

A silhouette of a person running, positioned in the upper center of the page. The background consists of several horizontal stripes in shades of red, orange, and yellow.

ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY

& ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS

// Issue 32

# ULTRARUNNING WORLD

M A G A Z I N E



3 AU 9 JUILLET  
DU ~~20 AU 26 JUIN~~ 2021  
EDITION 3

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## Welcome to Issue 32

We begin this edition with the culmination of our Debs & Dawn series of articles on their preparation for the 13 Peaks Challenge on Table Mountain overlooking Cape Town in South Africa. Debs had to bail due to injury and Dawn shares her experience of an iconic event.

Gareth Chadwick had the great opportunity to interview Kim Collison, after his Paddy Buckley Round in April, and who has been consolidating his position as one of the top UK trail runners at this time.

We are very fortunate to have an article from Matthew Hearne, The Easiest Ultras, which analyses a range of ultras that are suitable for newcomers to the sport and which will also appeal to runners wishing to set faster times.

We are also delighted to connect with Deborah from RunnersGate, a German running portal and who introduces some background on Ultrarunning in Germany.

Gina Evans shares some Lessons – Big & Little after completing her first ultra distance with some help from her friends after the D33 was cancelled.

In Yorkshire, England Chloe Brooks took part in the inaugural River Aire Ultra hosted by Punk Panther Ultra Marathons and ended up winning the event, a preparation for her GUCR race in which Chloe took fourth spot. Congratulations on such fine performances.

One of the most popular questions asked of ultrarunners is why. Why run an ultra? What could possibly inspire someone to take on such a difficult challenge? In this occasional series we asked Dougie Zinis that question and his article Ultra Dreaming shares what it meant for him.

Jenny Katsoni ran the SDW50 with her running buddy Laura and her article is a great read for any novice wondering how to run the event and become a Centurion.

Shattered by the death of her son, Rosie Nanette Gagnon has written an article that reflects how she had to put the pieces back together and move forward in Wayward Son 100/Swammie Shuffle 200.

Michelle Lindstrom sent us a story about how Laura Townsend decided to get involved with raising funds and awareness for the Saffron Centre in Alberta, Canada which led to the formation of Survivorfest which unfortunately as an in-person event which was due to be the National 24 hour championships was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Perhaps the biggest multiday "festival of the year" the Italian Ultra Marathon Festival provided one of the rarer events on the multiday running calendar, the 1000 mile race. Denis Orsini, translated by Sarah Cameron talks about his attempt at the Policoro venue on the Southern Italian coast and we follow this with Antonio Codina's interview with IUMF Race Director Pasquale Brandi who poses some questions that paint a picture of how the event developed.

We bring this issue to a close with Malcolm Beresford's mindful article the Power Within which weaves his mind/body/spirit into the GB Ultras Race Across The Alps 1592-mile virtual race earlier this year.

This issue has been created from a group of international runners and writers touching many different aspects of life from a diverse selection of events and challenges that reflect the deeper spirit of endurance that underlies the world of ultrarunning and we are grateful for these inspiring efforts. Thank you.

### The House:

#### • Editor

- Abichal Sherrington

#### • Staff

- Ana Sanchez

- Helen Hayes

- Sarah Thi

- Char Binns

#### • Front cover

Dawn Nunes on The Diving Board Near Kasteelspoort on the top of Table Mountain, Cape Town. Photo by Ernest Carrick

#### • Back cover

Andrea Marcato heading for victory at the Sofia 6 Day Race 2021. Photo by [Hrishikesh](#), Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team.

Graphic Designer

Editorial Assistant

Copy Editor

Book Reviewer

## Ultrarunning World June- July 2021

### • Correspondents

Sarah Cameron

Gary Dudney

Mick Farrar

Tim Hardy

Helen Hayes

Helen Pike

Sharon Gayter

Antonio Codina

Annabel Hepworth

Daniel Walker

Gareth Chadwick

### Ultrarunning World Magazine

Address: 38 Shadwell Rd, Bristol, BS7 8EP

Phone Number: 07923833719

Website: [Ultrarunningworld.co.uk](https://ultrarunningworld.co.uk)

Email: [mail@ultrarunningworld.co.uk](mailto:mail@ultrarunningworld.co.uk)



Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the email address above. Last dates for article submissions: August 14th, September 14th, October 14th. 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.

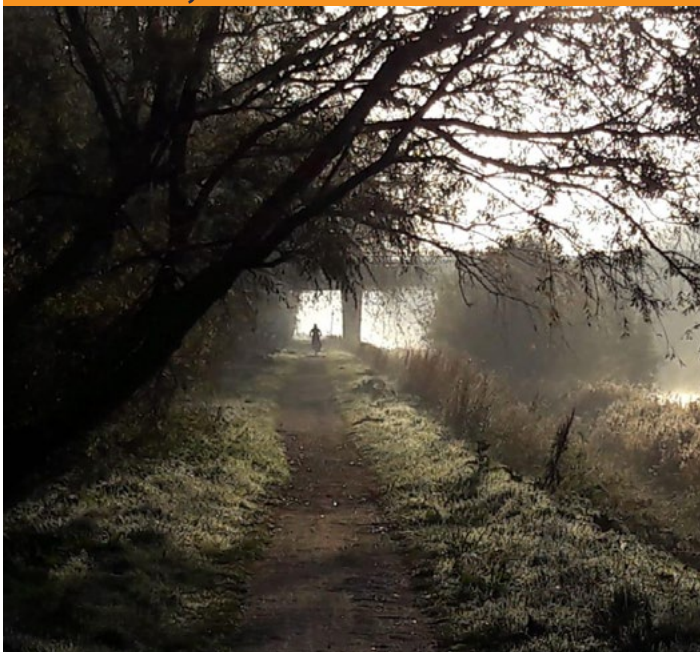
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# ULTRA TOUR MONTE ROSA

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# News

The **IAU** announced the cancellation of both the 2021 IAU 24 hours World Championships scheduled for 2-3 October 2021 in Romania, together with the associated WMA 24H World Championships, and also the IAU 50K World Championships. The IAU have also announced that the 2022 IAU 24-hour European Championships were granted to Verona, Italy. The Championships will take place on September 17th – 18th, 2022.

A post on the website reads “In both cases the decisions were taken after consideration of all the current risks and benefits of holding international championships in the respective host countries. The local situations in each host country differed but, more importantly, we needed to consider the global variation in risks as well. The safety of the athletes and spectators were a priority as well as to make sure that the participants from all regions had a fair chance to take part in the World Championship”.

The worlds longest annual footrace, **the Sri Chinmoy Self-Transcendence 3100 Mile Race**, held in Salzburg in 2020 and postponed in 2021 from its usual June start is now set for September 5th - October 26th in New York.

Completing 81 laps **John Stocker** set a new World Record at the Suffolk Back Yard Ultra of over 337 miles eclipsing the October 2020 record set by Belgian dentist **Karel Sabbe** who ran 75 laps, 312.5 miles (502km). The new record of 337.527 miles (543.197km) was only possible with the assistance of **Matthew Blackburn**.

At her third attempt **Sabrina Verjee** broke the Wainwrights record set by **Paul Tierney** in 2019. Trimming Paul's time by 6 hours Sabrina completed the route which features 214 Lakeland fells, around 500km of total distance and approximately 36,000m ascent in 5 days, 23 hours, 49 minutes and 12 seconds.

**Ross Jenkin** is the first person to complete the Big 4 Grand Round Challenge, a continuous traverse of the UK's four big mountain challenges: the Paddy Buckley Round in North Wales (47 summits); the Denis Rankin Round in Northern Ireland (39 summits); the Ramsay Round in Scotland (24 summits) and the Bob Graham Round (42 summits) in the English Lake District a total of 152 summits, with 387km (240 miles) of running and 31,800m (104,331ft) of ascent.

**Eli Burakian** (USA) set a new record on the 345.05 mi LIVE FREE OR DIE ROUTE in New Hampshire, USA on June 28, 2021 in 9 Days 10 hours 52 minutes and in the UK, **David Bone** (GBR) set a new FKT on the London Outer Orbital Path completing the 243.4 km in 1d 10h 23m 21s. Checkout the latest records on the [fastestknowntime.com](https://fastestknowntime.com) website.

**Patrycja Bereznowska** set a new women's World record at the Orlen Ultra Challenge, Suwałki, Poland beating the previous record at the 72 hour distance of 449.11 km set by **Ria**

“Matt Blackburn and John Stocker photo courtesy Suffolk Backyard Ultra”



“François D’haene is first to the Rock photo courtesy of IRunFar.com”





**Buften.** Bereznowska recorded 457.19 km which is also a new Polish women's record surpassing Barbara Szlachetka's best set in 2000 at 404.57 km.

**Kim Collison** set a new record of 33 Munros in 24 hours finishing in 23:48 and Jasmin Paris also set a new Women's record of 29 Munros on July 24th 2021. In the British Ultra-running Trail Championships which was incorporated into the Lakeland Trails 100km event George Foster took the win with 9:29.11 and women's winner in a new CR of 11:31:19 was Scotland's Meryl Cooper.

In a quick round up of some of the longer races recently Budjargal Byambaa (MGL) took the win at **6 Days in The Dome** with 904km. New course records were set at the **Montane Summer Spine** race which was won by Eoin Keith (IRL) in 77:34:52 and Anna Troup (GBR) 80:28:35. Also in the UK the **7th Thames Ring** saw great performances from Guy Bettinson finishing in 62:56:00 and Naomi Moss crossing the line in 81:52:26. **Western States** saw Jim Walmsley (USA) win again in 14:46:01 while Beth Pascall (GBR) produced the second fastest women's time in history with 17:10:41.

Correspondent Annabel Hepworth (AUS) finished the **Brisbane Valley Rail Trail** 200mile race in 57:53:07. François D'haene won the 2021 **Hardrock 100** in 21:45:51, breaking both the counterclockwise course record set by Kilian Jornet, 23:28:00 in 2015 and the overall course record, 22:41:33 also set by Kilian Jornet in 2014. (photo courtesy @iRunFar)



RUNTOREFUGE

Tom Crossland is making a 1,900-mile run around the coast of England and Wales, to raise awareness of the needs of survivors of trafficking. Setting off from Henley on Thames on 2nd June 2021 to run the equivalent of 75 marathons in 85 days, Tom has now covered some 1300 miles.

The goal is to raise £20,000 for the TRIBE Freedom Foundation, a charity inspired by a 1,000 mile run to set up the first UK home for trafficked children. <https://www.facebook.com/runtorefuge/>

**Run Around Poland** is the latest journey running project by Artur Kujawinski, (POL) who will try to run around his country along its borders self-supported. It will be a FKT challenge and the route will be 4,000 kilometers! Artur plans to run an average of two marathons a day and he says the preparations have been very intense. In the last 6 months he has run over 3,700 kilometers with only 9 days off/rest from training. He ended June with the number of 702 kilometers. Weekly average was 155-175 kilometers per week in the last 6 months. The whole thing will be documented using a localization transmitter, gpx file and online transmission with a tracker. The start will take place on July 25 at 9:00 am from the pier in Sopot. Artur will then move west to go around the entire Hel peninsula and then head towards Germany. Daily coverage of the route will be available on the youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/UltraManiac/> and on the FB profile: <https://www.facebook.com/arturkujawinskiultrarunner>



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Run Messinia



# Run Messinia: October 2-11, 2021

## 10 marathons in 10 days

The Greek rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, 200 years ago, marked the end of slavery, reclaiming the most valuable asset for Greeks, their freedom.

Any Greek who reads and learns in detail the history of Greece, on the occasion of the 200 years since the Revolution, will feel beyond pride and adoration for every part of our enchanting peninsula, the largest in our country, that of the Peloponnese.

At the same time, people would wish to visit, among others, Nedousa and Poliani, Diavolitsi and Katsaros, Stoupa and Kardamyli, Ramovouni and Mani, Saint Nikitas Sellas and Tripyla, Maniaki and Loutro, Zerbisia and Agios Andreas, Dyrachio and Neochori, Ano Psari and Schinolakka to end up at the place where everything came into existence for the Greek Revolution at the Navarino Bay, at the Bay of Freedom for us Greeks.

So, despite any objective adversities (pandemic, closed hotels, restaurants) we could not stop organizing and implementing this historic journey through all these glorious places. Places that people should learn about, monuments that everyone should visit. We do not owe it only to the 8 Municipalities of the Peloponnese who helped in this effort from the very first moment with whatever means they possessed, but mainly with a genuine Greek soul, nor only to the Greek long-distance runners who changed their training programs in order to run in these difficult routes. We owe it to our country. The country that stood upright from antiquity until today, the country that did not bend its head, knelt for a while but got up 200 years ago and stood on its feet again.

The final date of the 10 marathons in total in 10 days will be held on October 2-11, 2021. Run Messinia will start on October 2 from Mani and will conclude in Pylos on October 11, 2021.

The field so far includes the top ranked 24 hour runners in Greece, Christos Mavrikios and Angela Terzi, a raft of Spartathlon finishers and the Ultramarathon Man himself, Dean Karnazes.

More details on the event can be found at:

Website: [www.runmessinia.com](http://www.runmessinia.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/RunMessinia](https://www.facebook.com/RunMessinia)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/runmessinia](https://www.instagram.com/runmessinia)



Run Messinia. Photo by Navarino Challenge



Run Messinia. Photo by Navarino Challenge

# Recent Races

## **22/01/2021 the Gax urasunti epiphany 100m SWE 100 miles**

The Gax Urasunti Epiphany 100 mile race is a self supported race of 160,9 km (100 miles) with a cut off time of 36 hours which starts and finishes at Lund Cathedral in central Lund, southern Sweden passing through Øresund and Denmark. Two finishers, Roger Löfström in 27:42:48 and Malou Björnslätt (F) in 29:13:59. Results and more information on the [event website](#).

## **23/01/2021 Pier 2 Pier 200km Ultra Run USA 200 km**

Endurance Run starts at the Miami South Pointe Pier following the Tamiami Trail (Route 41) running on along pedestrian pathways, the Francis S. Taylor Wildlife Management Area levees, through Big Cypress National Preserves' Loop Road Scenic drive and road shoulders along US 41 finishing at the Naples Fishing Pier. There is a 48 hour cut off and the event is Support Crew Only every runner has to have a crew as there are no aid stations, only checkpoints.

Caryn Lubetsky won outright in 27:03:03, second was Ryan Peterson in 29:19:46 and third, second lady, was Jamie De-paula finishing in 40:46:00. Full results on [UltraSignup](#).

## **29/01/2021 Taipei 48/24/12 hour Ultra Marathon TPE 48 hours**

The Taipei 48 hour takes place at the Dream exhibition hall, Xin-shan park, Taipei on a 663 meter flat, traffic free Asphalt surfaced lap. First man was Jiun-Chang Lee setting a new national record with 384.548 km and first woman was Wen-Ya Tsai with 291.337 km. 29 finishers. Full results on the [DUV](#).

## **30/01/2021 Black Toe 24 Hour Run USA 24 hours**

The Black Toe Run is a 12/24 hour solo and team relay that takes place on a trail loop at Hardin Farm in Watertown, TN. The loop is 5-ish miles and features approximately 1,000ft of vertical gain. The 24 hour saw 38 finishers with Luke Bollschweiler covering the furthest distance with 136.794 km. First woman was Irene Koesters with 106.216 km, third overall. Results on [Ultrasingup](#).

## **05/02/2021 Grandmaster Ultras USA 100 m/k**

The Grandmaster Ultras have several loops utilised for the various races. The main course is a 50 mile loop with elevation gain and loss of 2600 feet, minimum elevation is at 1900 feet, max at 2600 feet. 20 miles on rough country road, and 30 miles on ATV trails. 100 miler runners run the 50 mile route twice. In the 100 mile event first across the line was Ron Hammett in 22:38:43 and first woman was Pamela Reed in 25:02:54, her 100th 100 mile race.

In the 100k first across the finish line was Julie Deery in 16:01:52 and first man was Gene Dykes in 16:08:54. [Results on Ultrasingup](#).

## **06/02/2021 Mumbai 24 Hour Stadium Run IND 24 hours**

The 5th Mumbai Stadium Run in February 2021 took place at the Wings Sports Centre, Reclamation, Bandra West, Mumbai and saw Preeti Lala take the win with 193.600 km. First man was Parwinder Singh with 154.00 km. 16 finishers. [Results on the DUV](#). [Race website](#).

## **06/02/2021 Hallucination 24/12 Hour Trail Run USA 24 hours**

The Hallucination 6/12/24 Hour Trail was first held in 2016 and takes place on the Biggin Creek Trail, Moncks Corner, SC. Participants run on a mix of dirt roads and single track trail on a 2.25 mile loop.

In the 24 hour, first man was Chadd Cosse with 154.818 km and first woman was Mary Ann Yarborough 104.607 km. In the 12 hour first man was Adams 96.238 km Stacy Jones 87.870. [Info and results on Ultrasingup](#).



## **06/02/2021 Rocky Raccoon 100 Mile/km Trail Run USA 100 miles**

Rocky Raccoon is organised by Tejas Trails and takes place in Huntsville State Park, TX. Known for a fast course and great support and is a qualifier for Western States 2022. The course features 5 x 20 mile loops around the lake, gently undulating trails on a bed of pine needles.

The 100 miler saw Devon Olson take the win in 14:25:32 and first woman was Maria Sylte in 17:27:48. 252 finishers. The 100km event was won by Lotti Zeiler in 08:46:53. First man was Chase Aycock, third overall in 10:43:12. 99 finishers. [Full results](#). [Rocky Raccoon website](#).



