manage that.*

A: Do you run many races together?

K: *Yes most of the time we both do the same races. We don't run them together because Germain is significantly faster than me. But we are competing at the front of the race with the top men and I'm with the women. So it's not together but we start the same races.*

G: *As we are running we have news from people and they are all cheering. When I run they tell me what Katie's position is, how's she looking. Every news I have pushes me. If she's not doing well, I am like happy ok I have to do well so it's good for both of us. If she is really doing well, it's really inspiring. I think in that situation it only brings positive things.*

A: Right, that's so nice. Have you thought about coaching? Do you share your experiences with other people?

G: *I've been coaching a bit, a few people. But I don't have a lot of time. I did it for a few years but it was only 1 or 2 people a year. So maybe it is something I will do after, when I have more time and we will be done with most of the racing things. I would say nowadays there's a lot of coaches. I think it's something we have to take seriously and if you want to do the thing properly you should have a limited number of athletes to be really involved with them and I was not. From my point of view I was not involved enough so I decided to stop. If I have more time later I will be happy to do, for me it's something really interesting. But if we don't put enough energy in it, it's not worth it for either the coach or the athlete.*

A: Do you have many more races lined up? What's happening after the virus?

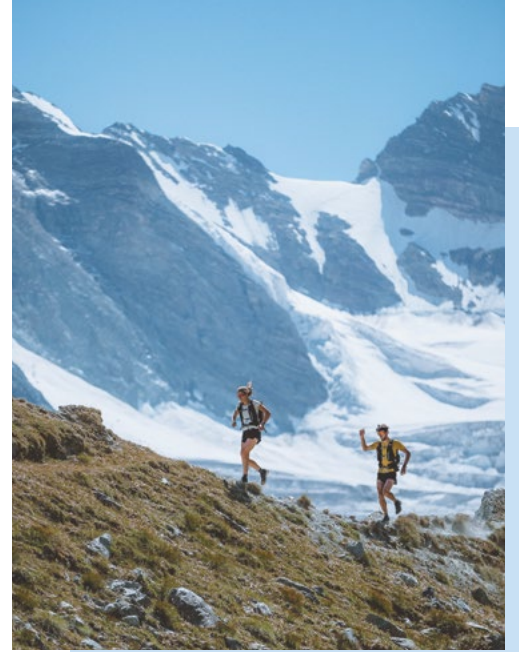
G: *You said it! For the end of the year 2020 we are all done because there was no significant race we were interested in to go to. So we are preparing for next year which we don't know what it will look like. We will keep training and see how 2021 goes and if there are no races we will find a personal project like we did but closer to home I guess. I think we will have more news in the coming month to see what we can do. If races happen, UTMB is still a race that we are interested to do and yes we'll see.*

A: ON, the company has been very helpful. Are they your sponsors?

K: *Yes ON is one of our main sponsors and they are definitely a big reason why we were able to do this project in such a strange year. They were really supportive of helping us plan something and set up a challenge for ourselves and they didn't care that it wasn't a big race. They were just happy that we were able to do something together and share our adventure.*

A: That's great that they are able to support these kinds of projects. It's definitely something inspiring. Thank you very much indeed for your time, it's been really, really nice talking to you.

G&K: *Yes sure, thank you for calling, have a nice day and we'll keep in touch. Thank you, Byeeeee.*



Day 1 – Cervinia to Schönbielhütte – 35km. On Sunday, July 19th at 5:00am, Katie and Germain left Cervinia in Italy to reach the summit of the Breithorn (4,164m). They arrived at the crack of dawn before descending towards Zermatt in Switzerland and eventually reaching Schönbielhütte, the final stop for day one. The cooler night temperatures would allow safe passage across the glaciers the next morning. The first stage of their journey, 35 kilometers and 2,700 meters of elevation was completed in just six hours.

Day 2 – Schönbielhütte to Chamonix, Les Houches – 115km.

On Monday, July 20th at 5:20am, Katie and Germain left Schönbielhütte in Switzerland to run the reverse course of the Glacier Haute Route, crossing glaciers and high mountain passes from Zermatt, reaching Les Houches near Chamonix. They were able to move quickly thanks to the cold night that froze the snow making for safer running conditions. After their initial crossing of the renowned Stockji glacier, the day continued with five more glacier crossings before hitting the final challenge: the 8km Otemma glacier. After taking several breaks through the day, Katie and Germain continued the 115km route by running through the night. Arriving 24 hours later at the fog-covered Col Supérieur du Tour above Trient, they eventually arrived at the bottom of Mont Blanc in Les Houches, midday on Tuesday, July 21st. Stage Two ended with a total of 115 kilometers and 7,000 meters of elevation accomplished in 24 hours.

Day 3 – Les Houches via the Mont Blanc Summit – 33km.

On the third day, Katie and Germain returned to mountaineering with the ascent of the Mont Blanc via the normal route through the Col de Goûter. After spending Wednesday in Les Houches because of bad weather conditions, the duo rested while waiting for the ideal weather window which finally allowed a resumption of their journey on Thursday, July 23rd at 2:00am, they left Les Houches for the majestic Mont Blanc—a 33km route that brought them to the summit after 4,000m of climbing. Summiting and descending Mont Blanc in one day is an incredible feat, as the highest mountain in Western Europe, normally completed over two or three days and often assisted by train for the first 1000 metres. Katie and Germain completed the two-way expedition in under 12 hours, arriving back in Les Houches after just 11 hours and 30 minutes to complete the last stage of their extraordinary adventure through the mountains.

More about [Katie and Germaine](#)

Watch the short movie On | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEzNNEncpss>

move light,
live slow



WWW.PINDIO.EU

Cockbain COAST 2 COAST

By Sarah Perry

Photo by [Luke Kennedy](#)

Photo by Shirley Steele

As I took my place on the start line, I glanced around at the other participants and was hit with the biggest sense of imposter syndrome. A few athletes I knew made up part of the nineteen starters and all of them had the same things in common: experience, strength and the fact that (in my opinion) they are known to be ultra-running legends. I, on the other hand, am very new to ultra-running and have done very few events. I had, on reflection, done a fair amount of training in preparation though. When Covid struck and lockdown was imposed I took the opportunity to take part in some of the challenges that Mark Cockbain had thought up: nineteen for nineteen (pretty much what it says on the tin) and an accumulator the next month (running the number of days in the month e.g. 24 on day 24). This was of course on top of my usual weekly fun-runner miles, but I still wasn't sure if I was prepared enough. When I initially decided to take part in the event, I was lured in by how epic it seemed to run from one side of the country to the other. I figured I'd done a century, and this was simply forty miles more. The Cockbain events also have a reputation of being incredibly tough and I couldn't help but want to try one out and see if this was really the case – drawn to suffering it seems. My initial plan was simple: plod steady-

ly at a pace that would get me through the time stations and this way I could – perhaps – finish the challenge. I was more than happy with my plan until I got chatting to an experienced runner over the summer who has many magnificent achievements, he told me that his top tip is to always run to how you feel. His logic is that, when doing a long-distance race such as the C2C, you're probably going to feel terrible by the end anyway and so you should just follow your instincts with pace. It clearly works for him.

And so, on Saturday 26th of September at 7am, I took off, keeping the front runners well within sight. As you leave the seaside town of Whitehaven and head towards Lamplugh you're gifted a ten mile stretch of flat cycle path to see you off on your journey; with the cherished advice I ran hard. I very much enjoyed weaving around the beautiful Lake District lanes and seeing the hills I had walked up with my family as a child and some I had more recently run. The sun crept out as I made my way out of Keswick and up to the Old Coach Road, an exposed and undulating section but I knew there was a checkpoint on the other side and I needed a top up of fuel. So far I was loving the race and felt great; I'd done about 40 miles in 7 hours at this point which I'd say is pretty quick for me.

