



ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY
& ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS

// Issue 40

ULTRARUNNING WORLD

M A G A Z I N E



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We are delighted to have Sarah Thi as our guest editor in this issue. Sarah, a member of Hinckley RC, has run a number of ultras including the Thames Path Challenge and the Warwickshire Bear Ultra and is looking forward to the Scafell Sky Race in June. Sarah is a sponsored Altra Run Crew Member.

What an exciting start to 2023 already. How can we not mention the Montane Winter Spine Race the UK? If 268 miles along the Pennine Way and sleep deprivation isn't brutal enough, throw in freezing weather and deep snow to wade through. Congratulations

to all starters. Super-experienced Damian Hall won the race. Whilst he finished alongside young Jack Scott, Jack took second place after a time penalty of 48 minutes for a navigational error but also a 7-minute credit for helping a fellow runner. Jack already has some FKs and surely has more great performances to come. Both Damian and Jack beat the men's record; the overall record is still held by the incredible Jasmin Paris. The first female finisher this year was Claire Bannwarth from France.

In this issue we have an open and very moving report of the multi-day coastal ultra around the Isle of Anglesey, Ring O' Fire, from David Jackson; a story of not being an ultrarunner.

Laura Watts, writes about her victory at the Leeds & Liverpool Canal 130-mile Race. It amazes me how runners can remember such detail about races to be able to write such great reports when it must be so mentally and physically tiring during the race.

Regular contributor, Dawn Nunes, completed the inaugural 100-mile Ultra-trail Cape Town (UTCT) race. It is a technical race through beautiful mountain trails. Not only did Dawn train for this 100-miler, she also moved jobs, and countries!

If anyone is thinking about the Autumn 100 race (a Western States qualifying race by the way, as is the aforementioned UTCT), which starts from Goring, a village in England, San Buckley writes about her experience and lessons learnt. San achieved the special finisher's buckle for completing the 100 miles in under 24 hours.

How far would you run in 24 hours? For Enar Warfvinge it was an impressive 201.781 km at Personliga Rekordens Tävlning in Sweden. The first 80 km in sandals! It was interesting to see his comparison with what was packed for the same race three years ago. 2019 kit included "two mp3-players; phone; three pairs of headphones (crappy, Bluetooth in-ear; noise cancelling over-ear)!" More pairs of shoes back then too. I am interested in a 24-hour track race as well and whilst I will be coincidentally wearing the same brand of shoes, I am sure I will not cover near the same distance.

For something a little different, Kate Maltby has advice on how yoga may help identify addictive behaviour in running: "Yoga is more than a physical practice. Using awareness of the breath can bring you into the present and create space around the thoughts and emotions that often cloud our judgements." I'll be sure to check out her recommended books for my general interest because we already know running is not just about the physical.

Even for experienced ultrarunners there often seems to be a theme of learning new things from races. Hopefully you will pick up some new tips to try from these personal stories and are perhaps inspired to write about your experiences including your tips too.

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- **Front cover**

Adventurer, Storyteller, Mountain Lover Jenny Tough has run six of the world's mountain ranges alone and features in a new film by Summit Media. (See page 55). Photo credit: Jenny Tough by Rachel Keenan. <https://rkeenanphoto.com/>

- **Back cover**

Roberto Semprini was the last finisher at this year's Montane Spine Race completing the 268 mile journey in 167:16:57. Photo credit: Adam Jacobs [Wild Adventure Photography](#)

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Ultrarunning World

January - February 2023

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Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the email address below. Last dates for article submissions: March 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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News



After first winning the IAU Athlete of the Year award in 2017, Patrycja Bereznowska has been voted the top women's ultrarunner for 2022. Patrycja won the IAU 24H European Championships in Verona for the second year running and set a new 48 Hour IAU World Record earlier in the year at the ABM Jędraszek UltraPark Weekend Pabianice, Poland in May with 403.32 km - the first woman to break 400 km in a 48 Hour race.

Aleksandr Sorokin (LTU) started off the year in Tel Aviv, Israel setting a new 100 mile World Record in 10:51:39 and in the same race set a new 12 Hour IAU World Record of 177,410 km. In September Aleksandr set a new 24 Hour IAU World

Record in Verona during the IAU 24 Hour European Championships with 319.614 km. He set a new 100 km World Record of 6:05:41 at the Centurion Track 100 which took place at the Bedford International Athletics Stadium and in the same race also set a new 6 Hour IAU World Record with 98.496 km.