## **12/02/2021 Hong Kong Four Trails Ultra Challenge HKG 298 km**

An invitation only event taking place over four trails with 100km on the Maclehorse Trail, 78km on the Wilson Trail, 50km on the Hong Kong Trail, and 70km on the Lantau Trail. This year the fifth edition's winners were Chun-Keung (Jacky) Leung in 49:21:00 and first woman was Nikki Han in 59:42:00. 11 finishers. Results on the [DUV](#). Race on [Instagram](#), [hk4tuc](#)

## **13/02/2021 Tarawera 100 km Ultramarathon NZL 102km**

The Tarawera Ultra is a point to point footrace from Rotorua through to Kawerau. Mostly on singletrack trails through native bush with less than 10% being on road. Ruth Croft became the first woman to take the outright win setting a new women's course record of 9:21:03 after taking the lead in the middle of the race and finishing 18 minutes ahead of first man Rhys Johnston who finished in 9:39:29. 306 finishers. In the 100 miler Matthew Urbanski was first home 18:04:34 and first



woman was Katie Wright in 20:19:19. 152 finishers. [Full results.](#) [Race website.](#)

### **13/02/2021 Black Canyon Trail 100 Km Run USA 100 km**

The Black Canyon Trail ultras, organised by Aravaipa Running, start in Spring Valley, AZ and are point to point courses on the non-motorized Black Canyon Trail (a National Recreation Trail) featuring a mixture of single track trail, jeep roads, and pieces of an old stagecoach route. This years 100k winner, (featured on the cover of issue 31) was Tyler Green in 8:06:33. First woman and 10th overall was Brittany Peterson in 8:48:32. [Full results on Ultrsignup.](#) [Black Canyon Trail website.](#)

### **20/02/2021 Flat Top Mesa 100 Mile Endurance Run USA 100 miles**

Flat Top Mesa Endurance run takes place on the Witwer trail, Mesquite, NV. The event is almost entirely on top of the mesa after climbing up to top in about 1 mile. The loop is about 8 miles with 2 aid stations, 4 laps for 50K, 6 laps to get 50 miler, 8 laps for 100K and 6 laps for 104 miles. Elevation gain is about 300 feet per lap, initial ascent is about 380 feet. The 100 miler was won by Francisco Saraxh in 18:37:33. First woman was Jessica Mullen in 24:37:50. The 50 miler saw Andrew Cassano first home in 7:33:24 and Lara Schick was first woman in 9:09:05. [Results on Ultrsignup.](#)

### **24/02/2021 Transgrancanaria 360° 262 km ESP 262 km**

Transgrancanaria 360° is an individual, self-sufficiency challenge. The course has basecamps where runners can eat and rest. The 360 is one of 6 event distances that the umbrella event features on the island of Gran Canaria. This year the race was won by Marco Gubert (ITA) in 46:28:53 and the first woman was Claire Bannwarth (FRA), 11th overall in 63:42:50. [Full results.](#)

### **27/02/2021 Farm Daze 24/12 Hour Run USA 24 hours**

Farm Daze takes place on a private 350 acre family farm in Brooklet GA. The course is a 2.25 mile trail loop crossing through grass pasture and shaded woods. 24 hour race winners were Scott Defusco with 186.941 km and Karen Padula with 163.573 km. 34 finishers. [Full results on Ultrsignup.](#) [Farm Daze is on Facebook](#)

### **03/03/2021 IUMF Winter Edition 1000m/km/10&6day/48/24 hour ITA**

The course at Policoro, the venue for the IUMF is a chalet-style holiday camp just 50m from the sea. Flat and paved and under a grove of Pine trees is growing in popularity perhaps also due to the range of events ranging from 6 hours to 1000 miles. The 1000 miles saw 3 finishers first of whom was Denis Orsini in 14d23:20:31, second was Jean-Louis Vidal in 15d10:38:09 and third was Petri Perttilä completing the distance in 15d20:05:08. There were no finishers in the 1000km race and in the 10 day race there 7 finishers, with Daniele Juan Alimonti completing 1060.360 km and Paola Coccato covering 976.198 km. The Six Day saw Matteo Nocera win with 625.366 km. There were no women entrants. In the 48 hour Francesco Cannito won with 305.040 km and Adele Ra-

sicci finished with 210.341 km, second overall. In the 24 hour the winners were Giovanni Spinelli with 162.300 km and Rita Maria Marzoli with 155.808 km and the 100 miler was covered by Giuseppe De Rosa in 24:13:32 and the only runner in the 100k was Domenico Carlucci who finished in 15:11:48. [Full results.](#) [Italian Ultra Marathon Festival website.](#)

### **20/03/2021 Ohio's Backyard Ultra USA BYU**

0730 hours on Saturday, March 20 2021 the race started at McChesney Ridge on a course measured at 4.1667 miles. Runners have an hour to complete the loop and be ready to start the next loop, on the hour until they either decide they have had enough or everyone else has and they are the last man standing. Harvey Lewis 368.797 km, 55 loops, was the last man standing and he was assisted by Jennifer Russo 362.102 km. [Results.](#)

### **26/03/2021 Sri Chinmoy 48/24 Hour Track Festival Canberra. AUS**

The 48/24 Hour event took place at the AIS Athletics Track in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), in southeastern Australia. The stadium features a 400m floodlit new blue MONDO track. The 48 hour was won by Ewan Horsburgh with 346.546 km and first woman was Cheryl Symons, 3rd overall with 322.352 km. 24 finishers. The 24 hour race was won by Matt Griggs with 244.087 km and first woman was Kathryn Austin with 169.223 km. 23 finishers. There were also 12 and 6 hour events. [Full results on the Sri Chinmoy races website.](#)

### **08/04/2021 Potawatomi 200/150 Mile Trail Run (USA) USA 200/150 mile**

Located at John T. McNaughton Park in Pekin, IL The course is a 10 mile loop consisting mostly of single track dirt, some prairies, several creek crossings, and endless rolling hills. Elevation gain per 10 mile loop is 1600 feet. The 200 mile race winners were Aaron Hamman in 50:50:00 and Aneta Zeppettella in 70:37:00, 6 finishers. In the 150 miler Gregory Trapp finished in 45:47:00 and Christy Howard finished in 52:16:00, 7 finishers. The 100 miler saw a few more entrants with Ben Kerezman coming home in 22:40:00 and Sally Thompson finished in 29:11:00, 31 finishers. [Results on UltraSignup.](#)





# PODCAST CORNER

**RunningIndustryPodcast** News, opinion and analysis on hot topics, alongside insight into key events and happenings within the global running landscape. Devised, hosted and produced by Matt Ward.

**UltraRunning Magazine Podcast** The UltraRunning Magazine Podcast brings listeners in-depth conversations with elite ultrarunners, coaches, medical professionals, race directors and more who cover any and all topics in the world of ultrarunning.

**UltraRunner Magazine Podcast** Passionate about anything and everything to do with ultra running and will take you to the heart of ultra-marathon events with race reviews from all over the UK and more.

Episode 11 Rising Stars - Martin Johnson  
[Legends of Running Endurance.](#)

**Women of Distance** Devon Yanko and Alison Naney A podcast about the women of Mountain, Trail, Ultra and Road running worlds. Hosted by Devon Yanko and Alison Naney. Episode 12 features Maggie Guterl fresh off her win at the Cocodona 250 mile race.

**The Runner's World UK Podcast:** Dean Karnazes: how to grow older, wiser, slower and stronger. Dean talks about his new book, A Runner's High.

**Marathon and Ultra Running - MRUNS Podcast** hosted by Suman Silwal who in this edition, episode 161, talks with Coree Woltering after his Pinhoti Trail FKT.



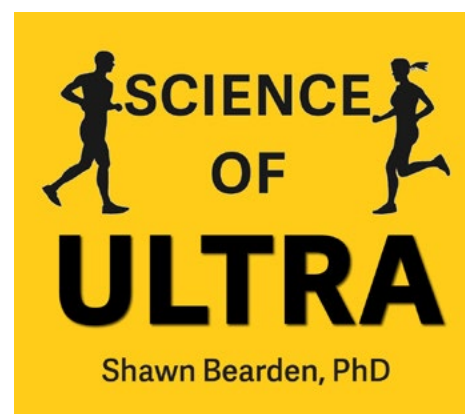
**Ultrarunning History.** Davy Crocket shares articles and podcasts about ultrarunning history. Podcast episodes come out about twice a month. Popular site with well researched material and just about 2 million downloads and growing. Latest issue is number 80: Comrades Marathon – 100 years old. Available on all the major podcast platforms.

**Trail Running Podcast** - Gary and Neil's Bob Graham Round - Charlie Parkinson Interview.

**Ten Junk Miles Long Run 133 - Joe Prusaitis 2021** Scotty and Hall of Fame RD Joe Prusaitis discuss what's new in racing and their lives, the upcoming Badger, and of course, some books.

**Science of Ultra episode 149 with Hillary Allen,** aka Hillygoat, one of the top ultra and sky-runners in the world. Shawn Bearden and Hillary talk about her views of life and running, what's important, and how to stay competitive while embracing whatever life brings. Her near-death accident during the 2017 Tromsø Skyrace, and her recovery are chronicled in her book Out & Back: A Runner's

Story of Survival and Recovery Against All Odds.



**Fastest Known Podcast Episode 141: Dave Mackey.** Published every Friday: interviews with FKT-setters and other athletes in the world of Fastest Known Times.

**Human Potential Running - Ultra Stories – Episode 136:** Ultrarunning's Struggle With Being Ethical. Human Potential Running Series was founded in 2014 on the belief that everyone has their own reservoir of untapped human potential and that the right mix of challenge and adversity can allow you to tap into it. Real growth occurs right at the edge of what you know you can do and what you think you can do.





# GLOUCESTER TRACK RACES

Gloucester invitational 24 hour track race



Gloucester invitational 48 hour track race



Gloucester Elite track race



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invitational 24 and 48 hour: 27th to 29th August 2021

&

elite 24 hour: 23rd to 24th October 2021

# 13 Peaks Challenge

By Debs&Dawn

*Deb O'Mahony and Dawn Nunes decided to take on the 13 Peaks Challenge in South Africa and joined forces to prepare and attempt the challenge together.*

6 weeks to go with our team.

We have now got a little crew joining us for our 13 peaks challenge in 6 weeks time. There is a great Balega Impi following (Balega are the most incredible technical sock for running and any other sport, an Impi is an ambassador for this sock brand) as well as fellow trail running friends.

Our group looks like this at the moment: Debs, Dawn and Nuno who have all been coached by Coach Neville. Balega Impi Se7en, her two hoods (sons) are also joining us, as well as Ernest who is a Lion500 friend.

Lion500 is very close to Dawn's heart. Lion500 began when a man named Kosta decided to climb Lion's head (the second peak on the 13 peaks) 500 times in order to raise awareness for mental health issues and raise funds. It took him two and a half years but he completed it! Now he has his own pride completing their 500 summits, Ernest is one of them who has almost finished a 100, and Dawn is very involved too. We can't all summit Lion's head, as it is in Cape Town, Kosta came up with the Lion500 Open Games which I took part in. We could choose a challenge with 500 in it, Dawn chose to complete 500 km of trail running and a charity to support. It is an incredible initiative. <https://www.facebook.com/thelion500/>

Final prep.

Debs is running an epic 100km trail in Mpumalanga in 2 weeks time as we write this (24th April) which gives her a great challenge before the final prep of the 13 peaks. Dawn continues to train on local trails increasing her mileage. At this stage, recovery is so important. We are finding that we need to prioritise sleep and good nutrition in order to prep our bodies for what is to come. We both train 5 days a week with running and at least 2 or more strength sessions are done in the week. Good to balance







Jumping pic from a Terra Firma local trail race where I came third in the 20 km.



out the days, these are completed as well as the weekly quality session. Mental prep goes a long way too and this arises from knowing we have done the training and then discussing the finer details for our 13 peaks.

### Zoom chat with the team

We had a zoom chat this past weekend with everyone to catch up and ensure that we are all thinking of similar goals. Together we are from three different cities within South Africa so it is truly going to be an amazing time together.

We discussed what apps we are going to use and to ensure that each of us know how to use the navigation as well as what time we'd like to start and nutrition.

We will chat in about a week for final details and, most importantly, a weather check. We will not be able to take on the challenge if the weather is too severe. We will give ourselves a few days and hope that within that time frame we will be able to complete our 13 peaks.

### Gear

We are also starting to think specifically about the gear that we will need. Two pairs of shoes, change of socks and clothes as well as our navigation, battery packs etc. It is this final planning which is so important and can help make things smoother when the time comes. Our seconders will have water and food for us at key areas but we will be carrying packs with a large amount of our gear as we are traversing mountains with Cape Town weather and one needs to be prepared at all times.

Next time, we will be on our way to Cape Town and have our final details and planning. We know it is going to be hard. There will be rough moments, but doing it as a team will enable us to encourage each other in those low points.

### Plans change so we adapt 2 weeks to go with our team

Debs did extremely well in her 100 km Recce Race coming third overall and first woman to complete this crazy self-navigating race. Unfortunately, her body is still recovering as well as an old ankle injury which has meant she is no longer able to do the 13 peaks.

### So, we adapt

I have an awesome team in place with four guys joining me in the 13 peaks challenge. We are exactly 2 weeks away from beginning our adventure. We recently had a zoom meeting to discuss specifics with date and time to start and where the best places are for seconders and pacers to come and meet us.

I am SO excited. We have decided to start on Wednesday the 26th May



at 18:00, we will avoid the crowds and the possible heat of the first section of the mountain. We will go up the first two peaks, starting at Signal Hill and onto Lion's head, very lightly packed, then meet up with our seconders as we have a long climb ahead of us on Table Mountain to tag the next three peaks.

#### My training

Has been consistent over the weeks. I have covered over 1000 km this year and a decent elevation with this distance. I decided to run a solo 30 km beachfront run to get time on my legs and for those long stretches of road which we will have on the 13 peaks. I also ran 30 km on some local trails with a friend and despite wanting to stop at 20 km, I pushed on to finish despite the last 10 km being really slow. This is what training is all about. Training the body, being consistent and training the mind for the task at hand.

#### My expectations

It is going to be hard. There are going to be great ups and downs, physically and mentally, but I am thrilled that I have a great team with me and I can share this experience with others. I have really been focused on the physical planning of food, seconders and support as well as the mental side of this challenge. I listened to an incredible South African ultra - trail runner, Nontu Mgabhi, who shared her story of completing 7 marathons in 7 continents in 7 days! Not only is this an incredible achievement, but what really helped me was her gratitude and attitude towards the privilege we have to run. "Do not give up" and "run the mile you're in" were two key points from her chat that resonated with me. I love to hear people's stories to be encouraged and to know that there will be hard times, but that we can push through and take just one more step.

#### Weather

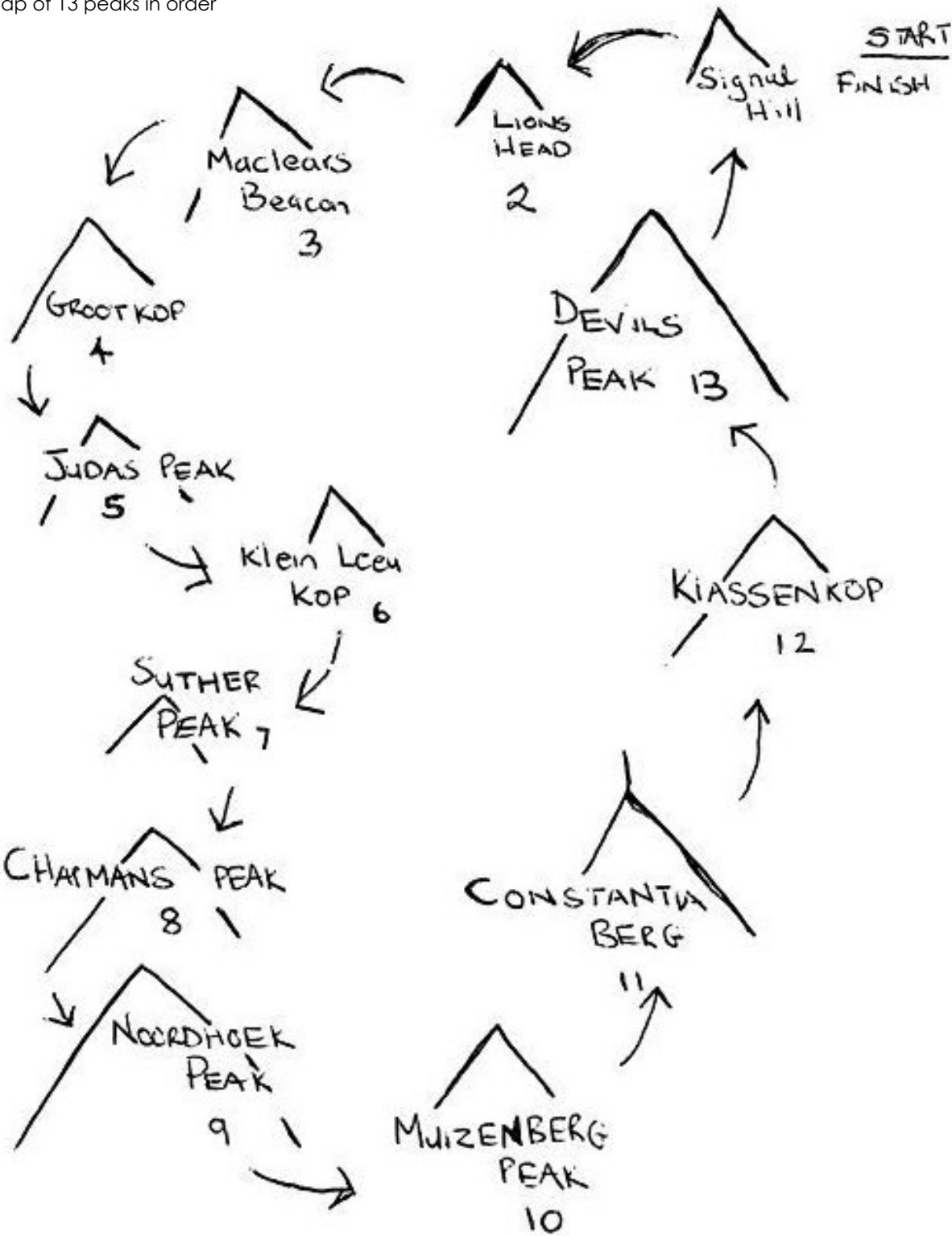
We chose to go this time of the year as it, hopefully, misses the start of the Cape Town winters. The Cape is well known for the moody weather with pouring rain and howling gales...so we are hoping that it holds out for us on the days that we are taking on the 13 peaks.

By the time you read this, we will have taken on the 13 peaks challenge. I hope to enjoy the experience and make the most of it, take photos and

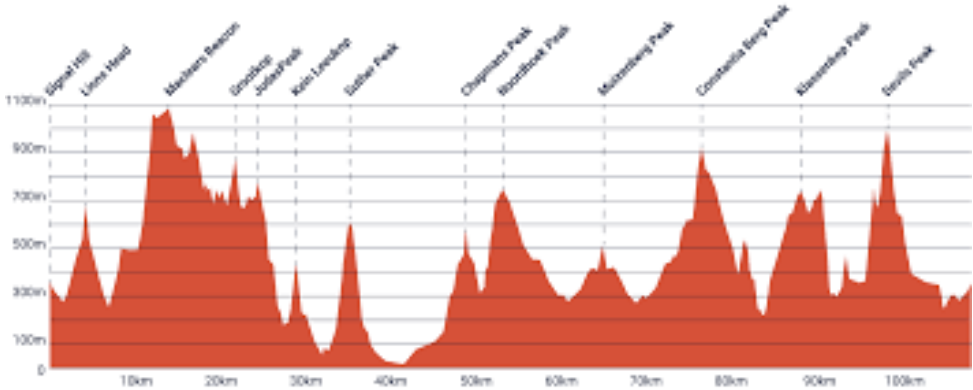


Lions Head

Map of 13 peaks in order



Profile of 13 peaks showing elevation and distance covered





get to know my fellow team through this adventure. It is going to be amazing. Trail running and trail runners are such a phenomenal community of people and I am so thankful that I have this opportunity and the ability to take on this epic challenge. Here's to the other side.

### **13 Peaks Challenge Completed!**

The date and time was set and we were off with the noon day gun on Signal Hill, Cape Town, South Africa for our 13 Peaks Challenge adventure. The 13 Peaks is a challenge in Cape Town where you run and "tag" 13 peaks in order then return back to the starting point. You can do this in one, two or multi-days. Our aim was to do it all in one go. Peek Peeps team was made up of five incredible trail runners. This was the first time the team had run together but I had no doubts that we would have fun. We are all of similar running strength and had the same goal in mind. Finish the 13 peaks Challenge together.

Cape Town showed off with beautiful clear skies and cool weather the whole of the first day and into the night. We had a full moon and were able to run by moonlight for a large portion of the evening. The second day we were all feeling the time on our legs, but we regularly met up with our seconding team and pacers who joined us for parts of our run. The new company added renewed energy and laughter to our team.