The next 30 or so miles were a blur of keeping going, fuelling well and chatting sparsely to another competitor that seemed to be moving at a similar pace to me. The pace had dropped to a more sustainable plod, but I was still eager to move as many miles towards Hartside Pass before dark as possible. I had recced the route in the summer on my road bike with a group of friends over a couple of days and so I knew the Pennines loomed before me with all of its lumps and bumps. Darkness had descended by the time I had ascended and the first of many friends popped up to cheer me along the way; a much needed boost. I relished the first stretch of darkness, I still felt good, I was moving well and enjoyed the serenity of being alone beneath the stars. Strangely my thoughts turned to my parents, how I hadn't seen them in so long and how I missed them, I sent them a quick text to let them know. By now I was layered up like a Michelin man with only my nose popping out of my jacket; it was cold and exposed up there, 'at least if I fell I'd bounce.' I chuckled to myself. As I started to descend into Stanhope it was the first time that I really acknowledged that I wasn't moving so well anymore, I was beginning to hurt which was expected but what wasn't expected was the tiredness that hit me.





Why this hadn't been a consideration I have no idea, but it was going to become an issue. Crawleyside Bank was an epic point when we'd cycled the route, as when you get to the top it's downhill (or thereabouts) all the way home but I wasn't feeling the same relief. I was quite aptly crawling up Crawleyside, bundled up in all my layers and drifting in and out of sleep. On one occasion I awoke with a shock hearing a man's voice behind me and at another point I was convinced that I'd seen an elephant, neither of these things were real. By this point I was living for seeing my crew and focused on hoping he'd be around the corner. I'm incredibly lucky to have a crew that was 1, my boyfriend and someone who knows me incredibly well, but also 2, an ultra-runner, he knew exactly what I needed and could empathise with how I felt at various times. When I reached the top looking like a sorry mess he offered me no options but instructed me to move on as it would soon be light, and I'd get a 'second wind'.

Dawn came and I took a moment to acknowledge how beautiful it was up there on the Wakerley Way. After 100 ish miles you could describe my movement as 'running' no more. I realised I could do it, my swift start had bought me time now and I was lucky that I could essentially hop to the finish and still make it within the 38-hour cut-off. Of course, I also had a strong desire to finish as quickly as possible too but I resigned myself to a mixture of plodding and fast walking for the next miles. There were definitely moments of pain and despair but the desire to finish far outweighed the desire to stop, I knew I had to complete. Not only was it downhill to sea level from 100 miles but there was also a steady downhill trajectory with my food and water intake. Personally I find Wakerley Way monotonous at the best of times, miles and miles of identical cycle track and sections that look deceptively like the next, making it hard to work out how far you had left on the utterly wretched thing. The lights of Newcastle twinkled below though to guide me to the finish line, not too far away now.

By mid-morning I had reached Consett and a fellow runner friend had come to scoop up my spirits and send me on my way again. My crew

were being used to rub ibuprofen gel on my legs and take paracetamol instead of the earlier scheduled drink guzzling and food shovelling rituals. I was now the final female in the race, even though I would say this event is not a race but a challenge, this still gave me a much needed mental boost to help me through more cycle track miles; summarise this section in one word? Disgusting.

At Rowlands Gill more friends popped up to cheer me on, I stared at one blankly as he attempted to make small talk, had he tried walking that section before? I imagined my reception to be much like he'd told a rude joke at a funeral. Luckily I think he's forgiven me. Was that it for the nasty sections? Nope. I now had Newcastle to get through including the busy quayside. Is this what 'the walk of shame' feels like? I was dishevelled and walking gingerly by this point and trying hard not to make eye contact with anyone; I wasn't sure if I was going to be sick too. A lovely mix of friends was walking me through by now and making an effort to entertain me with small talk; most questions were greeted with a stony silence however I did the odd attempt at a chuckle but I made sure I told them that I appreciated them being there.

Post Newcastle was, by far, the hardest section of all. I hadn't reced this section fully and I knew that we were close; the problem was I just didn't know how close. I wasn't even attempting a quick march anymore and so it seemed to drag on forever, not helped by the industrial back set: glass scattered paths and dog walkers' alleys. Apparently, if I could move faster I could set a new women's record for the course. I knew that it was unlikely as I was not moving fast enough but I made an attempt to jog / walk the last section.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I finally saw the pier, after the last twenty miles it looked breathtakingly beautiful and I was grateful that the sun had come out to see me. My posse vanished and all that stood between me and my medal was one last hill. Ever graceful, as soon as I reached the finisher hill I dropped the bottle I had in my hand and attempted to pick it up swiftly, it takes a surprising amount of effort to do this after travelling 140 miles. Seamless.

"Run, run!" Mark Cockbain yelled at me from the top. Not with any excitement may I add, it was more of a monotone request, perhaps he wanted to take down the finisher flags and get home ASAP.

I trotted up and was rewarded with a medal, a bottle of Newcastle Brown ale, a finisher's t-shirt, friends and family and the sun setting over the priory behind them. I was relieved to stop but also proud of the achievement and completely overwhelmed by the fact that I had managed it. There was always a chance that I wouldn't; really, I suppose with any long run, anything can happen. I counted my lucky stars that everything had (as much as possible) gone to plan.

One thing that definitely contributed to my success was my support crew as well as the support from family and friends throughout. I was completely overwhelmed by people's kind words and encouragement; it took me a couple of days to get through everything on social media. The running community really is like a family.

So, what about the record? I missed it by eleven minutes. Perhaps if I had it in my sights a little bit earlier it would have been somewhat more achievable. However, after looking up the course record holder, Sharon Gaytor, a GB athlete with some amazing achievements, I was more than happy to come second.

Of the 19 starters, only 9 finished. I imagine that they all suffered as much, if not more than me and for that I have a mega amount of respect for them all. A lot of people have asked if I would do it again. I think lots of the Cockbain events are challenges and I've completed it so it's a definite 'no'. And then, of course there are the people that asked if I regret doing it. Well, they're clearly not runners. Of course, I'll attempt the distance again, and hopefully further. I'm very much looking forward to finding out about what other races are out there and seeing how far I can push myself and what else I can achieve.

My final thoughts, how hilarious it is when you can travel 140 miles on your own two feet but are struggling to get around the local shop to pick up a few bits in the following few days. Well worth it though.

Everest FKT

By Tyler Andrews

Trigger warning: this piece con- tains references to depression and suicide.

It's darker than I'd imagined. I honestly thought there'd be more snow.

Staring at the rocky, grey summit of Mt. Everest, the summit enshrouded in grey-black clouds and still more than 11,000 ft above me at Base Camp, these are my first thoughts. Maybe it's the lack of oxygen here at 17,600 ft. above sea level, but in retrospect, it's more remarkable what I'm not thinking: how I've already been continuously moving for almost 12 hours, how I've still got another 33 miles before I reach my hard, hostel bed, how my flight back to Kathmandu and then onto Doha and finally Los Angeles leaves in 18 hours, no room for error.

But mostly, I realize that today is the first day in months, where I haven't, at some point, been overwhelmed by my own darkness, where I haven't thought about killing myself.

A joyous beginning

Let's move the clock back two and a half months to January 2, 2020. See me step off the plane in at Mariscal Sucre Airport, just outside Quito, Ecuador (9,300 ft. above sea level) to begin my final two months of training leading into the US Olympic Marathon Trials. Quito has been my home-away-from-home, my winter altitude camp, for years and I can't help but smile at the chaotic bustle traffic as we snake our way through the mountains and into the city, the sparkling snow caps that tower above us, and the endless eucalyptus forests that expand up the hills until, lacking sufficient oxygen, they throw in the towel, leaving nothing but grassy scrubland above 12,000 ft.

2020 is off to a great start. I run with friends, old and new, and my fellow runners (with help from the perilously thin air) are whipping me into fantastic shape. I'm smiling more, laughing more, and cruising through workouts alongside Olympians. After a sluggish start to this build up in my hometown of Boston, MA, things are finally starting to click.

Nearing the end of the month, I drive back to that same airport to pick up my wife, my partner over these last seven years, and we leave the honking taxis and diesel fumes for the silence

and mist of the Ecuadorian cloud forest. We've planned a short vacation to split up our time apart (and, for her, as a short reprieve from the dark and cold Boston winter). It's not until we have some time alone, out in a cabin we'd rented for these few days, that she says the words that, as soon as they break the silence of the unbearably beautiful room, I know will shape the course of this year.

"I don't want to be married anymore."

This is not about a breakup. Don't worry. This is not to be an angsty pity party nor a jaded tirade against my ex.

This is about the inextricable link between body and mind, which link I have never felt as strongly as I have in 2020. And the multilayered complexity of that link in the body and mind of the depressed athlete.

2020 has been a dumpster fire of a year for most of the world, and I don't want to monopolize the grief and hardship that so many have felt from losing loved ones, jobs, freedom, etc. But those seven words and the two years of downward spiraling that forced them to the surface, accelerated by my own long-term, underlying depression. It acted as the catalyst that would transform a quiet, controlled but toxic undercurrent into a volatile, churning froth.

I've struggled with depression, lack of self-worth, and suicidal thoughts for almost as long as I can remember (and, no, I've never attempted to act on those thoughts). For most of my twenties, I kept my depression under control; but over these past two years, despite my best attempts to continue to self-medicate with running and obsessive goal-setting and external validation of my own self-worth from my athletic career and my partner, that dark undercurrent, always there, has flooded in, fed by the constant refrain coming from deep inside myself and reinforced both subtly and directly from my crumbling relationship: You're not good enough. And you never will be.

It is this phrase, the same phrase that has, in a dark and perverse way, driven me to attempt to prove myself and push my body through a career in professional athletics, that echoes louder than ever over the subsequent months, the words twisting to become "you'll never be good enough", and then raising the conspicuous remaining and terribly final question, "why bother?"

Asleep at the wheel

It's been less than a week since those



seven words in the cabin and I'm blinking furiously, trying to hide the (obvious) fact that I'd been sobbing as I exit the bathroom and join Matt and Cal as nonchalantly as possible for the start of our run. Quito has blessed us with a perfect, cool morning at the Chaquiñan trail-head and, with the world still spinning, the three of us prepare for a long run: several hours of moderate running followed by a series of shorter, quicker repetitions on the road.

As with most harder training days, the first steps are easy, relaxed, the gentle downhill grade of the trail perfect for getting the legs moving early in the morning. But quickly, I'm losing ground. The whole world seems to scream, "You're a failure. You fucked up the one thing in your life that might have someday led to that capital-H Happiness. The voice deep inside you was right all along: you aren't good enough. You never were and you never will be."

I let Cal and Matt trot onward, the gap growing silently, they both know; we don't need to discuss it, until they're far enough ahead that I can simply stop. Maybe I even sit down. I don't ease back into running. I don't adjust the workout.

No, this is literally all I can do. The enormity of the dark cloud enshrouds my mind. And without my mind to drive, my body, the machine I've honed meticulously over the last fifteen years, is useless.

Nothing good will happen today.

Take what you can get

"Cayambe, Antisana, Cotopaxi, Ruminahui, Paschoa, Corazon, Ilinizas," I point and name



each summit, my inner tour-guide coming out, as I smile uncontrollably in the first light of dawn. Matt, piloting the “Fuya-fuya”, the 1980s Land Rover we’ve borrowed for the day, stays focused on the road as David, Sarah, and I crane our heads left, transfixed by the massive glaciers towering 10,000 ft above us.

I am not a spontaneous person, at least, not during a heavy and important training block. I worship the routine: run, eat, sleep, run, eat, sleep; and a trip to the grocery store or a walk to the local ramen bar generally suffices for about as much variation as I need.

But this is not a normal month. Since that morning on the Chaquiñan when I truly gave up, I’ve had some runs go surprisingly well. And then, I’ve had days where I’ve laid in bed, literally unsure how I could make it through another hour, when simple survival knocked training down to the second or third or hundredth priority. It’s been hard to predict, but, counterintuitively, though maybe not so, in retrospect, the days where I’m able to let go of “training” and focus instead on the warmth of the sun on my skin and the mountains dominating the horizon. The simple pleasure of the joyous struggle, putting one foot in front of the other, not because it’s the best textbook, physical preparation for some race, but simply because the effort and the beauty distract me, even momentarily, from the black tornado roaring in my mind, on these days, my body cooperates, performs. My fitness hasn’t disappeared.

And so, when a patch of unusually clear weather pops up on the forecast and my Casa Chaski housemates suggested a day trip to the mountains, I’d agreed, not because a long day hike fits well into my perfect training plan, but because I knew, hoped, that it’d be the kind of day where I’d lose myself in the moment, one deposit of positivity into the ol’ mental bank.

“I think that the only thing that’s going to determine what kind of race I have at the Trials is my headspace over the next few weeks,” I say, breaking the silence in the Fuya. “There’s no point in trying to stick to some regimented plan if my head is going to keep me from even getting out the door.”

David, one of my oldest friends, puts it well. “Sometimes, when things are tough, you’ve just gotta take whatever you can get.”

The best medicine

10,000 miles to the east and a month later, that sunny joyous day is a distant memory as I load up my pack, my breath hanging visibly in the frigid air just before midnight for what will be literally the longest day of my life: a single day attempt at the Fastest Known Time (FKT) on the Everest Base Camp Trail.

The Olympic Marathon Trials have come and gone (Spoiler Alert: I didn’t make the team). If you’d told me four years ago, even four months ago, how I’d end up finishing, I would have been devastated. But in real life, the race, even standing on the start line, is a victory, a celebration.

In the hours following the race, I think back to that bright sunny trip to Cotopaxi, and I again try to listen to my gut and take care of my mind, I cede control to my newfound impulsivity and, from my hotel bed in Atlanta, purchase a roundtrip ticket to Nepal, a part of the world where I know exactly nobody yet have always been drawn

The Himalaya do not disappoint and after ten days of hiking, in a final act of impulsivity, I give myself one goal: an attempt to run farther and longer than I ever have before, all through the high mountains along rocky and sometimes snowy trails from Lukla to Everest Base Camp and back.

I won’t rehash the entire big, long day. That’s been done, [here](#).

Running, hiking, and scrambling my way across 65 miles of high Himalayan trails was the best medicine I could have asked for. On a day that long, that intense, there’s no room for the voice that says “You’re not good enough,” or “You’ll never be good enough.” Instead, there is joy: the sunrise and sunset to myself, the random high fives from strangers, singing along to the Hamilton soundtrack in the pitch black night, a trillion stars overhead.

There’s a voice that asks “Why?” but on a day like this, that voice can be answered with the pragmatic. “Because if I stop, I’ll freeze,” or “because I have to catch my flight out of here tomorrow,” or “because I really, really want to do this, even if I can’t explain why.”

Of course, there is darkness, there is struggle, but the unrelenting need of the task at hand and the overwhelming simplicity of that task keep

my head where it needs to be. Right now. One step at a time.

Mind is body

Running for hours on end through the Himalaya is, unfortunately, not a sustainable form of self-medication for the long haul. Nepal is beautiful and wild and rugged, but I have to leave. Eight hours after I stop my watch, the wheels lift off at Lukla airport and I begin my long journey home.