The push really came when we had 3 peaks left to climb with 40 km still to cover. The weather turned rather wet and slightly windy which made it a lot harder to climb and keep warm. Our crew continually made jokes and had a really positive attitude which meant loads of fun and laughter for most of the way. Near the end, for me especially, at the last peak, I was a little overwhelmed. We had such a short way to go, yet it just seemed never-ending. After asking how much further to the final peak, I burst into tears realising that it was still a little way to go. But, the team rallied, a big hug was given and we kept on going one step at a time. Tagging our last peak we made our way swiftly down to the last, easy, 8 km road run which would lead us to Signal Hill.

We were greeted by friends and family who escorted us to the end while we were serenaded by a trumpet bringing us home. Thankfully our crew knew exactly where to go and we completed the challenge with phenomenal navigation skills. 110.87 km, 32 hours 33 minutes and 6,997 m of climbing in one go – non - stop. What an achievement.

Some highlights for me

- Dancing with my brother after Suther Peak (peak 7 and 35 km into the challenge).
- Having friends run with us for parts of the challenge and bringing us donuts at 5:30 am.
- Making time to take a jumping picture on the dive board, a beautiful outlying rock near Kasteelspoort.
- Spending time with the team laughing and making memories.
- Completing this epic adventure and realising that dreams can become reality!
- Overwhelmed by how many people cheered us on via the whatsapp group, who came out to support, second and run with us.

#### **Top 13 tips for 13 peaks challenge.**

1. Prepare Physically AND Mentally. I ensured my training program included

regular strength exercises through **@weekendwarriorsza** and my **@adventureobstacle**. This was in addition to peaking and tapering my run training. A mental vital training run I did 3 weeks before was a solo 30 km beachfront run. It taught me to set a goal, run without any other motivation factors and complete my intended goal.

Mentally I spent 4 weeks leading up to the challenge chatting to experienced ultra running friends, planning the route and envisioning the finish... by planning a celebration party already.

2. Know your "why". This came out of some great talks I heard recently by incredible women athletes. This will keep you going when it gets tough. My why, #inspireothers, #beinspired and #godatthecentre
3. Have an Epic team. Our seconders and supporters were the BEST!
4. Duct tape fixes (almost) everything.
5. Dream early. From 10 kms we were talking about the finish and ordering pizza and ice cream. A tub each by the way.
6. Fuel up regularly. Eat and drink little bits often regardless of how you feel.
7. Variety is key. Sometimes you just want a change. Change of clothes, change of socks, different food. Have the choices available. Helps with the mind set.
8. Recce the route as much as you can and study what you can't recce.
9. Take the photograph. You're doing this for fun. Enjoy. Look at the scenery. Appreciate.
10. Laugh at yourself.
11. Dance. I had an epic dance off with my brother at 35 km and again at the end. What a feeling!
12. Krispy Kremes for the win. Surprises come in many shapes and forms and we were blessed with donuts and friends to run with us on sections too.
13. When all else fails, just take ONE more step. You'll get there. Believe in yourself.



Kloof Corner Sezen



Brendan Lombard Signal Hill 2



Untamed Productions



## RUN FOR THE (WELSH) HILLS

Interview with Kim Collison

By Gareth Chadwick

*Another iconic FKT tumbled in April, when Kim Collison set a new record on the Paddy Buckley Round in North Wales, his latest in a series of record-breaking runs. Gareth Chadwick learns more about the secrets of his success.*

What's the first thing you do when four months of lockdown finally comes to an end? Dash to the shops? Grab a pint? Visit a mate? Personally, I opted for the pint, but if you're Kim Collison, you run 62 miles and 28,000 feet (8,700m) of ascent around 47 of the highest summits in North Wales in a new fastest known time of 16:20:40.

Kim achieved his feat on 17 April, just five days after travel restrictions into Wales were lifted. In doing so, he knocked around 17 minutes off the previous record, set by Math Roberts in August 2020.

"I decided about two weeks out that I'd go for it that weekend. The forecast was good, restrictions were due to be lifted; I felt in good shape. I didn't want to miss a window," he explains.

He'd initially planned to make an attempt on the record the previous year. He'd broken the FKT for the winter Bob Graham Round in December 2019, completing the 66-mile route in 15 hours 47 minutes. Paddy Buckley was next in his sights.

He made a couple of recce runs in spring and early summer of 2020, but the pandemic put a stop to that. Instead he took on a challenge that was closer to his Lake District home, the Lakeland 24. Not a 'round' as such, the Lakeland 24 involves trying to run up as many summits as you can in 24 hours. Kim duly smashed the 23-year-old record in July 2020, reaching 78 summits in 23 hours 45 minutes.

Preparing for Paddy

As travel restrictions began to be eased earlier this year, his thoughts returned to Paddy Buckley.

"I started my preparation from January, the build up towards the summer season, and focused on different phases of training to get me in good shape ready for this period. I wasn't sure what would

be possible, given the lockdown situation, but I wanted to be ready for the Paddy Buckley as and when it was possible. I also had an eye on events later in the year, like UTMB," says Kim.

For the first six-to-eight-week training block, he focused on short hill intervals to try and push his top-end speed, which he recognised as a weakness. He then moved on to a phase of threshold work to improve the quality of his long runs and strengthen his aerobic capacity. He says mileage peaked at about 85 to 90 miles and 4,000 to 8,000 metres of ascent per week, before tapering down in the two weeks running up to his Paddy Buckley attempt.

Unlike the Bob Graham Round in the Lake District, which starts and finishes at the Moot Hall in Keswick, runners can choose to start the Paddy Buckley anywhere along the route, as long as they finish in the same place.

And we're off

Kim decided to follow the same route as Math Roberts, usually accompanied by two pacers on each leg. Setting off at 5am, he started at Llanberis, running clockwise around the five legs of the circuit, covering the Glyders, Carneddau, Moel Siabod and Y Moelwynion, Moel Hebog, and finally Snowdon and the Eilio Ridge.

Kim says he prefers to run strong from the start to try and build up a lead on the target time. That way he has a buffer if something goes wrong, plus the psychological benefit of being in front, rather than behind.

"I like to try and get that mental boost early, to know that I'm ahead of schedule. I find it easier to do it that way, rather be slightly behind and chasing," he says.

Having studied Roberts' splits, he knew he had to at least match his fast-paced start if he was to avoid falling too far behind and leaving himself a mountain to climb – quite literally – to beat the record. He also felt his pace over rocky terrain, honed by his many years running in the Lake District, put him in a strong position.





His plan clearly worked and he made up 20 minutes on Roberts' time over legs one and two.

He had identified leg three – Capel Curig to Nantmor – as the pivotal stage of the run. It is by far the longest leg at 20 miles, has the most elevation, at 7,900 feet, and at 5 hours, accounts for almost one-third of the total running time.

"I knew that Math had run it at a really strong pace, and he's a strong runner. So I had to really focus and push hard to maintain a similar pace to him on that leg. That would be the whole crux of whether I was going to break his record or not," says Kim.

#### Finding the balance

He managed to maintain a good pace and at the end of leg three was still ahead of time, but as he moved onto leg four with a big climb out of Nantmor up to Moel Hebog, he began to struggle.

"I'd been pushing quite hard throughout leg three, and on the climb out of Nantmor it suddenly caught up with me. That was where I had my low point. I was struggling to eat, and I was starting to feel the effects quite a bit. I could tell from my pacer that I was starting to lose time. He didn't spell it out, but he politely suggested it might be a good idea to walk stronger up the hills, and I thought, uh oh,

that's not a good sign!" laughs Kim.

Fortunately, the 41-year-old Collison is no stranger to pushing the boundaries of physical and mental endurance. A county-level runner at school in Hertfordshire, it was only after returning to the UK in his late twenties from working abroad that he rediscovered his love of the trails. His mum had moved up the Lakes and, keen to find an outdoors, adventurous type of job, he decided to base himself there, too. He became an instructor with Outward Bound Trust, fitting in his running around his work. But it was not an easy balance.

"It was long hours, usually outside, on my feet all day, and then trying to train on the way to and from work, and on days off. I was accumulating a lot of fatigue in my legs and at constant risk of overtraining," says Kim.

Since becoming a full-time running coach and ultrarunner three years ago – he's currently sponsored by La Sportiva – he says one of the biggest differences has been his recovery.

"I get to have some proper rest now, rather than spending my 'rest day' hiking up a mountain with 12 kids or leading a canoeing expedition," he says. "It's much better for me in terms of recovery and I've really felt the difference."

Swirral Edge on Solo Unsupported Winter Steve Parr Attempt @ Steve Ashworth



#### Powering through

It was this 'difference' which enabled him to recover from his wobbles at the start of leg four and, fuelled by cola and fruit juice, power on to reach the summit of Snowdon – the last big summit – with his buffer still intact.

It could easily have gone the other way, he says, if he'd let his head drop when he lost time or not recognised the early signs that he was struggling.

"I think it was my experience and knowledge of my own body that brought me through that rough patch. Once I got to the top of Snowdon, there was only around two hours to go and I was 20 minutes up on the schedule. I knew at that point that something would have to go badly wrong for me not to make it," says Kim.

Barring a quick stop for some cramp relief on one of the final descents, the run-in went smoothly and he crossed the line in good time to claim the record – another one to add to his growing collection.

With FKTs for winter Bob Graham and Paddy Buckley safely in the bag, the obvious gap in his portfolio is the third of the 'big three' UK rounds – the 58-mile Charlie Ramsay Round in Scotland. Sure enough, Kim has it in his sights.

"There's nothing concrete in my diary, but it definitely needs to be ticked off," says Kim. "I might end up doing it as a winter round, like the Bob Graham, which would give it an extra level of adventure."

That's certainly true. Some people might think spending a day and night running round the highest peaks in Scotland in the middle of winter is even more crazy than running around the highest peaks in Wales in April. But to an ultrarunner, it's all just another adventure.

Kim's record-breaking route for the Paddy Buckley Round

Leg 1 - Llanberis to Ogwen, 9.5 miles, 5,900ft

Leg 2 - Ogwen to Capel Curig, 9.5 miles, 4,100ft

Leg 3 - Capel Curig to Nantmor, 20 miles, 7,900ft

Leg 4 - Nantmor to Pont Caer Gors, 9 miles, 5,100ft

Leg 5 - Pont Caer Gors to Llanberis, 13 miles, 61,00ft



Halls Fell Ridge Lakeland 24 hour Record @ Steve Ashworth





# THE BEST TRAIL ULTRAMARATHONS FOR BEGINNERS IN THE UK

By Matthew Hearne

**- There is a higher proportion of slower ultrarunners in the UK compared with Europe - ultrarunning is more inclusive in the UK with many races suitable for beginners; time limits are more generous than in Europe**

**- There is a higher proportion of female ultrarunners in the UK compared with most European countries - top 10 races for beginners can be seen in the tables towards the end of the article**

As a keen ultrarunner and race director who reads various running forums, I commonly see the question "What is the best ultramarathon for a beginner?" Responses are always qualitative and subjective, so I decided it was time to take a quantitative approach to find a more definitive answer. With the help of the International Trail Running Association (ITRA) and DUV Ultra Marathon Statistics (DUV), I have crunched the numbers and found some fascinating insights concerning the most suitable ultramarathons in the UK for beginners, in addition to the UK running culture compared with our European neighbours.

Back in 2013, I set up a race called the Stour Valley Path 100km which has attracted a considerable number of runners over the last eight years. The cut-off for the race was set at 15.5 hours so that runners would need to average a pace of just over 4 miles per hour to finish. However, it quickly became clear that some runners believed this cut-off was too challenging. They wanted to experience the race and run the route, but were concerned about the time limit. As the race director, I also had volunteers, the staff at the Brantham Leisure Centre and local residents to consider, so decided that extending the cut-off was not the best option. Instead, I introduced a 50km race on the same day starting from the half-way point, with a generous cut-off of 9.5 hours. I figured this would be a good compromise for the many runners who wanted to experience running in an ultra-race along the Stour Valley Path, but without the strict time pressures. Needless to say, the 50km race proved to be popular and sells out every year.

There are clearly a number of runners in the UK who wish to participate in ultramarathons, but may be concerned about jumping in at the deep end or entering races which have tight cut-off times. It made me wonder how many other ultramarathons in the UK are suitable for beginners, as it can be tricky for someone to find this information if they are unfamiliar with the sport. I figure this is why people frequently ask for advice about beginner-friendly ultra races on the forums.

Before diving into my analysis and findings I thought it would be useful to provide a bit of background about ultrarunning in the UK. The sport has grown at an annual rate of 27% between 2009 and 2019, based upon DUV participant numbers. There are now close to 40,000 runners from the UK listed on the ITRA website. ITRA is the governing body for trail running and it is fair to say that the majority of ultra races are held on trails rather than roads. ITRA collects race results for events

and currently has a database of 1.7 million runner results and more than 6,330 races globally.

ITRA assigns a performance index (PI) to each runner who has completed a race listed on its website. The PI allows for the comparison of the speed of trail runners around the world, with scores ranging from 0 to 1,000. International-level females typically score over 700 whilst males score over 825. ITRA considers both male and female runners with a PI less than 350 as 'Novice'. It is interesting to note the distribution of PI scores in Europe compared with the UK shown in Chart 1. The UK appears to have a much larger proportion of 'Novice' runners, with 28% of performances falling into this category versus only 13% in Europe.

Chart 1 - Distribution of ITRA Performance Index scores Source: ITRA

Why do we have a greater proportion of slower runners in the UK? Is ultrarunning perhaps a more inclusive activity with lower barriers to participation, or are there a larger number of 'easier' races with more generous cut-off times?

The UK has a greater proportion of slower runners than Europe

The RunRepeat website provides global marathon statistics to the end of 2018. The average Swiss runner completed the distance in just over 3 hours 50 minutes, whilst the average UK runner took just over 4 hours 30 minutes, probably weighed down by a rhino suit or a camel costume. I've run the London marathon dressed as the back-end of a camel and can confirm that it definitely hinders progress. Running to raise money for charity is a large part of our culture in the UK as evidenced by the many races with a specific focus on good causes. I have not seen such a prominent focus elsewhere in European races.

There are no European countries in the marathon statistics list that have a lower average finisher time than the UK and this is mirrored in the ITRA data. It is safe to assume that a certain proportion of these slower marathon runners from the UK are also taking part in ultramarathons.

Ultrarunning is a much more inclusive sport in the UK compared to Europe

This is difficult to prove conclusively, but



looking at the female to male ratio is a useful starting point. The DUV website shows the proportion of female to male ultrarunners by country. Compared with European countries, the UK had the third highest proportion of female ultrarunners based upon 2019 race results for approximately 30,000 people. This can be clearly seen in Chart 2, where the UK had a female to male ratio of 32:68, just behind Iceland and Finland. In fact, we also see a similar picture when looking at RunRepeat marathon statistics, where the UK was ranked fourth globally with a female to male ratio of 33:67.

Chart 2 – The percentage of male and female ultra runners in 2019

Source: DUV

Beyond the female to male ratio, the fact that the UK has more novice runners certainly further promotes inclusivity. Novice runners are more likely to encourage other novices to participate and many UK ultra races can be finished by walking due to generous time limits. In some European countries the sport is not so open to all abilities due to stricter time limits. This pattern can clearly be seen mirrored in the big city marathons for example, where London allows 7 hours to finish, compared with 5 hours 40 in Paris, 6 hours in Amsterdam and 6 hours 15 in Berlin. This may partly help explain why the average marathon pace of UK runners is slower as more people are able to finish races before being timed out.

The dreaded DNF (Did Not Finish) can also be highly demotivating and it is likely that some runners may not choose to participate in further races after failing to finish, or are unlikely to recommend a race that they have not finished.

Beyond the traditional running clubs there are also many friendly running collectives which started in the UK, such as Advent Running, Run Dem Crew and Midnight Runners. These communities aim to keep people motivated and often the members encourage one another to enter events en masse and will be frequently seen at various ultramarathons around the UK.

The UK has a larger number of 'easier' races with generous time limits

Are there a larger proportion of races suitable for novices in the UK? To determine this, '2 ITRA point' races have been analysed. Essentially, '2 ITRA point' races typically have 45-74 'Effort Points', where 1km distance is equal to 1 effort point and +100m ascent is equal to 1 effort point. Any race with less than 2 ITRA points is not likely to be considered an ultramarathon by many, which by definition is a footrace longer than 42.195 km (26 miles 385 yards). Any race with more than 2 ITRA points will require significantly greater effort and therefore may not be an entirely suitable recommendation for a novice.

Chart 3 shows that in 2019 there were 51 races in the UK which were categorised with 2 ITRA points, which

could potentially be suitable for a novice. In fact, the UK had the fifth largest overall number of 2 ITRA point races and many of these races have very generous time limits compared with equivalent races in Europe.

Chart 3 – The number of 2 ITRA point races held in 2019

Source: ITRA

Of the 51 races in the UK carrying 2 ITRA points, which would be considered the most suitable for novices? ITRA categorises each race with a 'Finisher Index', based on distance, elevation, cut-off time, plus other information about the course. ITRA also assigns 'Mountain Points' to each race based on longest continual climb, average altitude and total ascent to distance ratio. The 'Finisher Index' and 'Mountain Points' are designed to help a runner determine their capacity to finish a particular race before signing up. Therefore, in theory the lower the 'Finisher Index' and 'Mountain Points', the greater the chance a novice runner could complete a race within the time limit.

There are also other factors that can determine the difficulty of a race such as the overall number of participants, course markings, weather conditions and the nature of the trail. If there are more people running in a race it can help with both navigation and motivation. In some smaller events it might be easy for a novice runner with limited navigation experience to get lost even on a well-marked course, or become demotivated because they have not seen another runner for hours on end. The time of year for the race is also important, as winter races can often be much harder due to low temperatures, muddy conditions underfoot and less daylight hours.

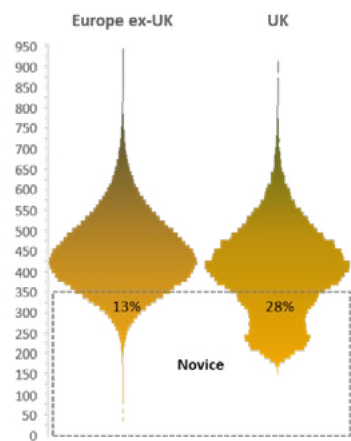
The best ultra races for beginners

Based upon these factors and using the ITRA data, some of the most suitable trail-based ultramarathons in the UK for novice runners can be seen highlighted in Table 1. The easiest race is potentially the Dulux London Revolution Trails, which is 52km long with 450m ascent and a generous 13 hour cut-off. Other popular races

for beginners based upon number of finishers are the Run to the Sea Bournemouth and the Stour Valley Path 50k.