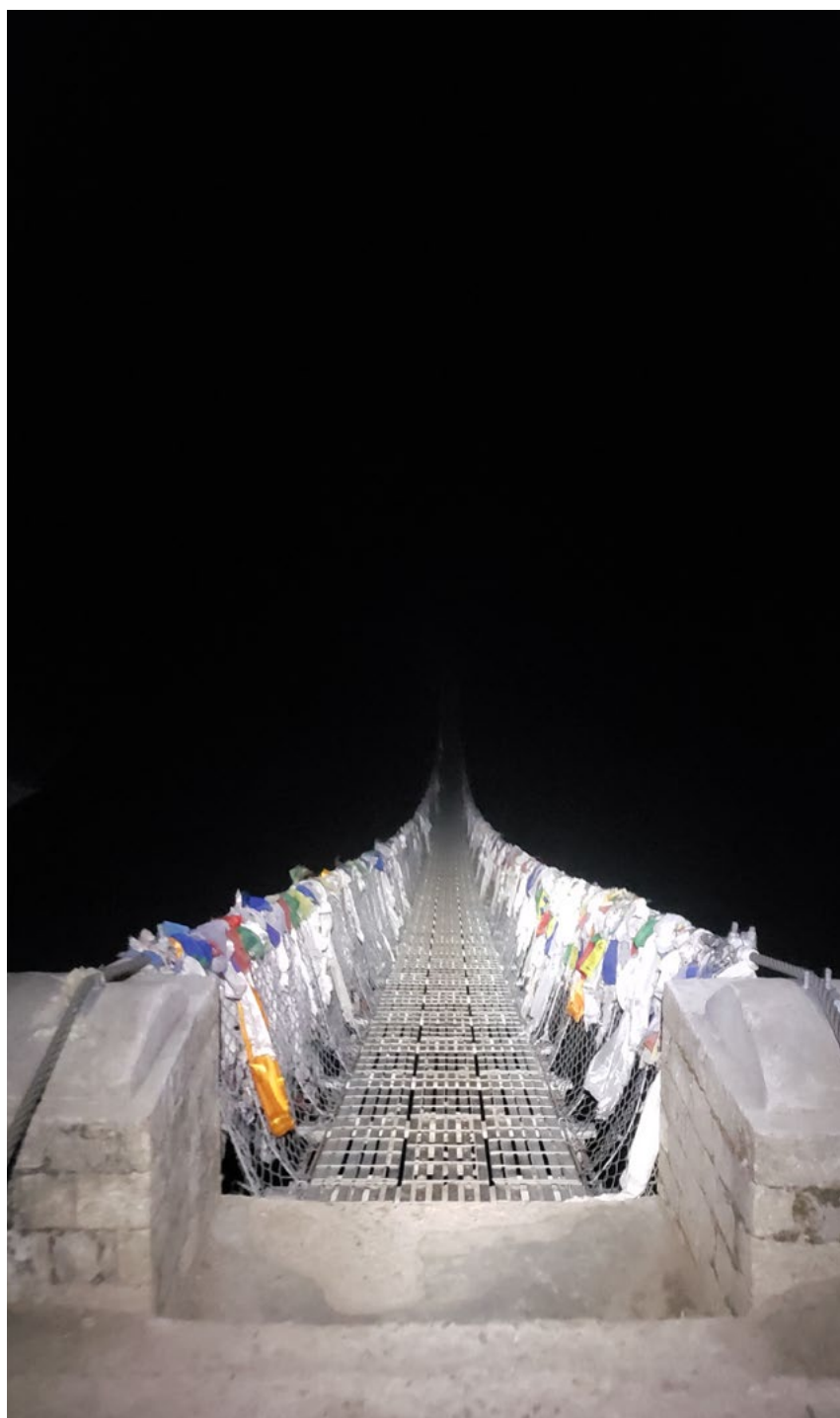
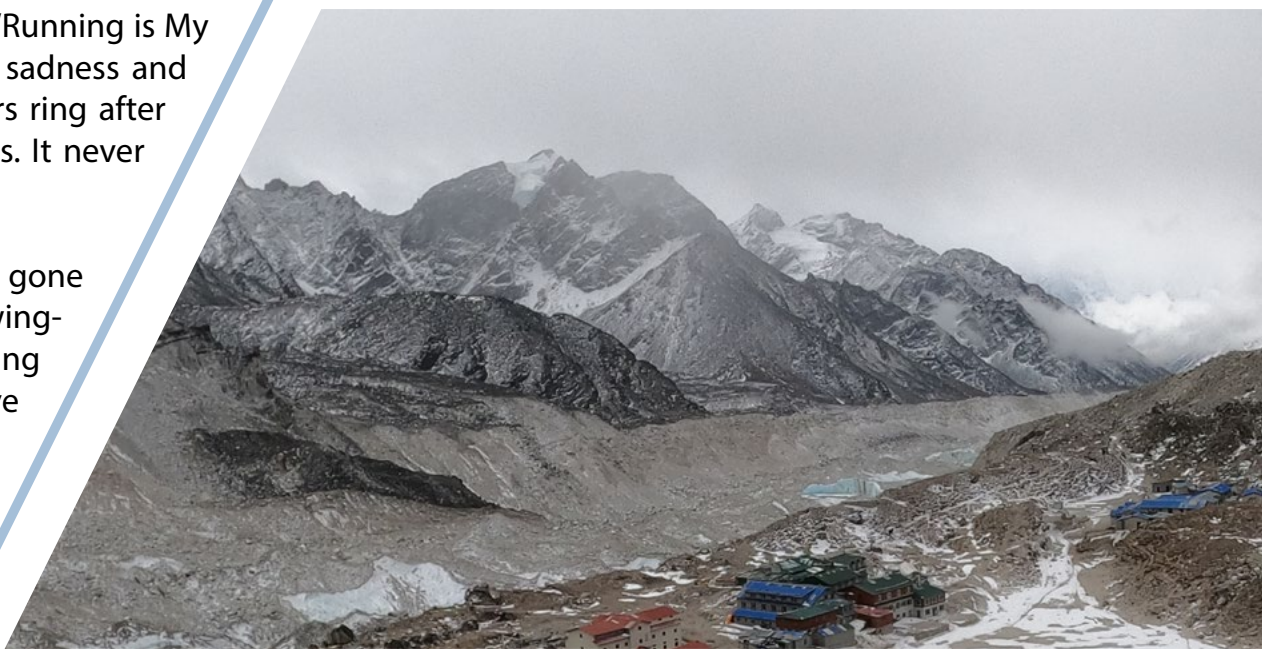
Now, it's been six months since that big, long day and while I wish I could say I took those lessons learned on the trail and turned my life around, mastered my own mind, knocked out the darkness and doubt, and that everything was generally fantastic, the truth is that depression doesn't work like that. Scott Douglas wrote in "Running is My Therapy" that the difference between sadness and depression is akin to the way your ears ring after a loud rock concert vs. chronic tinnitus. It never goes away. You just learn to live with it.

For a long time, my life had objectively gone well enough that I had, mostly unknowingly been caring for my mind by drowning out that low grade hum with the positive reinforcement and validation of a partner, a relatively successful athletic career, and an overall externally happy life. When things began to sour, I saw my self-confidence slowly dwindle, along with my ability to keep my mind focused on pushing my body towards its limits. And (switching metaphors now), like a lightbulb which dims until finally, pop! burning out, that final loss doesn't create the darkness; it merely reveals it.

I am still learning to navigate that darkness. I am learning to love and value myself and my presence on this earth. I am learning that I have to rebuild myself, physically and mentally, because for me running is both a source of joy and a potential for disappointment, the kind of capital-D Disappointment, avoidance of which has been a tremendously positive motivator over the years, but which I also know sets me up for a spectacularly hard crash back down to Earth. While I could pick myself up from that kind of crash five years ago, today, I can't.

Mind is body. There is no separation, just as we cannot run on a broken femur, we cannot "muscle through" life or training with a mind that is trapped at the bottom of a well.

I now give my mind the right of way. I still have ambitions, I still write out carefully crafted training calendars, I still want to squeeze every drop of juice from the orange of my ability; but, I know that the only way I'm going to do that is by capitalising on these moments of joy and struggle. While it's easy to stumble across those moments half a world away in the shadow of Everest, it takes work and focus to create them at home. But it can make all the difference. As a runner, and a human, it's worth it.



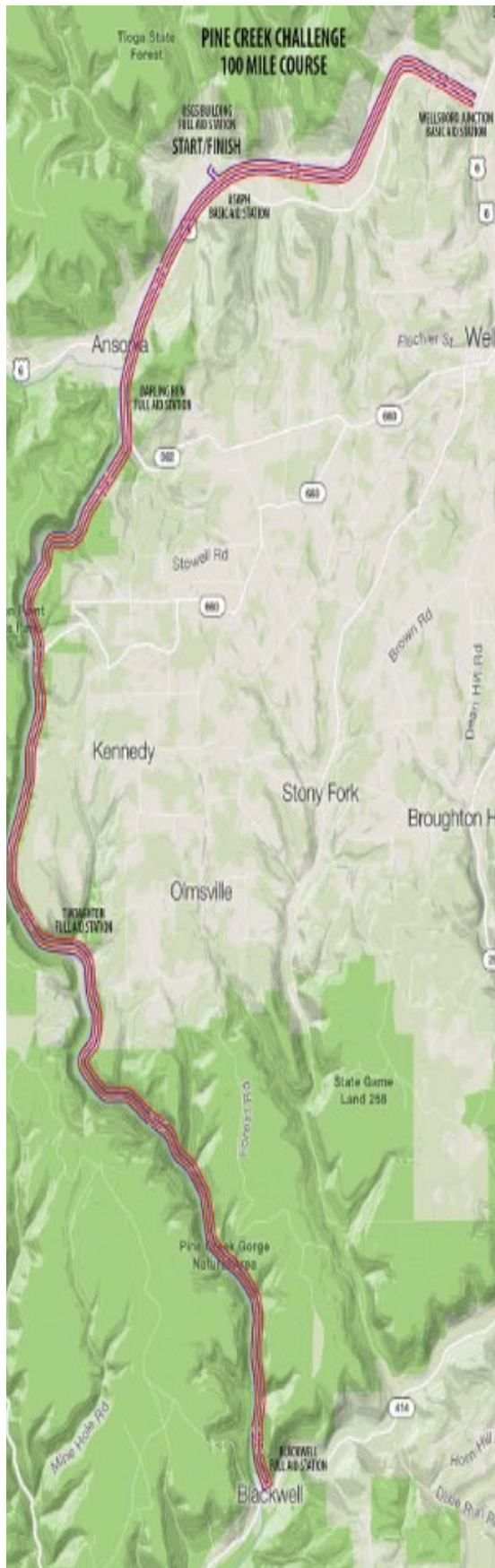
The Nearly Perfect 2020 Pine Creek Challenge 100 Mile Ultramarathon