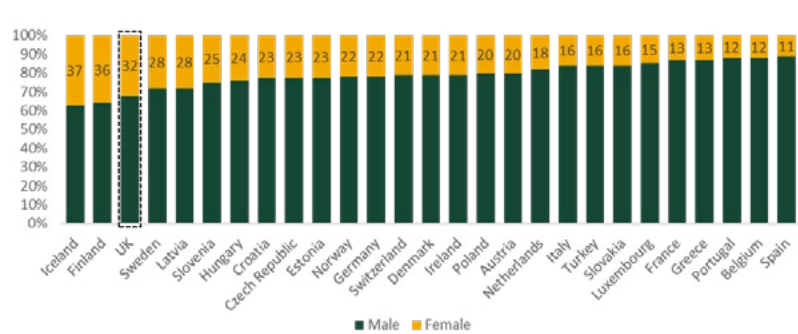
Table 1 – 10 most suitable 'novice' ultra races based upon ITRA data

Chart 1 - Distribution of ITRA Performance Index scores



Source: ITRA

Chart 2 – The percentage of male and female ultra runners in 2019



Source: DUV

Table 1 – 10 most suitable ‘novice’ ultra races based upon ITRA data

Event	Distance -km	Ascent - m	# of finishers	Cut-off (hrs)	Av Finish (hrs)	Month
London Revolution Trails Ultra	52	450	201	13.0	~7.5	Sep
Run To The Sea Bournemouth	50	610	445	9.5	~6.0	Mar
Stour Valley Path 50k	50	730	180	9.5	~6.5	Aug
Reservoir Dogs	59	930	71	12.0	~8.0	Sep
Nidderdale Way Ultra	47	970	40	18.0	~6.5	Sep
Kielder Ultra	50	1,030	142	11.0	~6.0	Mar
A Short Circuit	54	1,100	108	12.0	~7.5	Jan
Welcome Ultra	52	1,180	75	12.0	~7.5	Aug
Dartmoor Winter Traverse	49	1,260	70	14.0	~9.0	Feb
Maverick Adidas TERREX Ultra Peaks	53	1,270	134	11.0	~6.5	Sep

Table 2 – 10 most suitable ‘novice’ ultra races based upon DUV data

Event	Distance (km)	Ascent (m)	# of finishers	Cut-off (hrs)	Av Finish (hrs)	Month
Round Reading Ultra Marathon*	50	200	258	~10.0	~6.0	Jul
Salisbury 54321 Trail Races	50	400	294	9.0	~6.5	Aug
Dukeries Ultra	48	492	106	10.5	~6.0	May
London Revolution Trails Ultra*	51	505	201	~12.5	~7.5	Sep
Race to the Stones (Saturday or Sunday Run	50	650	221	14.5	~9.0	Jul
Humanity Direct Amersham Ultra*	47	695	179	~11.5	~6.5	Mar <sup>x</sup>
Serpent Trail Race	50	700	241	14.0	~7.0	Jul
Stour Valley Path 50km	50	730	180	9.5	~6.5	Aug
Humanity Direct Tring Ultra*	50	837	185	~12.0	~7.0	Sep
Nidderdale Way Ultra	47	970	40	18.0	~6.5	Oct

\*No specified cut-off. Approximate time of last finisher is shown in the table. <sup>x</sup>2021 race has been cancelled



London Revolution Trails Ultra 5 2 450 201 13.0  
~7.5 Sep

Event Distance -km Ascent - m # of finishers  
Cut-off (hrs) Av Finish (hrs) Month Run To The Sea  
Bournemouth 5 0 610 445 9.5 ~6.0 Mar

Stour Valley Path 50k 5 0 730 180 9.5 ~6.5 Aug  
Reservoir Dogs 5 9 930 7 1 12.0 ~8.0 Sep Nidderdale Way Ultra 4 7 970 4 0 18.0 ~6.5 Sep Kielder Ultra 5 0 1,030 142 11.0 ~6.0 Mar A Short Circuit 5 4 1,100 108 12.0 ~7.5 Jan Welcome Ultra 5 2 1,180 7 5 12.0 ~7.5 Aug Dartmoor Winter Traverse 4 9 1,260 7 0 14.0 ~9.0 Feb Maverick Adidas TERREX Ultra Peaks 5 3 1,270 134 11.0 ~6.5 Sep

Some UK-based ultra races are not registered with the ITRA so I also looked at the DUV dataset to analyse a larger sample. In addition, I spent many hours during the lockdown trawling through race websites to find information on elevation gain and cut-off times where this information may not have been supplied to DUV. In the case of races that do not have a specified cut-off time, I have used the time of the slowest finisher and then rounded up to the closest half hour to obtain an approximate cut-off. As you can see from Table 2 there is considerable overlap between the top ten from both the ITRA and DUV datasets, alongside a few additional names for consideration.

Table 2 – 10 most suitable 'novice' ultra races based upon DUV data

Round Reading Ultra Marathon\* 5 0 200 258  
~10.0 ~6.0 Jul

Event Distance (km) Ascent (m) # of finishers  
Cut-off (hrs) Av Finish (hrs) Month Salisbury 54321  
Trail Races 5 0 400 294 9.0 ~6.5 Aug

Dukeries Ultra 4 8 492 106 10.5 ~6.0 May London Revolution Trails Ultra\* 5 1 505 201 ~12.5 ~7.5 Sep Race to the Stones (Saturday or Sunday Run) 5 0 650 221 14.5 ~9.0 Jul Humanity Direct Amersham Ultra\* 4 7 695 179 ~11.5 ~6.5 Mar. Serpent Trail Race 5 0 700 241 14.0 ~7.0 Jul Stour Valley Path 50km 5 0 730 180 9.5 ~6.5 Aug Humanity Direct Tring Ultra\* 5 0 837 185 ~12.0 ~7.0 Sep

Nidderdale Way Ultra 4 7 970 4 0 18.0 ~6.5 Oct\*No specified cut-off. Approximate time of last finisher is shown in the table. 2021 race has been cancelled

Neil Thubron, Race Director for the two Humanity Direct races listed in table 2, says that he "wanted to open up the wonderful friendly world of

ultrarunning to a whole new group of runners", hence creating a series of races that are designed to take away some of the fears that people might have of long-distance events. He removed cut-off times to make the events less stressful and to attract both walkers and runners, in addition to providing regular well-stocked aid stations, a ton of course markings and plenty of celebrations throughout the whole event. There is clearly a charitable element to his races too.

Tom Sutton from the Serpent Trail Race also notes that his race is set at 50km as this is one of the "shortest milestone distances for an ultramarathon" and is along a route that is both flat and non-technical in nature, with plenty of aid stations. Additionally, the "cut-off of 14 hours is specifically set so that it is inclusive and relaxed for people doing their first ultra or for walkers too".

Finally, it is worth noting that there are other popular races not included in this analysis which may be suitable for beginners. For example, timed events such as 6-hour races may be a suitable entry point to ultrarunning, as you essentially run on a circuit with many other participants and only have to worry about the clock and the strength of your legs. Backyard ultras, where runners must consecutively run the distance of 6,706 metres in less than one hour, may also be a very suitable entry point worth considering.

Now is truly a great time for UK-based runners to consider entering their first ultramarathon. Not only do we have a friendly and inclusive running culture in the UK, but we also have plenty of races that have been designed with first-time ultrarunners in mind, with generous cut-offs and plenty of support. On top of that, as restrictions are eased across the UK, trail-based ultramarathons are likely to be some of the first races to be allowed to go ahead. What more motivation do you need to dust off those trail shoes and get signed up?

Matthew Hearne is the Race Director for the Stour Valley Path 100km and 50km races and is a member of both the Serpentine Running Club and the 100 Marathon Club. He has a wealth of experience racing in both road marathons and ultramarathons in the UK and Europe, and has completed a number of iconic races such as the UTMB, TDS, Transgrancanaria and Marathon Des Sables.

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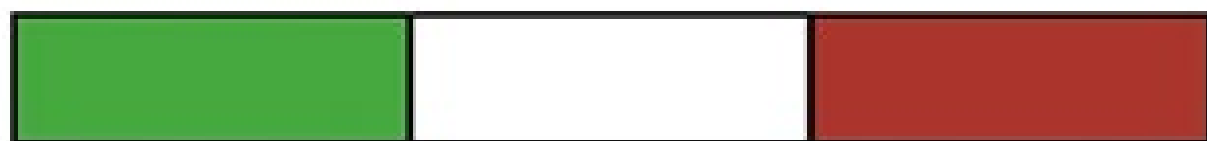
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### ITALIAN

Ultra Marathon Festival

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If you follow the emergence and further development of ultramarathons, you cannot avoid some important personalities and the birthplaces of legendary ultramarathons (see also Ultramarathon Calendar Germany). This certainly includes Germany, which offers ultrarunners from all over the world numerous events and a good association structure (see also Ultramarathon Calendar Germany).







Guest article by Deborah from RunnersGate

## THE ULTRAMARATHON SCENE IN GERMANY

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### **Development and history of ultrarunning in Germany**

#### ***History and association structure***

The history of the organized ultramarathon scene in Germany began with the founding of the German Ultramarathon Association (DUV) in 1985 (see also What is an Ultra Marathon). Just over a year after the founding of the International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU), the 22 founding members dedicated themselves to the targeted promotion of long-distance running beyond the marathon distance. In the years before, the running scene in general, and the marathon scene in particular, had already experienced lively growth: several initiatives by sports associations propagated running as a health-promoting sport for everyone - with success.

At the time of DUV's founding, ultramarathons were a rare fringe phenomenon and runners dedicated to this discipline alone were hardly taken seriously. To change that, the DUV focused at the beginning on setting up German championships in 100-kilometer road running. This succeeded in 1987 and caused the popularity and thus also the membership of the association to skyrocket in the following years. Over time, other official championships followed in the disciplines of 24-hour running, 50-kilometer running, ultratrail and, for several years, 6-hour running.

With the help of the DUV, it was also possible to establish support bases, increase the popularity of this sport and specifically promote talent in this area. Thanks to these structures, Germany today has a powerful national team in the field of ultramarathon and annually about 100 different events over all common distances. Over time, the DUV has developed into the largest national association for ultrarunners. Its members do not come exclusively from Germany. Many international athletes also benefit as members from the knowledge and expertise of the association.

### Traditional ultra runs in Germany

The first major ultra runs took place in Germany in the mid to late 1970s. The GutsMuths-Rennsteiglauf celebrated its premiere in 1973 and is one of the events that still regularly attracts a large number of participants today. With more than 15,000 runners and hikers, it is even considered the largest landscape and cross-country run in Europe. However, the course length has been shortened over time from 100 kilometers to 73 kilometers.

With its debut in the distant year 1977, the Monschau Marathon can also look back on a long and eventful history. In addition to the eponymous marathon, an ultra run over a distance of 56 kilometers has been available here since 2012. For this, participants complete an additional 14 kilometers before the actual marathon course, which gives them a unique panoramic view before they can then enjoy the picturesque landscapes of the German-Belgian Nature Park.

The Monschau Marathon with its associated ultra run is a good example of how many organizers in Germany have adapted their range of running events to meet demand. With the increasing number of ultra runners, it is worthwhile for many locations of smaller and medium-sized running events to hold competitions in the ultra range by adding additional loops or laps in addition to the typical medium and long distances. The additional expense is usually low. At the same time, both runners and organizers benefit from a larger number of participants and a more diverse field of runners. At the same time, ultra races can also increase the attractiveness for foreign participants in particular.

Among the other German classics that have existed since the beginning

of the movement is the Harz Crossing. The scenically exciting, but also strenuous cult race, has been taking place between Wernigerode and Nordhausen since 1980. Its realization was partly forbidden in times of the GDR. Since the fall of the Wall, however, numerous ultra-enthusiasts have gathered in eastern Germany every April to tackle the challenge of 51 kilometers and 1,200 meters of ascent.

### Well-known and successful German ultrarunners

Over the years, Germany has produced a large number of high-performing, passionate and enduring runners who have found their passion in ultramarathoning. It is not for nothing that 35 of the 235 current best times in ultrarunning are held by Germans. There are several personalities who have been able to draw attention to themselves with their special achievements.

#### Nele Alder-Baerens

Nele Alder-Baerens is a great example of a runner who has discovered and steadily developed her love of long distances over the course of her athletic career. While she started out running distances between 800 and 10,000 meters, she later discovered the marathon for herself. At her debut in Berlin, she set a new deaf world record in the marathon category with a time of 2:46:07. But it was not to stop there. She continued to increase her competitive distances to 50-kilometer and 6-hour runs, where she has won a total of seven German championships to date and finished second at the World Championships. Since 2016, she has also been competing at a distance of 100 kilometers and has already secured the German championship three times here as well. In recent years, she has continued to expand her program

to include competitions over 100 miles and 24-hour races - also with resounding success. The next big goal of this exceptional athlete is now to participate in the legendary Spartathlon between Sparta and Athens.

#### Florian Reus

Florian Reus has already achieved Nele Alder-Baeren's dream goal: he has already successfully completed the Spartathlon three times, twice in second place and in 2015 even as first with a new German record time. He discovered ultra running for himself at a young age and was the youngest German champion in the 24-hour race. In addition to four German titles, he also won the European championship three times and even the world championship once in this discipline. After more than ten years at the top, however, Florian Reus finally hung up his professional career and now only wants to enjoy ultra running privately.

#### Wolfgang Schwerk

There are also extremes in the field of ultra running - and Wolfgang Schwerk loves them. 24-hour and multi-day runs are his passion. He is best known for his two victories in the Self-Transcendence 3100 Mile Race in New York. In both 2002 and 2006, he won the world's longest race in a world record time. In 2006, he set a total of 74 new world records in the ultra-long distance range of 1,400 miles to 5,000 kilometers with a time of 41 days, 8 hours and 16 minutes. Many of these are no longer relevant today, but Wolfgang Schwerk is still remembered as a true world record wonder.

Picture sources:

- Dudarev Mikhail – stock.adobe.com
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By Gina Evans

### LESSONS – BIG AND LITTLE

---

*Impulsiveness: a tendency to act on a whim, displaying behaviour characterised by little or no forethought, reflection, or consideration of the consequences.*

That accurately sums up every running challenge I've set myself.

I can't overstate how much I never thought I'd run any sort of long distance, never mind an ultra event, but an impulsive nature can get you into all sorts of situations. My first 10km, I immediately said yes over dinner when a friend asked if anyone was interested. First marathon, I declared myself 'in' to an entire WhatsApp group after a few in the pub. D33 Ultra in Aberdeen, all it took was a casual morning run with my friend, Caroline. She floated the idea to me and by 10km we had committed to our first ultra together.

As the pandemic hit, my longest distance was 20 miles in preparation for the Paris marathon, so to run 33 miles one year later felt surreal. However, with the D33 cancelled due to you-know-what, I wasn't in Aberdeen, but toeing a makeshift startline in Roseburn, Edinburgh. The time was 7am, I was holding some balloons, a sign etched with '33 to go' and ready to be waved off by both my family...and my training partner Caroline.

Things hadn't gone to plan at all for my first encounter with the ultra world. I was now running a new route on a different date with no official event and without my training buddy. However, I learnt a lot about myself through training and running the event I rebranded my 'Edinburgh Lockdown 33 race'.

#### The big lessons

##### **It's time to figure out my 'why'**

External factors are undoubtedly what make organised events special. Visualising crossing a finish line or adorning a medal helps on those long training runs. But

with events off the cards, I needed another focus to keep my training in check. I had to evaluate why I run and use that as my motivation.

Before the ultra, I didn't really know why I ran, I just did. Looking a little deeper, I realised that I love pushing myself further than I ever thought I could, not only when it comes to the number of miles, but in other aspects of my life.

It's taught me the discipline I need to show up for myself and how to achieve targets only I can hold myself accountable for. I've also learnt the art of consistency and patience. It's not something I'm great at in a world of constant multi-tasking and the expectation of quick results. 'Slow and steady' was a lost concept on me until I saw my incremental progress each week. Ultimately, what I loved about my training was realising that it can't be cheated. The results were a direct reflection of the work. I couldn't get faster or fitter without showing up. It felt pure, something that I was in complete control of, and I loved that.

Now, my why isn't only the foundation of what motivates me to finish a race, it's what gets me out the door and helps hone skills I need when handling other parts of my life.

##### **Training in difficult weather can be fun. Honest.**

Some winter mornings were perfect. The sun would peek over the horizon, shining its orangey glow on my face as the frost thawed. I'd be high on life, mentally patting myself on the back as I ran along the promenades of Portobello getting the miles in.

Other days were awful.

My alarm would sound, roof slates rattling above me from gale force winds. I'd pull the covers over my head and try to







convince myself that going out was a terrible idea. 20 minutes later I'd begrudgingly get up, pull on my gear and mentally prepare to get my ass kicked for four hours by Scotland's unique ability to combine rain, snow, wind and sun into its own unrelenting weather Megazord. However, this winter I learnt that bad weather training really isn't that bad at all. It's actually really fun.

One of my most enjoyable runs was a 16-mile trek through puddles and mud, in the driving rain with gusts of piercingly cold wind. My friend (whom I'd met on a bit of a running 'blind date' a few weeks before) and I got lost twice, dealt with closed paths, collapsed bridges and diversions. Our feet were soaked and faces ice cold, but I absolutely loved it! The weather was awful, but barely a thought in my mind as we shared our life stories and got to know each other more. Every hurdle, simply another chapter in our morning adventure. The company and obstacles made the morning more exciting than some of my perfect weather runs. When we finished, I was so cold I couldn't feel my hands to open my front door, but it was worth every soggy step.

Imperfect conditions do not mean a run will be bad. Embrace them. Get up, run whatever the weather and bring good company.

### Ask your community for help

At every setback in life we can either give up or crack on. The D33 was cancelled, not something I was surprised about, but the big hitch was Caroline having to pull out five days before running the distance locally. She got sick and continuing wasn't an option. At this point I had a mild panic, not only because our plans were up in the air, but because I was worried about her health.

Caroline was determined to support me, and I, her. After lots of conversation, we decided I would run the distance and she would do her 33 miles later this year. With no support in place, I reached out to my local running community and Instagram friends for help. The response was overwhelming. When plotting the route, I arranged for runners to join me at different locations. I even had another running 'blind date' with an Instagram follower who joined me for 26.2 miles to comple-



te her own marathon! There was a support team WhatsApp group, people online were leaving me comments of encouragement and my friends were dotted around the course with signs and snacks.

My panic turned into excitement and it was all down to the kindness of the running community, both on and offline. In all honesty, the uniqueness of the day made me enjoy it so much more than I ever thought I would.

Since starting to run, I've only ever come across people who want to lift others up and help out. Event support, kit advice, motivation techniques, whatever it is, if in doubt, ask about. There will be a community there to help you along the way.

### The little lessons

Not everything in my journey was as deep or detailed as the above, but it was still equally important, such as:

- Carry a spare pair of socks. I changed my socks at mile 18 once, it was a game changer.
- Have back-up headphones with a wire. When the wireless pair run out halfway through, it's not fun.
- Always give the unspoken nod or a passing 'hello' to fellow runners. It can be a real mood booster when you're in a bad headspace.
- End your run at the front door of the local bakery.

So, will I do something longer in future? Now I know what my body can do, a multi-day running event is seriously tempting. The foundation of my 'why' is the same, but the boundaries are different now. They're even more exciting.

My impulsive nature tells me this won't be the end...





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By Chloe Brooks

### RIVER AIRE ULTRA



On Saturday 17 April I took part in the inaugural River Aire Ultra, a Punk Panther race. Like most of us, I was itching to take part in events again and I had been looking forward to this race for a long time due to COVID. Although I enjoy running by myself some of the time, I was looking forward to taking part in a real event again. As I had already done two other Punk Panther races, I knew it was going to be a cracker. It was originally postponed from 2020, and then again from 3 April. Punk Panther have done a great job at putting on safe races wherever possible. As a point-to-point race it got swapped with another race in the Punk Panther calendar to make it easier with the COVID restrictions, so this wasn't even their first race post-third lockdown. However, as they say, good things come to those who wait, and we were blessed with a gorgeous, sunny day; it had been snowing and hailing in Leeds a couple of weeks previously.