By Tim Hardy



While 2020 has been a year where hundreds of ultras have postponed or cancelled due to Covid related decisions, the Pine Creek Challenge ran smoothly and exactly as scheduled on September 12th and 13th. The race runs through the beautiful Pine Creek Gorge, also known as the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania, just west of Wellsboro, Pennsylvania. This is an incredibly scenic area made up of and surrounded by State Forests. Overall, as races go, this ultra-reporter probably has not run a 100 mile or longer race that has more appealing factors for a wider range of ultra-runners than the Pine Creek 100.

Wellsboro is a picturesque small American town and was fairly easy to get to, only a few minutes west of a major highway, Route 15. Friday night's packet pickup was located at Asaph Outfitters in the middle of town and there were several nearby restaurants to choose from. Race Headquarters was less than fifteen minutes west of Wellsboro, located at the US Geological Survey Center at Asaph, with ample room for parking and camping if racers chose to do so. The race course actually ended in the USGS parking lot Cul de Sac. The Pine Creek Challenge runs four separate races concurrently, including a distance for every endurance runner, making this a great venue for couples, family, or groups of friends, all intent on racing different distances together. In addition to the 100 mile event, there are 100K, 50 mile and 26.2 mile races. The 100 miler starts at 0600AM, the 100K at 0700AM, the 50 miler at 0800AM and the marathon at 0900AM. The event team led by Race Director Steve Hanes did a superb job of planning, organizing, and



executing the entire weekend. For ultra-runners that enjoy an out and back course, Pine Creek is perfect. From the race's starting point, also the Asaph Aid Station, the race starts and heads north for just under 6 miles to the Wellsboro Junction Aid Station, there racers turn around and head south to cover the rest of the course. Once back to Asaph Aid Station racers kept moving south to the course terminus just beyond Blackwell Aid Station nineteen miles from Asaph. The Darling Run Aid Station is only about three miles south of Asaph and the Tiadaghton Aid Station is midway between Darling and Blackwell. Tiadaghton is remote as there is no road access.

The rail trail runs right through the heart of the little village of Blackwell and that was a robust aid station, basically right in the center of the village. Racers had drop bags there and there were always crew and family members there as well. Once racers made it back to Asaph aid station that completed a full fifty miles on the course. 100K racers finished their race by heading north to Wellsboro Junction and then turned around and headed back to Asaph. 100 miler racers ran the full 50 mile course twice.

The course was incredibly flat, even flatter than the Beast of Burden course if that's possible. Given the out and back format and solid support factors, this event really lends itself to giving ambitious racers the chance to set a personal best at any distance. Once you completed the first half of



the course, you always knew exactly where you were on the course, and had a myriad of other runners to measure your progress against. The late summer weather this season was as perfect as running conditions could have been. Temperatures never got above the low seventies on either Saturday or Sunday and it remained overcast throughout the race. While Friday night had been somewhat chilly, Saturday night into Sunday morning was never colder on the course than t-shirt and shorts weather, and the rain forecasted for Sunday held off until the race was finished on the clock. The 100 mile race was closely contested. Pdraig Mullins ran a smooth, determined, and consistently paced race, grinding out the overall win in 16:40:10. Vasily Goncharov finished second, eleven minutes after Mullins at 16:51:27. Michael Gagliardi finished third at 16:57:24. Jessica Grinspan won the female race in 19:06:32, and came in fifth place overall. Yoshiko Jo was the second place female at 19:42:02, sixth overall, with Jenna Powers taking the third place female position at 23:22:52. Here's an added statistical breakdown. Race winner Mr. Mullins total time on the course- 16:40:10 - equates to 1000 minutes and ten seconds, meaning that Pdraig averaged ten minutes per mile for one hundred miles.

Race Report

Seventy-three racers started the 100 mile race and fifty-four finished. The oldest finisher was 70 years of age and the youngest was 29, the only finisher under the age of 30. Once the marathon started at 0900AM, there were 148 total racers spread out on the course. The race director had reported in one of his email updates that Pine Creek 2020 had more registered racers than any other previous year in their history. With that many racers and all the local bikers and hikers visiting the rail trail, the course and canyon was fairly full of people

100 Miler | 100K | 50 Miler | Marat

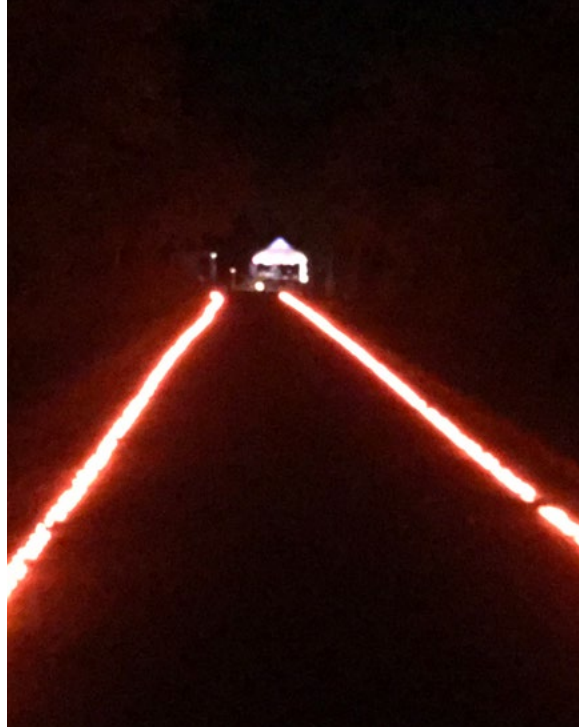
	Place	First	Last	City		Age	Gender	GP	Time	Rank
Finishers - 54										
results	1	Padraig	Mullins	Cambridge	MA	38	M	1	16:40:10	81.62
results	2	Vasily	Goncharov	Ashburn	VA	40	M	2	16:51:27	91.05
results	3	Michael	Gagliardi	Philadelphia	PA	44	M	3	16:57:24	80.39
results	4	Steve	Schall	Williamsport	PA	48	M	4	19:05:03	74.45
results	5	Jessica	Grinspan	North Wales	PA	37	F	1	19:06:32	94.4
results	6	Yoshiko	Jo	Swarthmore	PA	55	F	2	19:42:02	76.75
results	7	Conan	Mowbray	Sterling	VA	46	M	5	21:19:04	67.07
results	8	Ryan	Pelletier	New Bedford	MA	35	M	6	21:27:57	87.12
results	9	Philip	Perkins	West Chester	PA	48	M	7	21:32:31	69.23
results	10	Peter	Wai	Jenkintown	PA	49	M	8	22:04:47	71.04
results	11	Jonathan	Edwards	Ringoes	NJ	51	M	9	22:09:04	65.29
results	12	Xavier	McFadden	Laurel	MD	25	M	10	22:14:21	67.59
results	13	Travis	Shive	Harleysville	PA	41	M	11	22:37:03	75.72
results	14	Matthew	Mehring	Conshohocken	PA	24	M	12	22:40:36	81.76
results	15	Jamie	Healt	Burlington	WA	44	M	13	22:51:27	67.11
results	16	Jenna	Powers	Seattle	WA	43	F	3	23:22:52	71.56
results	17	Michael	Condella	Revere	MA	32	M	14	23:33:05	65.81
results	18	Keith	Straw	Malvern	PA	65	M	15	23:38:06	73.99



on Saturday. There were a fair amount of bikers and hikers to go along with the remaining 100 mile racers on Sunday morning as well.

Early on I spent a large portion of this race ruminating on the differences in the training required between a 300+ mile, multi-day race versus a 100 mile, 30-hour weekend sprint. It had been over eighteen months since I had completed a pure 100 miler, the winter Beast of Burden in February 2019 in Lockport, New York. While the distance did not concern me, the 30 hour race clock lent me some trepidation. My target races over the past thirty-six months had been 300+ mile races with ten day time limits. The lion's share of my training over that period had been focused on moving at least sixteen hours a day with an eight to ten pound pack on, at a four mile per hour pace. So instead of setting hard, big clock goals along the lines of going through the first fifty miles in less than twelve hours, or through seventy miles by midnight, I just stayed focused on the course in completing as many miles as I possibly could in less than fourteen minutes per mile.

Besides each race's inherent challenges, the thing I like the most about ultramarathons are the people, the Tribe. The 100 started just before a dawn broke, overcast, grayed-out, full of ground fog and humidity. Most of Nature was cast in monotone charcoal colors until late into the morning. The more time that I spend running ultramarathons, the more people that I know and certainly recognize from previous races. Pine Creek was no exception to that tenet. And, of course, you meet new friends, particularly in a long, double, out and back race like the Pine Creek. You see runners repeatedly. That also lends a somewhat rare perspective of how well, or less than well, individuals weather or wither at the 100 mile distances. Physically and mentally.



The first fifty mile lap flowed smoothly. Once the race hit Darling Run Aid Station the course joined with the big and beautiful Pine Creek and we traveled all the way to Blackwell and back through the majestic Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area. High ridges lined both sides, with the rail trail running along the east side of the creek the entire way. Pine Creek itself seemed, much larger than a creek, a not so small, winding river. Every so often we'd pass an enticing single track trail leading away up the ridgeline. By ten AM the rail trail was full of racers, hikers as well as single and groups of bike riders for the entire day. At one point a group of riders passed me and an older, bike-riding lady bounced off the biker in front of her and went down hard right in front of me. The woman was much more embarrassed than she was hurt. In complete contrast to the first loop in the race, it became completely dark on the second trip out to Wellsboro Junction Aid Station. That aid station was so well lit up, with red lights lining the rail trail on both sides going in, you could finally see it from at least three quarters of a mile outward at the end of the long straightaway leading up to it. There were motivated, encouraging, mask-wearing volunteers still greeting racers in every aid station throughout the entire night, offering whatever they had on hand in typical ultra aid station fare. It was pitch dark tunnel of deep night

in the canyon. We all moved within our own little spheres of head lamp light, grinding out the miles headed south towards the turnaround at Blackwell. That 8.4 mile stretch between Tiadaghton and Blackwell Aid Stations is the longest on the course, especially so southbound between 2 to 4 AM. Occasionally lights would appear in the distance, and the closer one got to Blackwell, the larger that stream of northbound runners grew. One runner passing warned of seeing a rattlesnake on the trail, although someone posted a picture of it later on Facebook, I never saw it. As always, daybreak on Day 2 brought with it renewed motivation and a bit of energy. While the cloud cover remained, it still had not rained yet. We started running limited intervals again, and worked to close with runners ahead on the course, and passed a few. The last ten miles were quite challenging as they always are. I finished in 28:33:25, 42nd overall. There were so many more racers that signed up and finished the 100 mile race than has been the historical case, several of us that finished in the second tier are receiving our finishers belt buckles in a second order soon in the mail. Sixteen racers alone finished in the last 90 minutes on the race clock. This average ultra-runner thoroughly enjoyed my first time at the Pine Creek 100 and cannot recommend this race highly enough for all the reasons detailed above. The Pine Creek Challenge team did a great job with this event.





Winter Yoga practice

As the nights get darker and longer it can be difficult to motivate ourselves to keep the training miles up. If you run before or after work the chances are, you'll be in the dark. Some see this as an opportunity to practice running with a head torch and others may find themselves sticking to well-lit streets. Either way our training does change in the winter months. We are, like most other animals on the planet, inclined to hibernate at this time of year. This does not mean we need to get out of shape. It is a good time to focus on other aspects of your training. Think of this as an opportunity to slow down, reflect inwards, plan and take good care of ourselves in preparation for the Springtime races. Many ultrarunners, including Scott Jurek, Amy Hughes, Rich Roll, Carla Molinaro, to name a few, understand the benefits of yoga for their training.

You can introduce yoga in several ways:

Cross Training - On days when you are not running plan a yoga routine to build strength. Focus on the core, and upper body strength in addition to legs, also include balance work.

Stretching - Commit to a shorter yoga session after each run to improve flexibility and your range of motion which in turn should reduce your tendency for injury. We all get tight hips, glutes, quads, and hamstrings. Take time to really assess how your body feels and stretch appropriately. This is not a time to be competitive, drop the ego and focus on what your body is telling you.

Focus your mind - Mental strength is key, not just for race day, but to get you through the training months.

Purposefully following a routine while using your breath to guide you will by its nature focus your mind more. You can further improve this by adding some meditation to your daily practice (see the sidebar).

Relax - A short slow yoga session, pranayama or yoga nidra before bed can improve your sleep. You will be up bright and early for your run in the morning and you'll feel good.



Begin with short sessions of 5 minutes and slowly build up your meditation time. Try to find somewhere you will be least distracted. If you are setting a timer on your phone ensure that all notifications are turned off.

The first thing you need is a comfortable position with a straight spine. Traditionally this would be cross legged on the floor but if you have tight legs this can be uncomfortable. You might want to sit with your back leaning against a wall or sofa to begin with. You can also build support under your knees by using cushions or yoga blocks.

Start with some breath work. You will be increasing your oxygen intake, exercising your lungs and simultaneously relaxing, reducing stress. Close your eyes and concentrate only on your breathing. Begin by inhaling and exhaling through the nose. Use all of your lungs, breathing from the belly all the way up to the neck. Try to lengthen and slow the breath. Give yourself time to find a relaxed rhythm here.

Once you feel you achieved that just start to count your breaths. An inhale followed by exhale count 1. Try to get to 7 without allowing your mind to wander off. Each time you find yourself distracted start from 1 again. Aim to count the cycle of 7 seven times.

As your mind stills your breath will naturally quieten, it should not feel forced. The counting and focusing on the breath are just ways to keep the mind from wandering. At first this may be as far as you get. You might be surprised at how distracting and talkative your mind is. Eventually, with practice, the counting will be easier, and you will get through the 7 cycles with minimum distraction. At this point you can stop the counting and turn your focus inwards.

Do not expect anything, don't let your mind ask questions, just allow yourself to be completely still for a while. If your mind wanders again start counting to keep it in check. Try to find time each day to practice, starting with 5 minutes and slowly building up to 10 or 15 minutes.

POST YOGA RUN

Take time after your run to stretch out

Even if you can only commit to 15 minutes post run, do these postures and your body will thank you. They are also a great way of assessing where you are tight and areas you need to work on. (If you have any medical issues please consult your doctor before completing any of the exercises)



Forward Fold

Stretch up first then fold over at the hips. Bend your knees

1. Take time to stand firmly with your weight evenly distributed over both feet. Reach your arms up as you inhale to lengthen your torso. Bend forward slowly, keeping the torso long, hands heading towards the mat. Most runners will be restricted from touching their toes by tight hamstrings. Please remember that this is a journey, and you should never force the hamstrings. They like to be loosened slowly over time. // **a.** Before folding forward activate your core and be active through your thighs. // **b.** Bend your knees and aim to get the torso against your thigh. Once you are in that position you can slowly begin to straighten the legs a little (never force this, always work with where you are. Your hamstrings will release when they are ready) // **c.** You can also do a seated forward fold. Again, I would recommend starting with your knees slightly bent and breathe into the posture, never force the hamstrings.

Sit back on your heels, fold forward stretching your arms out. Place forehead on the mat



Child's pose

2. From all fours, move your knees apart and let your toes come together. Sit back onto your heels. Lean forward resting your forehead on the mat and stretching your arms forward. Breathe and lengthen from your hips to your armpits. // **a.** As you bend forward your bottom may come up off the heels. That is ok. Just notice where you are, work with your breath and try to release down as much as you can. // **b.** If your hips are very tight you may want your knees to be closer together.