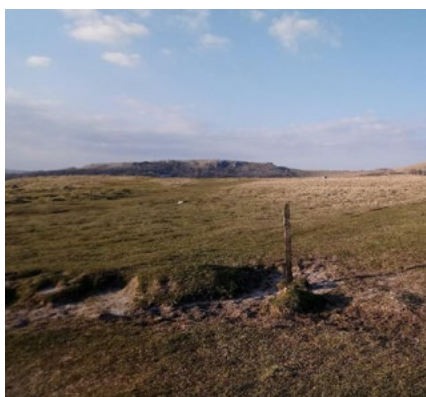
You'd be forgiven if you thought that a river ultra sounds like a nice, flat, route. The RD, Ryk Downes, is the only person who could find a way of making a river route quite so hilly. The 48-mile route starts in the centre of Leeds and follows the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and River Aire, all the way to the source of the River Aire at Malham Tarn.

Luckily, I only live about a mile and half from the start line which meant a fairly relaxed morning and not getting up at silly o'clock to get some breakfast down. It did seem a bit ridiculous getting an Uber to the start, but I knew I'd regret it at, oh about 40 miles, if I had walked down to the start.

The start was a bit anticlimactic where we were all set off at two-minute intervals compared with the usual pre-covid mass race starts. But it was probably quite helpful in stopping me from getting carried away in the usual buzz and going off too fast. I knew the first five miles quite well, straight down the canal, and that the danger would be starting too fast and paying for it later. Although inevitably I still probably should have slowed down even more.

Although sunny, it was still a bit nippy at 8.00 am when I set off. I regretted the t-shirt and shorts combo for about the first hour, but it soon warmed up. It was soon time to turn off the canal so I knew I needed to start paying attention





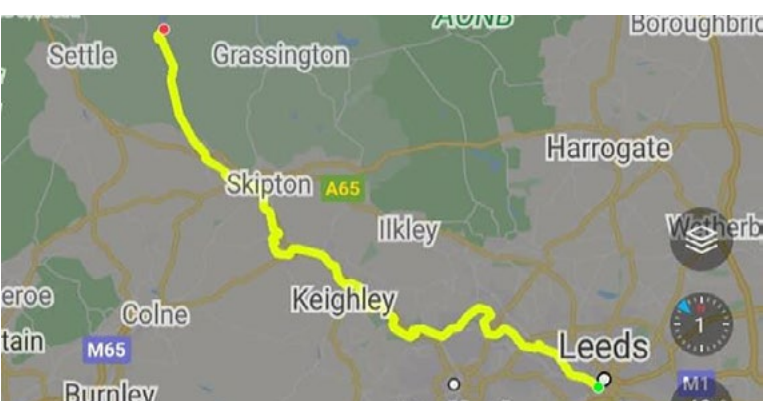
to navigation and my GPS watch as the route wasn't taped. If in doubt I choose the path closest to the river, which 95% of the time seemed to work. Or knowing the RD, the path going steepest uphill, which much to my annoyance wasn't in fact the case and at one point myself and another runner had to traipse our way down a rather pointless climb to get back on route.

Although I started on my own after CP1 at Apperley Bridge (8.5 miles) I gradually started seeing more of my fellow 46 starters. Initially I was worried that the staggered starts would mean spending more of the race by yourself, but I actually found the opposite, you actually end up seeing much more of the field over the entire day. You get overtaken by those behind you, and you catch up with those in front. In fact, there has been talk that races in the future might retain start waves, even if no longer required.

I was glad to reach CP2 Hirst Wood at 15 miles and take on some more fluid; although a southerner I have now clearly lived in the north for too long, and with the full force of the sun I was melting in the heat. The main checkpoint was slightly off the canal which we had rejoined at this point. I was worried I had taken a water bottle from a group who had set up a 'satellite checkpoint' a few metres away nearer the canal, but I think it was ok, or at least all forgiven.

CP3 Thwaites Brow at 21.5 miles soon appeared, although not until after quite a steep climb. After CP3 there was a busy road crossing to negotiate, before going over a stile much taller than me that must be a contender for the largest stile in the world, or at least felt like it when clambering up it. Luckily, I managed to catch a break in the traffic, and it didn't take long at all. There was also a railway crossing here and I was quite glad to have both these sections out the way.

I can normally cope with just sugar during races, but at CP4 Kildwick at 28 miles there were shop-bought packaged sandwiches and pasties – a great covid-friendly savoury option and nice to have something a bit more substantial. I also saw three members of my running club Hyde Park Harriers. CP4 to CP5 was the toughest section



for me. There was a long runnable riverbank section where I was by myself for quite a bit. I took some walking breaks, but had to battle to keep running at this point. Just before CP5 at Skipton (35 miles) I took a wrong turn initially and went under a bridge. Not a big nav mess-up, as I realised pretty quickly from my watch, but I had fully submerged my feet in smelly stagnant mud. If there was any mud at all on the bone-dry route, trust me to find it!

After CP5 where I accessed some goodies in my drop bag (including a Chia Charge flapjack and some Lucozade), I bumped into some other runners and had some more company. The sugar and some good conversation really perked me up and I knew the finish wasn't too far away. Just after CP5 the route joined the Pennine Way - a good opportunity to see what the Spine is all about, a race I've heard so much about.

At the final CP6 at Airton (41.5 miles), I gulped down a bottle of sports drink and a beautiful homemade cupcake to get some sugar in to power me for the last little section. Although fairly short, with fewer than seven miles remaining, I'd been hearing about this infamous last section all day, an apparent never-ending hill that is a struggle to get up in a car. Thankfully I spotted a runner just ahead of me, so I had someone to latch onto and try and chase down, or at least try not to lose.

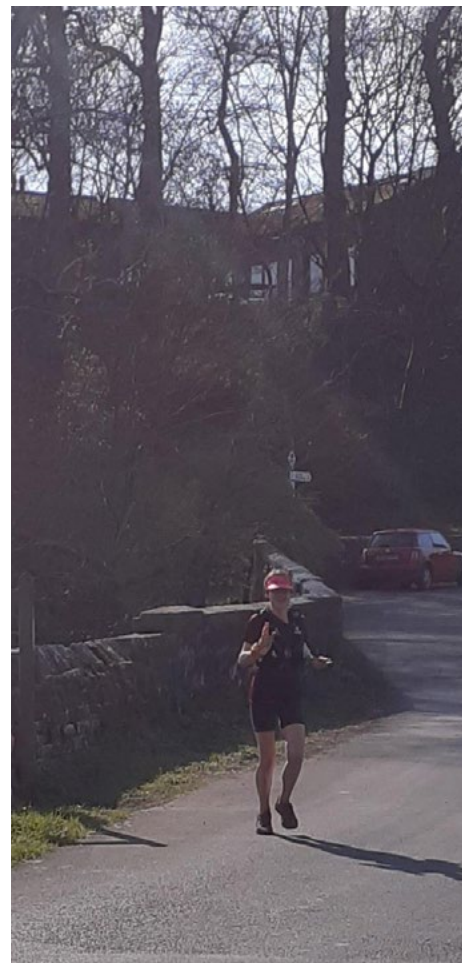
The last few miles were never-ending. At last I spotted the photographer at the top of the hill, typically placed where you most want to walk, who said that Ryk the RD wasn't far away. He quickly appeared and said congratulations, I was first lady! Well, as long as nothing happened to me between there and the last little bit to the finish. I wouldn't have put it past me to trip over a rock and knock myself out, so I ran the last little downhill but restrained myself from doing a proper sprint finish. I was using this as a training run leading up to the Grand Union Canal Race; my main aim was to get round without tripping, there were a few near misses on the way,

but I luckily managed to save them, remained upright and ended up with my ankles intact. It was a nice surprise to win. Having no idea of positions was nice due to the staggered starts as you could just run your own race and not worry about what everyone else was doing.

The finish at the carpark soon came into view – and what a sight! I collected my finish goodies, and another cupcake. I finally remembered to stop my watch after a couple of minutes, I'm not one for Strava so it doesn't really bother me so much. I had done 48.94 miles, which meant I had only added on 0.75 miles. A navigational triumph for me! It had felt like I had made quite a few errors, but in reality I righted them quite quickly so never went too far off route. Well, other runners pointed me in the right direction (thank you!) so I think it felt a lot worse than it actually was.

Despite the last climb to the finish being brutal, it was so worth it for the views at Malham Tarn. It really felt you had entered another world in Malham to the one we had left in Leeds City Centre. Point-to-point races are a bit more of a pain logistically, and the finish was in quite a remote place with a bad signal which made finding my taxi quite a challenge (but that's another story). However, I really love the feel of going on a journey and getting somewhere. Somehow it feels a bit more like an accomplishment than going round in a big circle. I must admit, I have really missed not being able to travel, but this showed me just what amazing places I can get to literally from (very near to) my doorstep on foot in a day! And after all, as the Punk Panther motto goes, we are "Born to run wild". This route had a bit of everything: canal, road, trail, with lots of runnable sections, but plenty of hills. As a local race to me it is definitely one I would do again. If you haven't done a Punk Panther race I couldn't recommend them more highly. Super friendly races (even for ultrarunners) in a gorgeous part of the country. Ryk and Bev Downes really put everything into making sure everyone has a great time, and although Ryk doesn't half make the routes easy, isn't a chal-

lenge half the reason why we all sign up for ultras?





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# **ADVERTISE HERE**



By Dougie Zinis

### ULTRA DREAMING

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So I'm sat here thinking when I considered myself an ultra runner. Was it my first training run over 26 miles? I suppose it was, but when was it when I psychologically thought this is a good fit, and what was it I liked? Well I'd best explain how my running started in the first place.

I was 24 years old and unhealthy big time. I was 15 stone, smoking, drinking and eating all the wrong things every night. My body gave me a warning and one evening I had a mini stroke. Time to stop, think and plan what the way forward could be. Get fit!! My first jogs were painful and I couldn't run any further than 200 meters, but after some time I could run a mile or two, and slowly I started to feel the benefits. What I liked about this was the planning and the discipline and, dare I say it, the pain! And that's how I plodded on slowly getting further and eventually being drawn to the trails and fells.

I joined my local club 'Calder Valley Fell Runners'. Up to this point my longest race was 15 miles and some of the club members were doing runs and races I found to be unbelievable. I took part in loads of races, but never liked them as I felt my eyes were exploding out of my head. I needed to slow down and I found I could go a lot further from doing so. Was this the spark? Maybe, as I went straight into route planning and did a 30+ mile run over the moors and despite various chafing and

cramps I was fine and already thinking ahead; looking up to my club members who had completed a round I planned a Bob Graham for 2019 and got stuck into planning and recces with friends. I found myself loving every minute of the build-up, seeing myself getting stronger and wiser to different scenarios. I got around in 20 hours and loved it.

That was my ultra mode well and truly activated. That year I also did a Paddy Buckley round and I had entered the Spine Challenger 2020. I was loving testing my body and mind, and again, got my planning head on and went to town with the training. I just wanted to finish, but to my amazement I stuck to my race strategies and won. Then Covid hit. I have two 100-mile races lined up and a full Spine so I figured it out: yes I love long-distance running, yes I love the pain and psychological ups and downs, but I also love the planning, the training blueprint I go through to match the conditions, terrain and climb. Recces and training runs with mates are the best days. Picking lessons and tips up from my club mates are priceless. And I'm still learning all the time. I'm in the full Spine 2021, 268 miles can I do it??

One thing's for sure, I'll enjoy the race, but just as much I'll enjoy the process leading up to it.





By Jenny Katsoni

# FIRST ULTRA

SDW 50 2021 - Two years in the making - a story of training, injuries and becoming a 'Centurion'

### Why did I sign up?

One would argue that it was a combination of peer pressure (not wanting to let people down ... the 'people pleaser' in me) but also some sort of personal challenge.

I heard about this race from a colleague who had done it twice and mentioned it being an enjoyable experience and even 'nicer' than Beachy Head Marathon, despite it being a much longer route, or double the distance, rather!

At the same time, my amazing running buddy, Laura, was keen to do it but did not want to go at it alone. We are of a similar running pace and we had trained for other races together so it felt like the right thing to sign up to this together. However, when it was time to sign up I had just returned from running the Paris marathon. Despite the buzz of being in Paris, the race did not feel great and I was not pleased with my time. As a result, I felt that it might not be sensible to aim to run 50 miles when I had not mastered the marathon distance as yet. Nevertheless, I saw it as my next challenge and the opportunity to train with my running buddy made it all worth it! We signed up in a rush as all places would go within the same weekend the entries were released.



### How did we train for this event?

We formulated a training plan and decided to follow this together and support each other through it. This was a 20-week training plan that allowed us to slowly build up the distance and the miles. We aimed for back-to-back long runs Saturday and Sunday to learn to run on tired legs, which is something a lot of ultrarunners would advocate for. This would mean doing, for example, 10 miles one day and 20 miles the next day, but as we were building up the miles we might do 12 miles one day and 28 the next day, for example. The longest run we did before the event was actually 30 miles.

We did a lot of our long runs together and shorter runs in the week were solo or running with other groups that we belong to.

### When did training start?

Originally it started in November 2019 and it continued on to March 2020. This is when we found out that the event was cancelled for April 2020 due to the covid-19 pandemic.



By that point we had done the actual route from Worthing to Falmer on a long run one day, and then Falmer to Eastbourne on a different day. It was helpful to split the route in half and test our endurance. Those runs were tough and navigation was a challenge. We also had the added challenge of training through winter with strong winds and even hailstorms at times.

When we found out the race was cancelled we decided to take on some virtual Centurion challenges such as running 100 miles in a week. That took place in May 2020 and I managed to complete 95 miles until I had an ankle sprain. I ended up running the last 5 miles to make it to 100 miles on my sprained ankle which was sore and painful to an extent.

As a result, I took two weeks off running and focused on strength and upper body work. I then decided to give cycling a go as this did not seem to affect my ankle as much. I borrowed a friend's hybrid bike and did a long ride with one of the local tri clubs. This led to me buying a second-hand road bike and doing my first duathlon in September!

The ankle sprain helped me realise that cross training is key to avoid injury and maybe running every day is not

the best way to go about things. I generally got into running to help me de-stress from work so felt it was something that I needed every day. However, the ankle sprain experience helped me realise that I need to have days off running and use that time to do strength and conditioning work or cross train to prevent injury.

#### **The SDW 50 journey continues...**

The event was rescheduled for October 2020, but we were unsure whether this would take place as it would all depend on the number of covid infections and government restrictions. So we decided to cancel our entry and receive a refund. We then booked the race for April 2021 instead. In retrospect I think this was the right decision as with my injury I would have struggled to train through the summer. Also, the weather in October can be wet and rainy and the days are shorter. As it turned out, it was wet and windy on race day in October which led to the ground being very muddy leading to very challenging racing conditions.

#### **Training for the 2021 race**

We started training around November/December time again and decided to follow the same training schedule as before. However, this time we could not train along the actual route due to government restrictions during lockdown. As a result, we had to do a lot of out-and-back runs from Eastbourne towards Alfriston, but never quite made it to Falmer. Also, we did not manage to do a run from Worthing to Falmer as we were not allowed to travel outside the local area. We still however managed some long runs. We did another Centurion virtual challenge in February where we had to run

50k/30 miles. This run led to me having another injury. The side of my left foot was sore, swollen and red which can be a sign of peroneal tendonitis. I suspect this happened due to the fact I had not tapered before the 30-mile run and did not rest as much after the run. Initially, I struggled to even walk. However, I rested for two weeks and focused on strength and conditioning. At that point, I felt gutted as I had managed to build up the distance on our plan and felt that with the injury I would have to start training all over again. I was not even sure whether I would be fully recovered by April to be able to do the race. Luckily, my foot felt better after two to three weeks and I slowly started doing some runs and tried to build up the distance again. I knew that I would have to do a few long runs and then taper two to three weeks prior to race day as per our training plan.

Fortunately, recovery went well and I felt good enough and rather optimistic about race day. We managed to train with a vest carrying all the mandatory kit, which was helpful as it did feel rather heavy at times. Also, the weather was getting better so that made training easier as we got closer to race day.

I also tested different fuelling strategies. The aim was to have 200-300 calories per hour. I decided that in my vest I would have one bottle (500ml) of just water and one with Tailwind or Precision Hydration sachets for electrolytes and carbs. In terms of solid food I decided to try different bars but also ended up trying baby food as I did not want to use any gels. I also used some guava solid blocks known as 'Lucho Dillitos' as well as crackers and fava beans for savoury and salty snacks.

#### **RACE DAY**

This moved from 10 April to 17 April which was ideal in terms of weather and training. The reason for the move was that some government restrictions would lift on 12 April as the UK was coming out of lockdown according to the roadmap.





This was really exciting as it would have been the first race of the year and our first ultra. There were some race nerves, but overall I felt good. I had a Precision Hydration sachet the night before and 90 minutes before the race on race day and felt good at the start.

Our friends were able to drive us to the start and were at the crew points for us. Also, Laura's parents came to two of the crew points to support. It was lovely to have friends and family supporting.

We got dropped off and then we handed in our bags, used the toilet and then walked to the start. We were aiming for an 8am start, but we were early so went through the start line around 7:45ish. The first few miles are generally uphill until you get to the South Downs Way. We both felt good so we did not stop at the first aid station. We decided that we would only stop if needing fluids and we would rely on our crew for extra food. We already had some food in our vests and had our bottles filled up, together with the mandatory kit. It was a lovely sunny day with a slight headwind. It also seemed that sunrise was early at 6am and sunset about 8pm. So we

had hoped to finish whilst still light if it all went to plan. We had the cut-off times with us to make sure we were not running late. The overall cut-off was 13 hours. We had worked out from training that we could do 10 miles in two hours on fresh legs, but we were not sure whether we could keep that pace towards the end. However, we were way ahead of all the cut-offs and we both felt good. Laura was power walking up the hills and I was trying to coordinate breathing and eating whilst walking up the hills... And there were quite a few!

First crew point was around mile 15 and it was nice to see some familiar faces and pick up some extra fuel as well as fluids. The first aid station we stopped at was at mile 26 - Housedean Farm. We managed to fill up our flasks and also grab some fruit such as satsumas and grapes which was lovely ☺. We also saw a bridge and decided to do a 'jump' as it was something we did on our runs!

After that there was another crew point at around mile 30 and then again at mile 40, as far as I remember right. We stopped at an aid station to fuel in between and grabbed some

more food from the crew. Before we knew it we were only 10 miles from the finish, but we knew we had two hills such as the Alfriston and Jevington hills. However, this was familiar ground as we had trained so much around those routes! My legs did start feeling heavy at about mile 40, but I was willing to push through and could not believe how blessed we had been with the sunny weather and mild winds!

In the end I visualised reaching the Jevington trig point and that kept me going. In my mind, getting there would feel as if the race was over as no more hills from that point onwards!!! I felt so elated once we got to the Jevington trig point! I raced down the hill and then when I got to Kings Drive my legs were almost ready to give up but Laura made a point that we had to keep running to the finish. I must admit I was tempted to walk this last bit. I estimated a finish time of around 10 hours 30 minutes and I was not far out. As we turned into the sports park car park everyone was there cheering and it felt so good. Unfortunately no spectators were allowed on track due to covid restrictions, but we sprinted round the track with an official time of



10 hours 36 minutes. I could not believe we had done it!!! We were now both 'Centurions' ☺ . The whole experience was so surreal and after, I could not believe that we had done it! The official photos looked great and helped remind me of the whole experience. My amazing running buddy also created a little video of the whole race which is a great memory (link below).