Downward facing dog

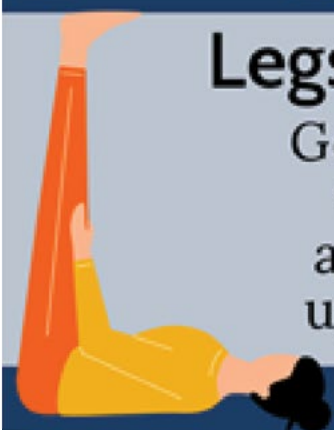
Push with your hands. Send your hips up and lower your heels down.



3. Come back up to all fours. Spread your fingers and evenly distribute the weight across your hands. Tuck your toes under, lift the knees and push into your hands to raise the hips. Push the mat away with your hands, send the tailbone up towards the sky and let your heels fall to the mat. Tight hamstrings will restrict this posture so be careful and don't aim for heels on the mat. // **a.** Bend your knees as you come up and get comfortable with pushing your hands away to get a nice long, straight spine. Then slowly straighten the legs (or not). You may find you just need to keep the knees bent initially. // **b.** Start on the tip toes and gently lower the heels towards the mat. Getting the heels onto the mat is not the important part of this posture. Ensure you get the straight back first, and when you are ready lower the heels towards the mat.

Legs up the wall

Get as close to the wall as you can and lift your legs up the wall. Relax



4. Shuffle yourself on your bottom up towards a wall and swing your legs up. Relax your upper body. Stay here as long as you can and just enjoy the tingling in your legs.

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Susan Lister

Back of the pack ultra runner/jogger and Yoga teacher

THE HALL OF FAME.

Richard Brown

Photo by [Mark Easton](#)

The Hall of Fame would be amiss if it did not showcase the length and breadth of one extraordinary ultra distance career. This was expedited by Richard Brown, an icon of the ultra running world. An incredibly modest athlete who, with the encouragement of his wife Sandra, incrementally broke records and demolished plentiful miles in a steady succession. Aesop's fable about the hare and the tortoise epitomises his winning style. Let's look back at this momentous career.

Richard was born after the 2nd World War in 1946. An only child in post war austerity, his parents were not well off, however, Richard



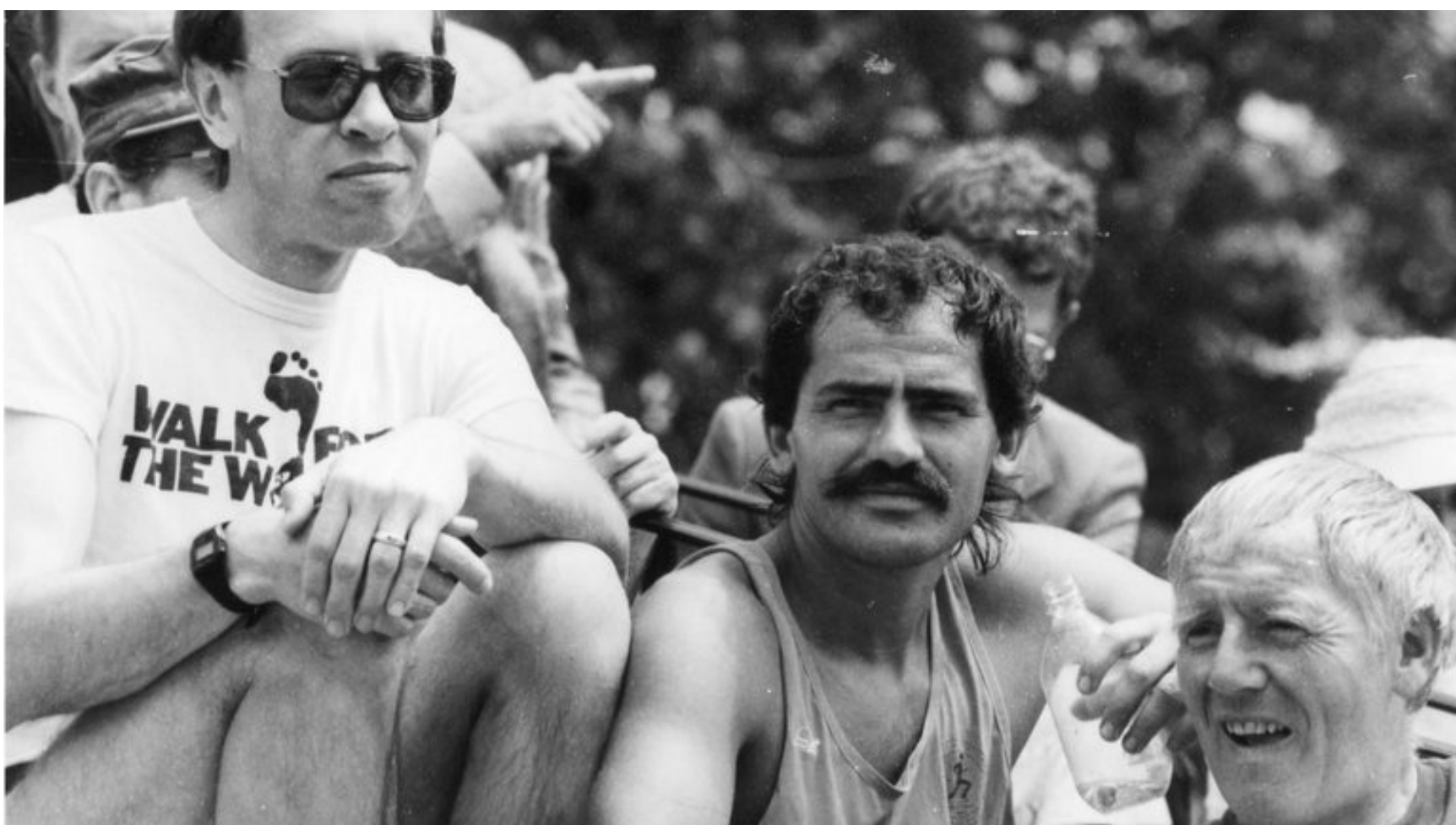


Photo courtesy Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team

had a talent for singing and his first achievement was to win a chorister scholarship to the City of London School. Walking 2 miles to the station and back on every school day, primed his legs for an as yet unrealised future. It wasn't until university that he became interested in rowing. A diagnosis of a rare form of arthritis which impaired Richard's flexibility could have been a painful, life long barrier, this condition did not perturb him from pursuing his sport. The seeds of training and sporting discipline were further enhanced.

Having met Sandra at university and newly married, they moved nearer the countryside to Luton in 1970. They both began walking as a respite from their civil service careers, five miles turned into ten and more, eventually they joined the Long Distance Walking Association (L.D.W.A) but it wasn't until 1982 that they started entering long distance races which was also through their participation with Surrey Walking Club.

This is when the long distance race became a way of life for the Browns. Richard entered his first marathon in 1982 and he finished it in under 4 hours. Despite vowing never to do a marathon again, Richard went on to complete his first 100 miles in 1982 during the L.D.W.A pilgrims from Guildford to Canterbury, sporting a rucksack and boots.

Richard preferred to employ walking as his main method of locomotion in all his races, only running on the downhills to stretch out his muscles. This seemingly tortoise approach to a race brought success, he would often pass out runners and go on to win the races.

"The longer the distance the more the

walker comes into his own."

Richard knew that over ultra distances, a runner cannot run all the time and as a result their speed varies but a proficient walker can maintain a steady speed, experiencing overtaking by a walker can psychologically destroy a runner. Richard was following in the footsteps of a long and illustrious history of walking races stretching back to 2,500 BC in Egypt and Greece with a revival from the 17th Century.

Richard went on to compete in a variety of long distances from 100 miles, 24 hours, 48 hours and 6 day events over a 40 year competitive career. He has walked alongside (and sometimes moved past) all the greats of his generation, Yiannis Kouros, Eleanor Adams-Robinson and Don Richie to name but a few.

This personal experience was invaluable as he coached the GB team to success in 2014.

"At Ultra-distance events, especially over a 100 miles we are all in it together. We all know that while to some extent we are competing against each other, we are actually competing against ourselves. We are trying to do the best for ourselves."