**Video:** [South Downs Way](#)

This experience made me realise how mindset is key in anything like this. There are times when physically you want to give up, but then the power of the mind helps you keep going. There was a point where it did feel tough and we had to push through, but having my running buddy encouraged me to keep going, her power walking up the hills and especially towards the end putting on some cheesy pop was a race highlight! I think I would have struggled running by myself although everyone seemed friendly. Overall, it was a lovely sunny day to be out, and looking back I did enjoy it even when it felt tough. I definitely did not feel like I hit a wall as I kept on with the fuelling and took it at a steady slow pace to keep going for the full distance.

**5 tips when considering running your first ultra:**

- 1) Buddy up - find a keen buddy who would train with you in any weather and can be reliable.
- 2) Aim for back-to-back long runs.
- 3) Use a training plan to build up the mileage.
- 4) Train with the mandatory kit on.
- 5) Think about a fuelling plan to avoid crashing on the day.

**WHAT NEXT?**

It could be aiming for the SDW 100, but I think I will aim for a 100k race first and see... I have also started doing more cycling and swimming so I think aiming for a triathlon might be the next challenge on the table... Wish me luck ☺

**Photos:** Stuart March photography - <https://www.stuartmarchphotography.co.uk/-/galleries/centurion-running/2021/sdw50>



By Rosie Nanette Gagnon

## SWAMMIE SHUFFLE 200

25 February 2018, early afternoon, my family arrived home from church and found the body of my 23 year old son Dexter, who had died by his own hand. Dexter had been training as a United States Marine when he had an onset of bipolar disorder that ended his lifetime dream of serving his country. As his illness progressed he went the sadly typical symptomatic route of high-risk behavior and self medication. After a brief stay in jail, and a psychotic break requiring a month-long hospitalization, he was finally diagnosed with bipolar 1 and schizoaffective disorder. Five months later, my hilarious, bright, brave, handsome, loving oldest son and father of one, one of eight siblings, was gone.

The trauma of his death completely shattered my heart. I was drowning in grief. I didn't know how I could continue to live, let alone run, or even get out of bed in the morning. Dexter had encouraged me to sign up for my first 100 mile ultra a few months prior, which took place two months after he died. The habit of lacing up my shoes every day literally kept me alive. Like a robot I woke up every morning, dragged myself out of bed and went out for a run and usually ended up sobbing by the side of the road. I failed my first 100. That first year, I attempted it four times and only finished once... though those failures ended up

being my lifeline. I found running a 100 mile race to be the only physical - emotional - spiritual outlet that could even remotely compare to the pain and anguish that my soul was experiencing. Through running, though failing, I felt those miles were breathing life into my barely beating heart. I found that I could talk to Dexter out there late at night and running in his honor gave me the will to make it just a few more weeks, just until the next race.

After about 18 months a friend I'd met at Tuscazoar 100, Margaret, learned about Dexter and asked if she could run for him in the Marine Corps Marathon. Not only did she want to run for him, but she got over 60 people to also carry his name. The overwhelming support and recognition of my loss, though I explained to everyone that he died of a mental illness, not combat... that didn't matter to them. He was

disabled because of his service and he died. They all considered him a hero, just dying on a different battlefield. That act of kindness inspired me and I decided to start running for veteran suicide awareness as well as in Dexter's memory. I completed six 100-mile races that year (2019). I had a stroke of inspiration at some point, to run a hundred 100-milers for veteran suicide awareness. I connected to the group 22 Too Many, which promotes honoring and keeping the memory of veteran suicide victims alive through physical activity. They added Dexter to their wall of heroes and I was inspired to carry photos of some of their other Marine Corps veterans lost to PTSD or mental health issues along with Dexter.

My confidence was shot down just before Covid hit when I DNF'd two 100s in a row. I felt defeated and like I'd let Dexter down; with so many





races shut down I was tempted to just give up, but he kept pushing me. I ran seven more 100s. This was about distance and suicide awareness, and Covid gave me the freedom to be creative and I ran two self-supported 100s. With the third anniversary of Dexter's death approaching in 2021, I felt the waves of grief encroaching on me again. About that time I discovered Swammie Shuffle 200, an ultra being planned specifically to raise awareness for veteran suicide and Mission 22, highlighting the estimated 22 veterans who take their life each day. They had a virtual option and I decided if I was going to attempt a 200 mile race that I wanted it to be a meaningful, epic run, not just a highway down the beach on the OBX. I determined to run from my home in Berryville Virginia to Arlington Cemetery and the US Marine Corps Iwo Jima monument in Washington DC, down to George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate in two loops, then return to my home in Berryville, with two stops at Dexter's cemetery in Round Hill, Va. I was hoping to complete the run in under four days. I had several friends who paced me through about half the miles, my husband Jason was my crew, and we dropped off a dozen plastic bins with food supplies in various hiding places along my planned route.

I started at 12:01am on 25 February determined to run my fastest 100 and the most miles that I could in that 24 hour period. I decided to try and use this as a fundraiser for 22 Too Many and I was so happy and grateful to raise over \$1,500. This was definitely the biggest running challenge I have faced. I ran the first 94 miles in 24 hours (Dexter was born in 1994) and ran my fastest 100 in under 26 hours. I stopped to nap at a hotel room after my first 100 was completed, getting a quick shower, change of clothes, and tending blisters and taping sore muscles. The second day I ran 50 miles, got slightly lost, ran through an ice storm and had an emotional breakdown at least once. On the third day I ran until I couldn't run anymore, hiked the highway up and over the Blue Ridge Mountain and brought it in at just over 68 hours, under three days. I was exhausted, in pain, and elated to have beaten my goal by over a full day! It was a beautiful moment to be met by my youngest son Peter, 15, who had been the first to find his big brother's body three years before. We struggled together that first year to survive, and here he was helping me struggle through the last two miles, keeping me from staggering out onto the highway. He and another brother Adam, and my husband Jason were at the "finish line" which was basically mile 200 on my watch. We celebrated by driving to the nearest gas station for a huge quesarito.

This 200-mile outlet, raising awareness for veteran suicide, really helped me navigate a difficult anniversary date that so many grieving parents struggle through. I've also tried to bring awareness to the pain of child loss because I know so many suffer silently, afraid to talk about the length and extent of their broken hearts. Especially after a suicide. I've finished seventeen 100-mile distances now and feel confident that I can pull out one hundred. I've kept a running blog of each distance and tried to express both the difficulties of running 100

miles, and living as a suicide survivor. I have 100 miles or more planned for every month in 2021 and I feel Dexter motivating me, pushing me to do my best, and God carrying me and giving me the health and strength to continue. It truly is my hope that I can help spare even one family, the pain of losing their hero; one mother, the anguish of child loss; having one person to ask for help to stay alive. Dexter wanted to help people when he was alive who were struggling with mental illness, and though my heart will never fully recover from the pain of losing him, I find hope and strength being his legs and voice.

Read the longer version of Rosie's Swammie Shuffle 200 on her website, [One Hundred Hundreds For Dexter](#)

## In Memory Of Pvt James Dexter Morris USMC



Our Heroes  
22 Too Many



By Michelle Lindstrom

### IN IT TOGETHER AT SURVIVORFEST

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In 2009, Laura Townsend completed her first ultra-marathon: the [Frozen Ass Fifty](#) in Calgary, Alberta (AB), Canada. Every year since, she's participated in that race for the challenge, community, and accountability to train throughout northern Canada's cold, snowy winters.

"You're going to feel crappy at some point," Townsend says about the mid-ultra experience, "but you need to embrace the suck and just figure it out."

That's advice she's taken and given to others regarding running and life.

In addition to being a businesswoman, mother, wife, and ultra-runner, Townsend is also a sexual assault survivor. After being inspired by [Martin Parnell's](#) 250 marathons in one year for [Right to Play](#), a plan was formed to use her running to raise awareness and funds for organizations supporting sexual assault survivors.

In 2017, Townsend decided to run 50 ultras before turning 50 in support of her local sexual assault centre, [Saffron Centre](#). The charity supports those affected by sexual violence, with healing and empowerment, as well as providing proactive education to surrounding communities.

Townsend sat in on some educational presentations Saffron led at her children's school and heard presenters speak of various relationships, feelings, boundaries, communication, and then for the older students, layered in consent, social media, online predators, and resources that help friends who share troubling experiences with you.

The presentations were eye-opening to Townsend who believes that if she heard this information during her elementary days, she may have told someone sooner about her own sexual assault experience. And a Saffron presentation may have helped her high school friend know what to do when Townsend finally opened up to her years later.



At 46 years old with 35 ultras under her belt, Townsend is well on track to accomplish her goal of 50 while raising awareness about sexual violence. May 2021's [Blackfoot Ultra](#) was to be ultra number 36, but due to COVID-19 restrictions in the area, the event was cancelled. But, she has another to take No.36's place: [Sinister 7 Ultra](#) (50-miler) in July 2021.

When a friend's idea to create a timed race came up, Townsend agreed it was the right time because she wanted something to support Saffron Centre even after she crushed 50 ultras by 50. It took some research, considering she had no experience as a race creator or director, nor participated in a timed ultra before, but runner friends stepped up to help her bring the aptly named [Survivorfest](#) Running Event to life.

The 2019 inaugural event became an International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU) bronze qualifying race with a 6, 12 and a 24 hour option at Strathcona Athletic Park's (SAP) 400m outdoor track.

"It surpassed expectations," Townsend says, after 2019's Survivorfest raised over





\$3,100 for Saffron Centre's educational programs and two athletes qualified for the Canadian national team to compete at the 2019 World 24 Hour Championships in Ireland.

"Raising awareness for sexual violence affects us all," Townsend says, and although it's a sensitive subject to talk about and listen to, Survivorfest shows that people aren't alone and there's something we all can do to help.

COVID-19 forced 2020's in-person Survivorfest to be cancelled, gifting Townsend time to finally try a 24-hour track event instead of directing one. This was ultra number 29 and the experience amped up her mental game while completing 134 kilometers. When finished, she thought, "Everyone needs to do a timed running event."

Unfortunately pandemic restrictions meant that 2021's June 12 in-person Survivorfest had to be virtual, which was disappointing as it would have had three 6-hour events, a 24-hour event and the Association of Canadian Ultramarathoners (ACU) had chosen it to be the offi-

cial 2021 six hour and 24 hour Canadian National Championship.

Inspired by the success of the [Quarantine Backyard](#) events, Townsend and team created a virtual live-streaming event for 2021's Survivorfest with 24-hour race commentary and DJ music so athletes were connected in the celebration of strength, sacrifice, and survival—Survivorfest's mantra—regardless of where they were physically running.

As a mid-pack runner, Townsend says it's easy to assume fast runners rarely struggle during a race because you're never around them. The great thing about a timed, track race is that you see everyone throughout the whole race, sometimes running side-by-side and chatting with them, regardless of pace.

"You see them focus, puke, and deal with blisters, just like you do," Townsend says, "and you embrace the suck together."





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By Denis Orsini translated by Sarah Cameron

## 1000 MILES D'ITALIE WINTER EDITION 2021

My 2nd 1000 miles in 6 months, personal best, best French performance.

March 3 to 18, 2021 at the "Italian Ultra Marathon Festival" in Policoro village, southern Italy, Basilicata region.

Here are my 15 days in km per day, of this 1000 mile race:

Day 1: 140 km

Day 2: 111 km

Day 3: 105 km

Day 4: 121 km

Day 5: 108 km

Day 6: 99 km

Day 7: 87 km

Day 8: 95 km

Day 9: 102 km

Day 10: 104 km

Day 11: 104 km

Day 12: 103 km

Day 13: 105 km

Day 14: 104 km

Day 15: 122 km

1,610 / 1,609 km in:

14 days 23 hours 20 '31" (official time)

Before being a competitor, I was an adventurer. My first sporting adventure dates back to 2007, followed by another the following year, when it was Corsica's turn: about 2000 km for this human over rocks and beaches, in a little less than 38 days, comprising approximately 13 hours of walking per day.

Outside of competition, I've completed 3 traverses of Corsica on foot: In 2014, a GR20 round trip in 6 days (which I intend to improve upon) and in 2012, 2 attempts to officially record the GR20 with the French Federation.

The GR20 is a 195k hiking trail that crosses the Corsican mountains, with 14,500 meters of elevation gain. It is considered the most difficult trail in Europe and the current record holder of the GR20 is the World Champion François d'Hane in 31 hours and 6 minutes.

I started competing in ultra marathons at the age of 42, beginning with a 6 day race, so I've been doing very long 6 day style ultramarathon competitions for 4½ years now.

The tale of this 1000 mile race begins at the very start of my training block, and even before, as my previous events have had an influence on my likelihood to succeed in such a competition, such a sporting challenge.

Last December, and with my wife as my support crew, I circumnavigated Corsica on foot in 5 days and 23 hours; according to my GPS it was 629k. I suffered with swellings and tendon issues and it rained every day, but I raised 1,500 euros for charity.

Before this tour of Corsica, I had first hit the 1,000 mile mark in September 2020, in a time of 16 days and 21 hours. It's a very long story but I had a great adventure and it was when I first saw my potential over this format. It was when I fell in love with 1000 miles, as a distance. I started with dreams of setting records, but gradually lost those along the way, as my injuries are usually as impressive as my ambitions.

The year 2020 was quite significant for me sporting, despite the Covid crisis. In January I fought for a victory at the 6 day race at the Athens International Ultramarathon Festival; injury issues and cost me too much time at night for the win but I came away with an extremely satisfactory

second place and a personal best of 737k for 6 days. Without any injuries I know that I have it in the legs to hit 800k or more.

In March I took part in the JOGLE ultra, a 1400k traverse of the United Kingdom in 17 stages. It was during a difficult period just at the start of the first lockdown and I almost couldn't leave France.

The competition started at John O'Groats in the north of Scotland, and I made the mistake of pushing too hard in the first half of the first stage. I fell behind with my nutrition so I experienced cramps and muscle problems over the next two days. I was still able to hang onto second place in the general classification though. After 3 stages and 210 km, we arrived at Loch Ness, feeling very happy and we had a great pizza that evening before learning from the organiser that the race was cancelled. Due to the pandemic, the inhabitants of the next city did not want us to pass because there were more than four of us.







On the trip home I actually caught Covid, so I isolated myself for 25 days. It was like a bad case of flu, but with some rather unusual symptoms.

Most competitions in France were cancelled, but one of the last to be maintained was the 100 miles of France in the Ardèche region, which happens to be a Spartathlon qualifier, something on my bucket list. To achieve the automatic qualification, you have to finish the race in under 15h45.

Someone warned me not to start too fast and that the lead group would probably set off at around 5' per km pace. This is precisely the pace at which I've been training and the pace that I want to start at.

I'm not immediately amongst the leaders, but my desire to be in front is present. After 300 metres I find myself with the leading group and five of us are coasting between 4'15 to 4'45 pace. By the first aid station there is only one person still with me, and I leave it alone. But then just before the second aid station I turn left instead of right, I do an extra 3.3k and I crack mentally. Physically it is not going too well either, and even if I could still have finished in the top 10 my chance of the Spartathlon auto qualifier has slipped away, taking my motivation with it, so I walked for a further 20k and then dropped out at around the first marathon.

This 100 miles was only two weeks before my first 1000 mile attempt, which was one of the other reasons why I gave up so early. Dropping out was the right thing to do in terms of my commitment to the 1000 miles of Italy. That race would go on to teach me a lot through my own mistakes; I lost dozens of hours at night, because of injuries and also because of a

certain laziness. A few days afterwards, I decided to make some changes.

And there the story begins for my second 1000 miles.

1000 miles, a 2nd 1000 miles in 6 months, I really want it, and I know that I can do a lot better. My training starts off pretty relaxed, as always, with about 10k per session, and not every day. After injury it's important to get the body used to running again and I like to take a recovery period of 7 to 15 days after a big race, but no more. I start running just a few kilometres at a time and I gradually increase the frequency but not the distance. Then when I'm running every day I switch to a final training phase, the most important, which comprises of 30k every morning, for 7 to 10 days in a row. For the 1000 miles of Italy winter edition I opted for 7 x 30k sessions, 210 km in 6 days and 3 hours, I didn't feel that I wanted to do any more than that, plus I had work commitments. Then I took my usual short recovery period of 3 to 5 days.

Once the training block was finished, I packed my bags and had the negative PCR test that was required to enter Italy.

On the day of departure my wife accompanied me to Bastia by car. From there I took the boat to Livorno, then headed for Pisa by taxi. From Pisa I took the train to Rome where I had to stay for a day and I made contact with my friend Jean-Louis who was there at the same time. We had dinner and took the train to Policoro together at 6am the following morning. We arrived several hours early but the race organiser was waiting for us at the station and he helped us buy some supplies for our chalet.

This was the 5th time in 4½ years that I had come to Policoro to compete; the first time was in June 2017 for my first victory over 6 days, with 732 km.

Then I messed up my 6 day race in 2018, and pretty much messed up my 6 days in 2019 at this same venue. During my first 1000 mile event I had an epiphany: I had finally found the competition format that suited me best. Extremely long distances and time trials.

As there were only two competitors in my first 1000 miles, it was not too difficult to be the only finisher. I had physical issues and there were timing issues too; but despite the computer saying I'd exceeded the 17 day cut off I knew that was wrong and that I had squeezed under it by three hours. Not a great time, but I had to win some



personal battles on the way.

So here we are, installed in our chalets for this 1000 miles of Italy Winter Edition 2021. Some have luxury chalets; my preference is to have a basic one, alone.

The course is the same 1082 metres, but this time we'll run in the opposite direction, or anti-clockwise.

Four of us will stand on the start line; five of us were registered but the Mongolian athlete who was the favourite has had to drop out. He had previously ran 1304 km in 10 days.

So initially 4 people line up: an Italian, the same as last September, a man in the M60 category who's very good at running and walking; a Finnish M55 runner who I've encountered before and has a long track record, plus a Frenchman who I know very well. I have in fact shared more than half my ultras with him; he is one of the best M60s in the world and is stronger than many younger athletes.

Day One

140 km

Cold last night, but not super cold, around 5 degrees. The start line is at the restaurant, not at the usual place.

Before starting, I had made up my mind to find a rhythm of running 10 miles and then stopping for 45 minutes. What ac-



tually happened was that I ran 16k in 1h37, stopped for 35 minutes and then stretched it to 20k blocks. This meant I was running for about 19 hours out of 24, which isn't great but it's important to rest your legs.

After 80 km of racing I had a lovely shower. At one point during the night I found myself running alone so I tried to sleep a little but I didn't succeed, so I was awake since 05:30 yesterday. You have to wait for the right moment to fall asleep, and I think it will be tonight.

I had 2 or 3 mini blisters, no big ones, and no other injuries for the moment. But even when things are going well you have to rest the machine.

Like last year, the Italian had to give up. The Finn is very resilient; a man who ran 333 km over 48 hours and 700 km over 6 days in the third competition we did together. The French guy is aiming for a very good performance, if he can realise it.

Personally, I am not yet ready to try for a great performance over this distance. I vomited three times today, but that's normal for me the first day. I am already fatigued, but I have to hang on.

#### Day 2

111 km (251 km in 48 hours)

Yesterday I had some red spots on my feet and now it's been confirmed: I have oedema. I'll just have to get on with it.

Last night I forgot my gloves and I ran for 30k like that, so it took me hours to get the feeling in my hands back. The very good news is that I was able to do a fair amount of kilometres. And that I was able to sleep for 1 hour, then about another 30 minutes.

The third day promises to be difficult. Sometimes 24 hours feels like several days. But let's stay positive, I'll do my best. With one marathon I'm closer to the end, with two marathons I'm even closer...

The oedemas have increased compared to the same time yesterday so I backed off and started running more slowly even though there are people here who think I'm doing really badly and not handling things well.

#### Day 3

105 km (356 in 72 hours)

This morning I saw 7 adult wild boars,

and a fox. I lost 4 hours because I fell asleep in the chalet for longer than I'd planned. I lost so much time that in order to make it up I was still on my feet at the end of this 24 hours.

#### Day 4

121 km (477 km / 1609)

My injuries are making their presence known. Annoying, because I've cranked it up a gear in terms of speed but it's difficult to perform in this state.

#### Day 5

108 km (585 km / 1609)

I spent 6 hours in the chalet last night; too much time wasted.

This 5th day was quite difficult, probably because I pushed a bit harder yesterday. However, the evening started well and contrary to what my opponents thought, I was not tired but was playing a waiting game rather than a full on attack strategy. I noticed the evening before there's no point in openly attacking my opponents. Basically I was between the two of them, but on purpose. The leader is consistently running at 6'40 to 7'30 kms (10'45 to 12' miles), which gains you no more kilometres by the end of the race because it just tires you out quicker. But we can't say anything to him; his personality is different outside of Facebook and he's always bragging about how great he is. He congratulates himself: "I'm so great; we're so great; we're exceptional; we're rare beings; if a person can attack me for a whole night and go faster than me, then I will concede defeat, but this will never happen; you Denis, you haven't understood anything about ultra running". These were his words over the past few days, despite him claiming not to say very much. He speaks a lot and I only listen; the options are either to get mad or to remain silent. It really annoyed him that on the fourth night I quietly performed as well as he did, despite being injured and in his opinion, no good.

In short, last night despite my injuries, I attacked him, as I was able to do in 2017 against other opponents, but this time with injuries. I launched one attack: a lap of 1082 metres in 5'35 followed by two laps of 6'. I reclaimed a lap that he had over me in a matter of minutes, despite being injured. He shouldn't believe that

the win is in the bag for him because even on the last day I can pull back dozens of laps despite being injured.

This day is the first day that my leg muscles hurt. Tomorrow it will be 6 days, and my objective is to pass the 700 km mark.

#### Day 6

99 km (683.8 / 1609)

Difficult with the oedema; it hurts to keep running for a long time. Last September to enable me to run 100 km per day with injuries, I ran 60k in the morning and 40k in the evening, but for today and the next day it's not easy to keep going in the evenings. I hit 600k quite easily, then had a break at 611 km, which proved to be an error. It should have been a simple stop but I hung about for 1h45, and without sleeping. I set off again but only managed 10k so I was at 623. I then fell asleep easily but I lost 5 hours in the chalet. At 0500 I found myself with less than 10 hours to cover 700k within 6 days. 77k in 10 hours was almost mission impossible given my condition. I didn't succeed in this challenge but I fulfilled another in terms of friendship and solidarity; I finished 6 days with 683k which is the same figure achieved in a 6 day race by my friend Manu, who sadly passed away last year.

#### Day 7

87km in a 13 hour period (771 / 1609) Since the end of yesterday I've had extensor tendonitis along the top of my right foot. It's really inflamed and sore, so I strap it up with a bandage.

Yesterday evening I fairly quickly reached the 700k mark, then had a proper meal break at the restaurant to refuel. When I set off again, almost immediately my legs were crying out for a rest and I was only at 706k, 22k for that day, which was about half of what I should have done. I didn't hear my 3 alarms go off around 1 a.m. so I didn't get up until 4 a.m. It rained during the night, and when I set off again at 5 a.m. I'm not in great shape but I manage to put in a decent morning, covering 65 km in 9 hours.

The participants of the 10 day race finished today, as did the runner in the 1000k.

I picked up my meal at the aid station and took it to eat in my chalet, which is a habit of mine.

### Day 8

95 km (866 km / 1609)

Yesterday evening was a good evening, despite the foot problems. I went out for a run a little before 6 p.m., and I stopped a little after midnight. The timing was very good; I was able to do my 40k.

The oedemas in the feet are actually a bit better, but the tendonitis in my right foot is constant.

Yesterday evening I reached 800 km around 10 p.m., so at precisely 7 days and 7 hours. Pasquale the organizer is really thoughtful and hard-working; I was treated to a superb personalised cake for my birthday.

This morning my goal was to do at least 100k today and I started in good time at around 5:30 am, but considering how much my tendonitis hurts, I am happy with the 95k.

### Day 9

102 km (968/1609)

Yesterday evening I had only 34 km to reach the 900k mark, but I didn't get there due to fatigue. Also, I wasn't sufficiently protected against the cold. I walked slowly, became more and more cold and around 9:30 p.m. I returned to the chalet, having done only 26 km, making it a low mileage day.

I started at 3 am so I had 12 hours to do as much as possible, as much as the tendonitis would allow. Towards daybreak and for about an hour into the day I really wanted to sleep and I almost went back to bed.

I hung on, and found a good steady pace. And I'm happy with my day. The oedemas in my feet are still gradually disappearing.

I ate some really good pasta, and for pudding I had a croissant filled with chocolate which I made even richer by adding honey; I do that every day.

This evening I'll hit the 1,000k mark.

### Day 10

104 km (1072/1609)

After a few hours' sleep last night I made it to 1000 km in about 9 days and 7 hours, then carrying the fatigue of injuries and a hundred kilometres daily, I fell asleep quite quickly.

I went back to bed around 10:30 p.m., having first started at 4 a.m., and this time I slept for a good 3 hours; I wasn't sleepy whilst I was running.

Here we go, I now have extensor tendonitis in both feet. The right was getting a bit better but the left has flared up. I'll just have to deal with it.

With injuries it's a real struggle to start out for a 100 km day, and doing it every day is very difficult. I must have just over 5 days left to go.

Tomorrow, competing in the 6-day race, the French champion Didier Sessegolo will arrive.

It's a bit of a shame that the 3 of us who are doing the 1000 miles are all injured, proof that these are not easy events.

### Day 11

104 km (1176/1609)

Yesterday evening my only objective was to hit 1100k and then to go to bed. It went rather well. The

oedema on the right has mostly gone down but is still bothering me a little; the left foot is still nicely inflated. I've been icing it.

Last night I only did 29 km, so I got back to the chalet around 10 p.m. I must have slept for a good 3h30, and I was able to do 75 km in the morning during 10 hours of elapsed time.

### Day 12

103 km (1,279 / 1,609)

Yesterday the 6-day category started, in which the French champion Didier was entered. I was able to do a few quick laps with him.

I had a break when I reached 1200k and then I finished on 1211 km, so 35 km in the evening. Then I returned to rest, to put my feet up in particular, with the substantial swelling in my left foot in mind. Left foot, towards the ankle. I slept well, 3 to 4 hours. I put 3 alarm alerts on my phone and I heard the third one. I snoozed 3 times, and finally woke up a little after 3 o'clock, and left at 4 o'clock.

I wasn't in great shape today, mainly due to injuries, partly due to fatigue and also due to a strong wind.

I ended this day by doing a few laps with Didier; he did 162k on the first day of his 6 days.

Another day that ends with more than 100k on the clock, and that leaves me with about 3 days left to finish this 1000 miles.

### Day 13

105 km (1384/1609)

Yesterday evening, I was fixed on getting to 1300k and I got to 1302, with only 23k of that in the evening. I wasn't yet sleepy, but I went to eat in the restaurant and one of the timekeepers was celebrating his birthday. I stayed for a bit and... time flies... I ended up being there for an hour or almost. I had started to cool down and was feeling a bit chilly so as I had previously succeeded following a day like this, with a big morning and a conservative evening, I went to bed around 9 p.m. I wanted to get up and go again at 2 a.m., but it ended up being at 3 a.m.

Today I started 42k behind the leader; yesterday it was 20k. In a 12 hour period I was able to do 82k. I put 30k into his lead in this exhausting morning but I was really happy to give it everything.

In my opinion, there are 2 days of competition left for the 3 of us; there will only be a few hours' difference at most and it might come down to minutes or tens of minutes. For the official time limit to finish the competition there are 4 days left.

My feet still hurt, but I have to just deal with it.

### Day 14

104 km (1,488 / 1,609)

121 km remain.

First place currently.

It was a good mileage day, but I felt in worse form than during the other days.

This morning I started 17k behind the leader.

During the early evening I got to 1409k, so 25k in the evening following the 79k I'd put in between 2:40 a.m. to 3 p.m., during which I took a break of one hour.

The last day, the 15th, may be the most difficult, but



also the most rewarding.

Day 15

122 km (1,610 / 1,609)

My second 1000 miles. It should be 1609k, but twice now I've done 1610k due to a small computer error. My most direct opponent did 1609k.

During this challenge, despite injuries to my feet and ankles, I can say that it was a total success. I beat my personal best by almost 48 hours; and it's also the best ever French performance: 14 days 23 hours 20 minutes. My splits for 6 days and 10 days were also really competitive. I claimed the victory in this competition after doing battle with two very talented ultramarathoners; a Finn and a French man. Revenge was taken over the French man and that I didn't understand anything about the ultra distance. Sort of revenge over the Finn who had won the 6 days of Athens in 2018; I had been forced to drop out of this event by the organisers because I had a simple oedema of the foot. I had run 302k during the first 48 hours, including 172 in the first 24 hours, so I know I could have won it. I didn't get the chance to prove it through no fault of my own or of my opponent.

Despite the injuries and the oedema, I started around 4.30 p.m., with 121k to go in order to reach 1609k. Difficult to be sure I'd achieve it in my current state, but the hours tick by and I keep moving. After about 30k I want to go to back to bed and I slow down, so the Finn overtakes me. I try to wake myself up, but I hang on. It must be around 11 p.m. so I decide to sleep for an hour. I set my alarm clock, and I do indeed sleep for an hour, but my rivals are both taking longer sleep breaks. I go back and do a really good stint, then I go to rest but without sleeping, while all this time they are sleeping. I run alone for several hours, and when my closest rival starts off again I have 30k on him. The victory is in the bag but since last night my main objective has become finishing in under 15 days. Even though my Swiss friend Pierre thought that the three of us would be racing for the win during the final night, I knew that the Finn couldn't come back and that the French guy, despite being very consistent, could only walk at 6 kmph due to his sciatica, so it would have been impossible for him to battle it out. I was more afraid of the Finn coming back, but in the end I didn't attack, I was just consistent.

But for me the victory was attained a day earlier than expected, so I mentioned to the French champion Didier Sessegolo that I had a new goal to finish in 14 days 23 h.

The day broke, my lead was accentuated over my adversaries, my plan was unfolding almost without hitches, without a watch and without a written or calculated strategy. I had my goal in mind, and I knew what I had to do. It started to be very difficult with 30k left before the end and although I can see light at the end of the tunnel it is getting more and more difficult.

At this moment a friend from Policoro and another friend of hers run a few laps with me: 10 km, thank you very much to them.

But when you're extremely tired, you want to be alone and quiet.

With 10 laps to go before the end, I knew that I was going to succeed at getting under 15 days, but I have not eaten properly for some time. I stop at the aid station feeling really rinsed, and I eat a bowl of pasta with salt and Parmesan. I lose a few minutes, but I'm in bet-

ter form afterwards.

I accelerate, and I finish with the Italian champion Daniele Alimonti, who won the 10 days, a man who always encourages me a lot. He wants to finish with me, but he has one more lap to go so I pick up my Corsican flag at the chalet. One of the timekeepers cycles with me as I start the last lap at an easy pace and then I push hard until the finish line. I complete this last lap of 1082 meters in 5'03, according to Didier.

1610 km on the clock within 15 days, despite injuries. I'm very satisfied with my performance, knowing that it was solid and that I'll be able to improve my personal best. I can already see everything I can improve on and it could save me tens of hours.

Thank you all for cheering me on whether live or remotely.

The timing control computer was always wrong about the estimation of my finish time; it said for a very long time on the last day that I would finish in more than 15 days, so I'm happy to have beaten the computer once again.

Thank you all and see you soon for a new adventure.









By Antonio Codina

## INTERVIEW WITH PASQUALE BRANDI

The email from Abichal, Ultrarunning World editor, read something like this: 'Antonio do you speak Italian by any chance? The Italian Ultra Marathon Festival (IUMF) has just finished in Policoro; I would like to talk to the race director, Pasquale Brandi, but he doesn't speak much English.'

My Italian is very rusty but I thought it would be nice to learn about the event and meet Pasquale so I agreed to do it straight away. I had never heard of IUMF but with a quick check on the website I learnt that the festival is a series of non-stop races of 6h, 24h, 48h, 6 days, 1,000km (10 days) or 1,000 miles (17 days!). The race is on a loop slightly longer than 1km, on tarmac using the grounds of a campsite by the sea in southern Italy. I cannot even imagine the mental and physical strength needed to tackle 1,000km or miles in a 1km loop. But Pasquale is not the average runner, before becoming race director he competed at a high level in many desert and arctic ultra races.

I was not sure if we could have a fluent conversation in Italian on the phone so I sent a series of questions to Pasquale and he sent me his answers. We then had a Whatsapp video call just to clarify a couple of things. We had a very amenable conversation where we discussed all sorts from the IUMF to desert races he had done, to his interest in doing the Spine race in the UK one day. His English is

actually very good!

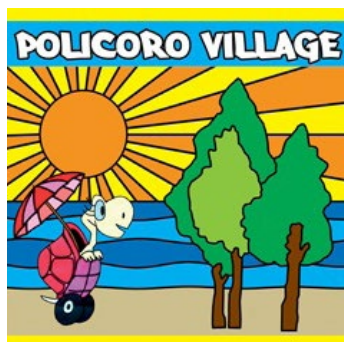
### 1. ***Congratulations on holding the first 6-day of the year. Was it a challenging experience?***

It was a really stressful undertaking above all for the bureaucratic aspects: I invested money hoping that the trend of Italian laws would not change; I invested time in chasing municipal managers to get all the permits on time; I invested the trust that runners had in me, trying not to betray them; I used all my contacts to provide the necessary medical assistance for such a long period. In return, I received the greatest recognition that an Organiser can have: the trust of competitors who, amazingly, have taken planes from many countries to arrive in a part of Italy that is not very easy to reach. Certainly we are lucky not to be touched by Covid-19, but luck, alone, is not enough if you do not get it with the planning, intelligence and collaboration of everybody.

### 2. ***How did the Festival begin? What was the inspiration?***

The Festival started because I wanted to create a competition that did not exist in Italy. A tough race that did not overlap with what already existed: in fact, in the first edition the shortest race was the 24 Hours.

### 3. ***You are a very talented runner in multi-stage desert races, why did you or-***





**ganise a race on tarmac?** I am an unusual runner who, suddenly and without ever having done so before, decided to run in the desert in longer and longer races. Similarly, without having any idea (and without any example to follow), I decided to create an absolute novelty for Italy, a no-frills race as you experience in the desert. I had in mind to organise a 'Tour of Basilicata' (my region in Italy) of about 800km to run in a single stage, all trail. However, I had to confront the enormous organisational difficulty of the project. Lake Pantano - (a WWF natural reserve around which I trained for the hot and cold deserts) was the link between my trail project and the tarmac.

**4. For context, the first editions of the race were in a natural reserve called Pantano di Pignola. What inspired the move from Pantano for the 2018 race?** At Pantano di Pignola, even though only ten minutes from my house, I had little support. The 6km circuit at Lake Pantano for me is beautiful, especially during the evening with thousands of low spotlights so as not to disturb the local fauna. But the opinion of the runners was that it was too hard psychologically to deal with, probably because they were more used to track races where the loops are much shorter. In addition to all the other organisational aspects, the length of the loop required me to have to keep two 24h check points for six days, which is absolutely prohibitive. Also there was a limited hotel capacity in the area. I therefore decided to look on the coast of the Ionian Sea that I know well (I have a holiday home 10km from Policoro) to try to marry tourism with running and I therefore arrived at the Policoro Village which supports me avidly allowing me to organise the race almost by myself.

**5. Was the 2012 race the first 6-day in Italy?** It was the first 6-day in Italy. I still remember with affection at least a doubtful member of the IUTA (Italian Ultramarathon and Trail Association) who came to inspect the course and to talk to me before the race took place; subsequently he wrote an article praising me and the 'extreme cut' of the event, an article that caused him many problems with the marathon purists.

**6. What was the reaction from the ultrarunning community?** The reaction was of great interest, but mainly on paper. There is a small number of ultramarathoners who are willing to test themselves in their own country, because, if it goes wrong, it is more difficult to keep 'the secret'. Also we Italians love racing abroad. For this reason, to lose less money, I was forced to open shorter races, creating a real Ultramarathon Festival.

**7. How did you build your organisation team?** Initially I asked my local running club if I could use the club (with them keeping the profit) in order to organise regularly the 6-day Italian Championship with affiliation to the Italian Athletics Federation (FIDAL) and recognition by the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI). Having received a negative response, I funded my own running club, the 'Transeo', from the Latin 'go beyond' with the sole purpose of having a legal structure for organising the competition. For this reason, I do not charge more than what the FIDAL asks me, in exchange for a few hours of their time



during the race. At the current moment, I organise the events on my own, with a limited collaboration of some friends and club members and with the help of the tourist village that hosts me (which means that they take most of the enrollment money). The boys of electronic timekeeping, TEMPOGARA, the only professionals who, almost 10 years ago, were willing to get involved in a race with a crazy duration, have now become like brothers and, therefore, I can count them among the members of my team, as well as my wife who, speaking and teaching French, takes care of relations with the large French sports community.

I am amazed by the dedication of Pasquale organising a 17-day event mostly on his own so during the phone we chat quite a lot about the logistics of the event. It turns out that one of the biggest challenges of every edition is to find a doctor that is available to work during the length of the event. Pasquale also tells me that due to his work as a pharmacist he is used to working at nights so he is well used to operating with little sleep and he hardly sleeps during the festival.

**8. Is ultrarunning popular in Italy or growing in popularity?**

Ultrarunning is becoming more and more popular in Italy around the trail sector where the contact with nature is strong and significant. Naturally, when a large number of people approach a sport without adequate preparation, it is easy for accidents to happen and, from this point of view, the tarmac is safer and, in the long distances that I propose, it is possible to combine the race with the tourist vacation for all the family. I believe that the ultramarathon will grow more and more since the relationship with the chronometer is less stressful and secondary than the traditional disciplines of athletics.

**9. What is for you the difference between stage races and the non-stop events?**

The difference is very simple: in stage races you submit to the route but in non-stop races you manage the course and, if you do it right (for you), you can make a huge difference. In this regard, I like to think that I was one of the pioneers, in the non-stop competitions in the desert, of the low-sleep technique and to be always on the move, which is simple to say, but not very easy to implement, while maintaining the necessary mental ability to not do silly things.