This analysis sums up his compassion and understanding of the sport;

"We know that if we go through a difficult patch one of them will help us. They help because they know that in another few hours they will be in difficulty and we will help them out. So our aim is to do the best we possibly can. In our sport the comradery, helping each other, is part of what it is about."

Now in his 70's Richard continues to enter long distance events and to win in his age category. He is active and appreciated as a selector for 100km and 24 hour GB runners. He is passing

the baton on. During August of this year, Richard was out on the route encouraging Dan Lawson in his quest to beat the record Richard achieved in 1995 of 10 days, 2 hours and 25 minutes from Land's End to John O'Groats. Here's a summary of his achievements, not that a written list has any resemblance to the grit and determination required from a rare breed indeed.

1993 UK 100 mile walking record of 16 hrs 50 mins

1992 UK 200 km walking record of 21 hrs 42 mins

1990 & 1992 the second British walker to compete in Paris to Colmar, 542km Centurion 100 mile race winner a record ten times

1991 The sixth person to exceed 400 km in a 48 hr event and a British record

1997 Previous UK indoor 48 hr record

1988 World 1,000 M45 road record

1988 Previous UK 6 day road record, 832 km

1988 World's best for running length of Ireland, 375 miles in 4 days, 12 hrs

2010 Held world M60 age group best performance for 6 days, 765 km

2012 M65 world best, 654km

2014 Team manager of men's squad to win the World Championships, ten year tenure.

UW will be featuring the equally accomplished Sandra Brown in issue 28

Further Links

Richard's website: www.ultrabrowns.co.uk/

Great article on Richard by [Tim Erickson](#)

LESSONS LEARNED ON THE RUN

A Book About
Running and Life

David Kempston

Lessons learned on the run. A book about running and life

by David Kempton.

In this book David Kempton, a lawyer and self-professed middle of the pack runner offers life lessons by drawing parallels between his life and his running. The book is part self-help and part philosophy as the author addresses issues all runners will have experienced whether novices or veterans.

Whilst those looking for a technical guide to improve their running endurance or speed will be left wanting, those new to the sport will find lots of helpful advice and tips although the book is primarily about the connection of running to life, the lessons are pertinent to any sporting activity.

The book is well written and the snappy writing style allows you to fly through the pages reaching the end sooner than you would like. Such is his writing style you feel that you are sometimes running along with David as he tells you his stories.

The short chapters also allow the book to be picked up for a few minutes at a time and you still feel you have learnt something new. The book would be ideal for those interested in starting running or those recent beginners as the guidance will help you avoid the common pitfalls of choosing the wrong shoes or clothing and how to find running partners. David uses lots of stories to illustrate his life lessons which are often both humorous and poignant and make the book engaging and enjoyable. Sometimes the stories don't quite match up to the lessons David is trying to convey however this doesn't detract from the enjoyment the book provides.

The only issue I found with the book was that occasionally sentences are repeated in bold and boxed at the side of some pages. Whilst some are the take home message of the chapter, some are just random sentences which don't contribute to the reading experience and were distracting to the flow of the book.

This book would be a great read for runners and non-runners alike and both will take home advice that can be used for life in general and specific to sport. I found this book a great way to spend a few hours and read it straight through with ease.

Whilst this book may not make you a better runner it will definitely change what you think about on those cold winter runs.

Reviewed by Thomas Garrod

Freetrain V1 Vest

By Laura Johnstone

This is the piece of kit you didn't know you needed until you try it. I'm a traditional runner- on shorter runs I don't take any kit/ phone/etc and when I head to the hills I take full body cover in a race vest. I've never seen the need for an 'in between'. However, when the dark nights kick in there is the need for Hi Viz and now the FreeTrain combines reflective safety with a very unintrusive way of carrying your essentials too.

Firstly- sizing. I'm a female, size 8 and my pet hate with kit is any flapping, moving, jiggling. Once adjusted, I genuinely forgot I was wearing this. I also like that it could be put on/taken off without any zips/ clasps/buttons, meaning that any kit changes were straightforward which is always a bonus when you have numb fingers. I was interested to see if it adjusted well for all body sizes, so it was passed round runners of various sizes who all found it adjusted to suit their size. The only thing to note is that with the phone pocket being in the middle of your chest, anybody with a more ample cleavage might find this uncomfortable. We also noted that some phones fit in the pocket easier than others. That said, once they were in, all phone types were secure.

Pros

- Secure fit
- HiViz
- Easily put on/adjusted



**Cons**

- Possibly uncomfortable for anybody with a larger cleavage.

I thought the storage was well thought out and practical. Your phone is stored in a waterproof, flip down pocket (I wore this during Storm Aiden and my phone stayed dry). This meant I could access it without taking off a jacket/gloves or unzipping a pocket. The protective casing is touch sensitive so you can use your phone while wearing it and without removing it from the case, good news for those who use their phone as a training tool. Also, being a flip down pocket means that your phone is already the correct way round for you to read the screen- again, less faff time. There are two additional small storage pockets, one on each collarbone. I squeezed a gel into one and my keys into the other without any effort.

For me, the Hi Viz flashes are a crucial aspect on this. I wouldn't seek something just to carry my phone etc but if I need to wear Hi Viz to be safe it's an absolute bonus that it comes with additional features and is close fitting with no flapping! The Hi Viz flashes are very effective and additional lights could be clipped to the straps if required overall this is a great piece of kit

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



Sarah Perry I'm a proud Yorkshire lass currently living in the North East. During the week I am a primary school teacher and at the weekends I go away with my lovely boyfriend and crazy Vizsla to find somewhere beautiful to run. I'm very new to ultra-running and racing but am loving my journey so far. Instagram: @sarahperry19917



Laura Johnstone I'm a better juggler than I am runner. Mum, teacher, runner... the order changes from time to time. Mostly likely to be found on trails and hills. I've been the president of our local club for 5 years and currently organise a local trail race.



Tim Hardy is an ultrarunner living in Marietta, New York with his wife, their three dogs, one cat, and four horses and they lure their three grandchildren and daughter over as often as possible. Tim served in the US Army for twenty years and has completed a combined seventy ultramarathons and marathons, including the Arrowhead 135 and Badwater 135 in the same calendar year, and the Last Annual VolState 500K in July 2018. Tim is the race director for the Green Lakes Endurance Races 100K and 50K trail races.



Susan Lister is a back of the pack ultra runner and Yoga teacher. She provides a variety of online seasonal yoga classes including yoga specifically for runners. She loves to spend her time jogging around her local Scottish trails. Check out her website Ananta Yoga for more details.



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.



Dan Walker Hi, I am Dan, since deciding to run a marathon for my 40th birthday I have since clocked up 24 ultras. The biggest being the HM110 and always learning from each one. Currently training to be a PT and owning a black lab I'm always on the move
Strava: [Dan Walker](#)
Instagram: [@the_running_dan](#)



Jess Willis Hi, my name is Jess. I've Always been active growing up but have been running more seriously for the last 7 years. I've run and placed in countless races ranging from 5k to 50k but my heart is definitely set on the longer Distances. I'm a single mum to 3 kids. 1 boy and twin girls who keep me very busy. They also give me the fire I need to train and race hard. I want to show them that you can be better then you think you can be and you must always believe you can reach your goals. Please feel free to follow my running journey on Instagram [@jesslw](#)



Tyler Andrews is a professional runner for HOKA ONE ONE and the co-founder and coach at Chaski Endurance Collective. He has made three US National Teams for the 50km World Championships (finishing with individual silver in '16) and won his first National Championships over 50 Miles in 2019. Despite humble beginnings as a high school and college runner, he has improved his best times to 2:46 (50K, #2 all time US mark), 2:15 (marathon), 1:03 (half), and has competed at two US Olympic Marathon Trials ('16, '20). He has also set speed records (FKT) on the Inca Trail ('19) and Everest Base Camp Trail ('20). Tyler strives to empower other athletes by sharing his story, along with coaching and mentorship in person and online and via his work with [Chaski Endurance Collective](#).



Thomas Garrod a dentist from Kent started running to help with fitness for mountaineering. He quickly became addicted to trail running and has run marathons, ultras and a won a double Ironman. Running multi day ultras in foreign countries with his friends made at the fire and ice ultra in Iceland are his most cherished memories.