**10. In 2020 you introduced a 10 day/1,000km/m for the first time. Was this logistically a difficult undertaking? What was the response like from the community?** And we also introduced the 17 day/1000 mile event! Logistically not much has changed since I rely on a professional campsite. What changed was the number of days 'away' from family and work; for this reason I had to review my vacation days: when Covid-19 ends it will be more complicated to reconcile vacation time with the family with that of two editions (Summer and Winter) of 6 Days UMF & 1,000 Miles !! As expected, the response of the community was enthusiastic, above all from foreigners (I think I am the only race with a greater number of foreign athletes than

Italians) despite four Italian Champion Titles that are attributed by me.

**11. Do you have a 'family' of regulars, is there a family feeling at the event?** After a rapid 'natural selection' in the first editions, now the climate of friendship and family that has been strongly created, makes 'my race' very pleasant to attend for the regular runners; what, however, is very nice, is that thanks to word of mouth (personal and media) every year there are always new people (especially among foreigners), and the continued improvements to the organisation always succeed in making the event attractive for both the old 'clients' and the new ones. For example, my race is the only one in the WORLD during which, without breaking the rules (you cannot abandon the race course), you can have a dip in the pool :)

**12. Do you think the longer races will continue?** Are ultrarunners in Italy looking to break new ground? It is amazing to record a strong demand (always with respect to small numbers ...) for ever longer races. The construction of a 10,000km is being considered!! I repeat, always with the crucial participation of international runners. Basically my motto of dream big and dare to fail is not common to all Italian runners.

**13. Do you think the Backyard Ultras bring something new to the sport?** I think it's a nice novelty. Personally, however, I prefer non-stop races where you run managing yourself and not the opponents.

I suggested to Pasquale that his route in Pantano would make a very good backyard ultra but I am not sure if he is convinced.

**14. The next IUMF edition is happening in September and many people have registered already. What are you expecting from this summer edition?** Yes, the next edition will be from the 15 September to 2 October. I expect to show people the magic that is conceived only at 6 Days UMF!!

The enthusiasm of Pasquale is just fantastic and I hope he will have a superb festival in September. I offered my help whenever he wants to race in the UK so I hope we will meet in person one day.

**Photos** <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.100456533319128&type=3>

By Malcolm Beresford

Access Your Inner Strengths

### THE POWER WITHIN

A surprisingly warm, sunny March afternoon, I sat and enjoyed a few moments of rest on the soft grass bank of the canal. Nature has found a little haven here, where geese and swans are the big traffic, and any number of ducks, coots and others are the smaller bodies, all grateful for this quiet stretch of water.

I enjoyed those precious few minutes of escape from my new world. A place of dark, core-chilling frozen mornings, that rudely awoke me from my brief sleep. The moon and stars lit my way along deserted lanes, where pigeons and pheasants

were catapulted into an instinctive flight of panic by the sound of my footsteps. An occasional feather would waft gently down, illuminated by my headlamp, and then silence once more, and it was just me, the cold, and the night.

I thought about the day ahead, and wondered where my wanderings would take me. I seldom planned a route, and would usually be drawn to the prettier parts of this largely agricultural landscape. Windy days saw me walking along hedge-sheltered lanes, wet days targeted stoney tracks, and clear sunny days meant the wide-open spaces and big horizons for which Lincolnshire is known.

I enjoyed my freedom, my time and my space. A rare experience, increasingly difficult to find on our overcrowded, busy little island.



The Fossdyke, approaching Lincoln

But I was not there as a nature lover, I was racing.

The GB Ultras Race Across The Alps 1592-mile virtual race was never going to be a quick dash, especially as injury meant I could only walk. As the miles went by I immersed myself more and more into my surroundings, and into my reasons for joining this great trek.

Many would use the event to help their training. But I was there for victory, though with a track record of success as meagre and humble as mine, few would have given me much of a thought.

When I entered the race, I was sure that I would win, but apart from a good helping of determination, I had little that would suggest victory, just that feeling, deep inside. An open race, competitors from several countries, and almost 1600 miles. Not your average ultra, and twice as far as I had ever run in any event.

Without blind arrogance, naive optimism, or total lack of understanding, where did the confidence come from?



It is widely accepted that performance is heavily influenced by our mind, in which we develop determination and confidence. This helps our bodies to run significant distances and speeds. We acknowledge the role of the mind when after a mediocre run we say, "My mind was not in the right place today."

But is all this merely our mood - the state and place of our mind? Or is there something else at play, something that influences the mind, or perhaps even governs it? When we talk about our "deep down" feelings, are we referring to something beyond our mind?

Some may label it the soul. But we need a more neutral and less spiritual term to describe this phenomenon. It seems to operate independently of our thoughts, as though it were a mind within our mind, or a parallel mind. We are not aware of its workings, only the feelings of conviction it produces, and the tangible boost it gives to our physical performance. It is not affected by chemicals or medication, environment or situation. This I know to be true from my own experience. During a three-month stay in hospital, the drugs, therapy and counselling I received affected my mind, but not this more powerful, invisible and unseen part of me. Mind-changing drugs did just that, but that is all. I was still me, beneath my changed thoughts, words and actions. An old car may look shiny and new after a respray, but it is still an old car.

We need a better name than "it". We could think about drive theory, which looks at what motivates us to find our basic needs as humans, or we could simply describe it as Power Within (PW), leaving the mystery relatively intact. I do not know what it is, or where it sits; it is there and we can sometimes draw on it to boost our performance. This definition could also cross over to the creative, the surge of brilliance that brings words or colours together

to form masterpieces.

We know that PW enables us to use our strengths and talents to the full, and beyond. Physically, we vary very little from one day to another, but athletic performance can change dramatically. Our motivation, a product of the mind, may remain high, but can often be thwarted by our physical performance on the day.

I would be delighted to say I can access PW at will, and this enables me to find the extra one or two miles per hour of which I would love to be capable. But alas, I have no such Magic Fairy, only the occasional visit from her. I have never considered the requirements for her visits, I just make her welcome when she is with me.

Some observations may help our understanding of PW. So I thought about the Alps Virtual Race, and other times when I have been helped by PW, in any sport, over the last fifty years. What were the circumstances, and how was my state of mind?

- I have trained and prepared adequately, but no more than that. No detailed race-specific plan, no intense build up.
- No pre-race nerves or anxiety. I was relaxed, simply there to do a job.
- A feeling of detachment from the event and the competitors, and little or no interest in the prize list.
- I have sometimes felt less than 100% fit or confident early in the event.
- Occasionally, I have been feeling happy after a recent success.
- A sense of "fit"... I am where I should be at this moment, doing what I should be doing.
- A tight, clear focus on myself, my mind and body.

These observations are of little use unless we can recognise and reproduce them. So was my

state of mind in the Alps virtual race a good match?

Let's check:

There was no intense build up to the race; I had written plans, but more as an academic exercise than as a rule book. I did not refer to the plans during the race. I would do as I would do, and finish as I would finish.

This race was long, and required substantial stamina and determination. I chose to wander the lanes and tracks, rather than be shackled to a daily route map. I was reasonably fit, as a leftover from the GB Ultras Himalayan virtual race a few weeks earlier. I spent some of my time casually admiring Nature as I walked. I'd spot an occasional barn owl, watch the cormorants catching dinner, courtesy of the local angling club. Many days were framed by spectacular sunrises and sunsets. I would watch the lonely tractor, pecking away at the large fields.

By taking these scenes in, I found relaxation and detachment from the race. I was immersed in the wonders of Nature, and the race was almost by the way. Good feelings already, a long, relaxing walk through quiet countryside.

Did I feel 100% fit in the first part of the race? Two days idle through injury answer that question. I was plagued by painful bones from the start. After the first few days I had to give them a rest, or face a disappointing DNF. My toe bones felt as though they were cracked, bones in my legs were complaining, and my back and neck were audibly cracking when I turned or bent down. Not a promising start really. I was not feeling great.

A little bundle of joy arrived, late in the night before the race start. Our first grandson, Hadley. My happiness per pound of weight? Immeasurable. Timing of the little chap's arrival? Perfect.

I have spent most of my life in Lincolnshire, and although I'm not a fully fledged "Yellow Belly", I do enjoy most aspects of living here. I have spent years exploring and training on tracks, lanes and quiet roads in the Wolds, and my local parts of the county. So I enjoy a deep sense of belonging, and I feel at home in the quiet, rarely disturbed places, the waterside paths and the big, wide-open vistas.

The list seems to suggest an introverted state of mind, one that is concentrated on self, and individual performance, but without being over-motivated. (The performance/motivation curve plunges downwards when motivation reaches too high a level.) Sufficient preparation prompts confidence, which is put to best use by a mind that is relaxed and confident, is focused and free of clutter.

Looking at these comments, we have a good match, the criteria were met, and I certainly benefited from PW throughout the event. Even when I was many miles behind the leaders, I was in no doubt about what the eventual result would be, it was almost inevitable.

There were periods when I repeatedly managed around 40 miles a day; my average mileage for the 1592 was 32 miles a day, including the two days off. The 40-mile days did tire me for the next day, but you expect a race to be tiring.

In your next race, can you access your Power Within?  
Perhaps you should have a go, just to find out.

A smile at the end of the GB Ultras Race Across The Alps 1592-mile virtual race





# CHORLEY 6 HOUR ROAD RACE



## WHEN

**October 2nd, 2021**  
**10AM - 4PM**

## WHERE

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**CHORLEY**

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# LIMITLESS

AN ULTRARUNNER'S STORY OF  
PAIN, PERSEVERANCE AND THE  
PURSUIT OF SUCCESS

***"TRULY  
INSPIRING"***

ALY DIXON, OLYMPIAN AND  
50 KM WORLD CHAMPION

***"REFRESHINGLY  
HONEST AND  
POWERFUL"***

ANNA McNUFF, AUTHOR  
AND ADVENTURER



MIMI ANDERSON



## Limitless:

*An Ultrarunner's Story of Pain, Perseverance and the Pursuit of Success*  
by Mimi Anderson

Mimi Anderson is a legend of ultrarunning. Indeed, it is an endurance challenge just to read the list of accolades and records she's achieved over 20 years of running. Highlights include records for LEJOG, a double Comrades, double Badwater, double Sparathalon, there's a long list of her superhuman achievements.

Now Mimi is taking on her biggest challenge yet. Limitless charts Mimi's attempt to become the fastest ever female to cross the USA on foot. The aim was to beat a record that had stood for nearly 30 years, the coast to coast run by Mavis Mutchinson who clocked 69 days and 2 hours. At a distance of 2,850 miles, that meant an average of 57 miles a day for 69 days. Mimi is boldly determined to do the same in just 50 days.

Planning a journey of this magnitude took a whole lot of work and it was 6 years from brewing the idea to executing it. Plotting the journey required a road-tripping recce, covering 350 miles a day, through 12 states. Meanwhile, additional behind the scenes prep included recruiting a crew willing to spend 2 months on the road and securing sponsors to fund the challenge. As the clock starts ticking towards the start date, Mimi experiences a challenging pre-challenge. Eventually the team flew out to Los Angeles to start the run in September 2017.

Mimi's honesty and openness about her history of eating disorders and the battles she still fights is hugely important in raising awareness and tackling the prevalence of issues like RED-S in our sport. While having crew members that understand her history and were able to gently yet firmly ensure Mimi's nutrition was on track, also highlights the importance of the crew in any record attempt.

The run begins well and Mimi quickly racks up the miles. But it soon becomes apparent that all is not well and the reader is given a detailed account of Mimi's physical and mental experiences during this run.

Perhaps less a critique of the book and more a reflection on my own ambitions as a runner, I didn't feel as engaged in the adventure because it really didn't appeal. The notion of plodding along tarmac roads day after day, dodging cars and trucks and rarely interacting with the wider environment or the people just isn't my style of adventure. Plus, chasing records adds layers of stress on what might otherwise be a really special pursuit. Mimi is a record chaser. That's her thing and she's had enormous success in gaining records. But it sometimes feels to me like she's more interested in the record than in the experience.

The repercussions arising during this challenging run were brutal beyond words but Mimi puts a brave face on it. In trademark style, she finds new ways to challenge herself. A door closed but a window opened and admirably, Mimi continues to make the most of every new opportunity.

It seemed however, that the title is a misnomer. During Mimi's epic attempt to run across the USA she does, for the first time, hit a limitation. And that is worth talking about. In any endurance sport there is an element of pushing beyond the bounds of what is physically comfortable, of entering the pain cave. But at what point should our strong minds listen to the discomfort and recognise that the body can't withstand endless miles upon miles? Yes, Mimi has found new adventures (new limits to exceed?) through cycling and triathlons, but she did reach her physical running limit, her bodily limit. Isn't it important that the ultrarunning community acknowledges such a thing exists?



# HALL OF FAME



By Helen Hayes

## PAM REED

The slight, elfish figure emerges from the desert haze, relentlessly progressing closer to the finish line. This is the remarkable Pamela J. Reed. In 2002 she was the first woman to become the overall winner of the punishingly hot Badwater 135. She repeated the feat in 2003.

At first glance, Pam looks more like a dancer with her long slender legs rather than an accomplished ultrarunner with 30 years of experience. She also has a bucket full of energy.

"I have a lot of energy, so I always want to be doing things."

Those "things" include running, skiing, swimming, yoga and cycling in and around her home in Jackson, Wyoming. At school, Pam was a gymnast and cheerleader, the running bug began when her tennis coach recommended running as part of the training. At college she was doing 5k and 10k runs, even a half marathon but she didn't enjoy them. It was only after doing a marathon in 34.5 hours that it clicked for Pam.

"I just fell in love with the marathon from the very beginning, it was great."

For the last 28 years, Pam has been the race director of the Tucson Marathon.

Pam runs short distances of about 6 to 10 miles every day, often accompanied by her dogs. She is the current American female record holder in

six-day marathons after completing 490 miles in the twelfth-annual Self-Transcendence 6 and 10 day race in New York.

Her record for the USATF 24-hour track run was only recently broken by Camille Herron. In 2005 Pam ran 300 miles in just under 80 hours without sleep.

These remarkable records are more than enough for an inclusion in the UW Hall of Fame. Pam has said she will not stop running and will continue until her legs no longer move.

Pam continues to run and turning 60 this year, she reached her goal by becoming the 17th person in the world to finish one hundred 100-mile races. This means races of at least 100 miles, some were double and triple this distance. On February 6th 2021 Pam crossed the finish line at the Grandmaster Ultras in Littlefield, Arizona as the first woman and third overall in 25:02:54.

"...100 miles are hard to do no matter what way you do them."

Pam hasn't finished yet and there is more to come. UW is honoured to include this positive and delightfully inspiring ultra runner into our Hall of Fame.



**Antonio Codina** I am a runner based in the North East of England. My sporting background is in mountaineering and rock climbing, and I started running ultras four years ago. This probably explains my interest in mountain and winter races such as TDS, Lakeland or the Spine races. My dream race is Tor de Géants



**Char Binns** is a runner and writer with a funny accent. Brung up in West Yorkshire, she spent 9 years in That London before escaping back up North. She's lived in Liverpool for 4 years and even has a Mersey ferry tattoo. But living somewhere flat and urban restricts her ultra training and she often finds herself running laps of the same incline (sometimes up to 20 times a morning!). Char is Top Dog at Bookhounds, the club for people who love running and reading. Visit [bookhounds.club](https://bookhounds.club).



**Chloe Brooks** I'm a Global Health PhD student researching how the use of evidence can be strengthened for mental health policymaking in Assam. I have been running for two years, quickly focusing on ultras. I realised that I much prefer the longer stuff, getting to enjoy spending often a whole day (or even more) outdoors. Originally from the south, I'm now based in Leeds and making the most of the opportunity to explore Yorkshire by running. Instagram: @chloebrooks



**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.



**Denis Orsini**, is a French multiday runner who has taken part in 6 day races in France, Hungary, USA and Athens as well as 1000 mile races in Athens and a run around Corsica. He will be taking part in the 6 days in the Dome in the USA in June 2021.



**Gareth Chadwick** is a professional journalist and, in the breaks between injuries, an unprofessional runner. He ran his first ultra, the 35-mile Gritstone Grind in Cheshire, UK, in September 2020.





**Debs and Dawn** are on an adventure. In 2021 they hope to complete the 13 Peaks Challenge in Cape Town...and finish it in under 24 hours.

Debs is from Johannesburg and Dawn is in Durban – they met via Zoom through their coach and clicked straightaway.

Follow their progress on their [Facebook page](#).



**Doug Zinis** Hiya, I'm a 40 year old ultrarunner based in Calderdale, West Yorkshire. I'm relatively new to the Ultra running scene and am looking forward to more adventures.

Achievements. 2018 winning pair in the Calderdale way Ultra with Iain Illstone. Bob Graham and Paddy Buckley rounds in 2019. Spine Challenger 1st place 2020.



**Deborah Runnersgate** With her studies in sports science with a focus on health sports at the Justus Liebig University in Giessen, Deborah has turned her passion into her profession. Although she herself is more of a sprinter than an endurance runner, a certain basic endurance is mandatory for Deborah. When it comes to longer distances, she prefers to lace up her hiking boots rather than her running shoes.



**Gina Evans** Since the first lockdown in March 2020, Gina has gone from running half marathons to completing her first ultra after discovering a love for long-distance challenges. Her next ultra isn't on the ground, but in the water, paddling the Great Glen Ultra SUP in Scotland. However, she's confident there will be another ultra running adventure next year! Gina also loves helping runners build their confidence and mileage as a Jog Leader with women's running group, We Run Edinburgh. Instagram - @tinyvictoryclub



**Jenny Katsoni** is a GP as well as an endurance runner. She started running 5 years ago and since then, the running obsession has taken over as she has ran various marathons such as Brighton, Paris, Athens and recently completed her first 50 mile ultra. She is a member of vegan runners and has set up her own local running group known as [The 6am runners \(Eastbourne seafront\)](#) that can be found on Facebook.



**Malcolm Beresford** My first race was in 2017, when I was 61. I have run several hundreds, and had one failed attempt at the Race Across Scotland. Winning the GB Ultras Virtual Alps Race, (1593 miles) is my best result to date.



**Matthew Hearne** grew up on the Essex Suffolk border, adjacent to the River Stour and being a passionate ultra-runner and endurance athlete, thought he'd share the beauty of the Stour Valley with fellow runners. Matthew has completed a number of long distance endurance events, including the UTMB, TDS, CCC, Marathon des Sables, MIUT, Lavaredo Ultra Trail, Cappadocia Ultra Trail, Transgrancanaria, 2x Comrades, 11x Ironman Triathlons and many other long distance races.

[www.svp100.co.uk](http://www.svp100.co.uk)



**Michelle Lindstrom** is a Canadian freelance writer, editor, and certified group fitness trainer. She started You Be You (UBU) programs to boost youth's confidence and interest in physical activity, while combating stats of young girls dropping out of sports. Catch Michelle writing articles about people crushing goals, big and small.

<https://u-b-u.ca/>



**Rosie Nanette Gagnon** from Berryville Virginia. I'm a mother of 8, sheep farmer, artist, gardener and ultra runner. I ran my first 100 in 2018 after my son Pvt. James Dexter Morris, died from suicide. After a time I began running for veteran suicide awareness, in pursuit of achieving 100 100's



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