The IAU have announced that the [50 km World Championships](#), have been awarded to Hyderabad, South India and will take place on November 5th 2023.



The World Mountain and Trail Running Championships 2023 will take place in Innsbruck-Stubai from June 6 to 10, with an expected total of 1,400 athletes from 60 nations.

Further information on the WMTRC Innsbruck-Stubai 2023: <https://innsbruck-stubai2023.com/volunteers/>

Breaking NEWS

Joasia Zakrzewski (GBR) set a new 48 hour record in Taipei of 255.668 miles/ 411.458km breaking the record set by Patrycja Bereznowska (POL) of 403.320 km. The race started on February 10th 2023.

February 18th **Camille Herron** set new track 12 Hour and 100 mile World and American records at the Raven 24 Hour. Camille's 12 hour was 93.473 mi/150.43km and her 100 mile time was 12:52:50. [Results](#).

In my Feed: [Speedo Mick](#) is walking a 3 peak JOGLE in his swimming trunks. [Paul Edwards](#) is on Day 34 - Tuesday, February 21st 2023 of his Trans-con and has made it to Deming, New Mexico. [Candice Burt](#) has been running a 50k a day for 109 days straight and doesn't look like ending her streak just yet.



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RESPECT & FAIR-PLAY

18.12.2022
Running Festival Wychwood
20/10/6 Day 48 hour RSA

The second annual Running Festival in Wychwood, Germiston features the only 20 day race in the world. RD Eric Wright has set up his own timing enterprise and has been hosting multiday events for almost a decade. This year saw 74 year old Fred Davis III (USA) cover 1160 km to take the win, a very impressive performance and must have cleaned up some age group records. First woman was Mireille Cormier (FRA). Pumla Mojji (RSA) won the 6 day with 306km and Peter King was first man second overall with 202km. Marsh Muller won the 49 hour with 267.5km. [Download the results.](#)

28.12.2022
Across The Years 6
Day/72/48 hour USA

The 38th Across The Years race this year featured a 6 Day race which started on December 28th. Now taking place at Camelback Ranch, in Phoenix, AZ, the race route is a USATF certified one mile loop of 85% dirt paths and 15% asphalt/concrete. The race was won for the second time by Budjargal Byambaa (MGL) with 745.300 km. Second man was Marc Sanderson (USA) 613.776 km and third place was Mikey Sklar (USA) 600.286 km. The women's race was won, also for the second time, by last issue's Guest Editor, Annabel Hepworth (AUS) with 649.186 km. Second was Yolanda Holder (USA) with 521.034 km and third was Hannah Carta (USA) with 505.858 km.

The 72 hour race was won by Carol Northrup (USA) with 343.984 km. Second woman and third overall was Mikaela Osler (USA) with 333.866 km. Third was Lisamarie Fosdal-Griffin (USA). The men's race was won by Troy Alan (USA), second overall with 342.297km. Second was Rene Fosdal-Griffin (DEN) with 325.435 km and third was Caden Ragsdale (USA) with 323.750 km. The 48 hour saw the women outrun the men with Lisa Devona (USA) 298.456 km taking first place. Second was Rachel Entrekin (USA) with 269.792 km and Brenda Dyer (CAN) was third with 246.184 km. However perhaps the most amazing performance of the whole event was 90 year old Donald Jans (USA) who ran 205.716 km. Results are on [Ultrarunning.com](#)

07.01.2023
Country to Capital
43mi GBR

Hosted by Go Beyond Challenge Ltd, Country to Capital was first held in 2009 and is a 43 mile race from Wendover to the Little Venice canal basin in London. This year's winner was Sage Pearce-Higgins (GBR) in 5:11:45 and first woman was Rachel Piper (GBR) 10th overall in 6:17:56. 199 finishers. [Full results.](#)

08.01.2023
S1 Night trail
164/82km ITA

The website says "S1 Soča Ultra is the first 100 miles of Alpe Adria: the first in North East Italy and Slovenia. This year an even more spectacular route will be

inaugurated, entirely marked, without snow, very fast, panoramic and perfect for the winter season". The mens race was won by Petter Restorp (SWE) in 19:57:55. First woman was Karbalaii Mahya (IRN), seventh overall finishing in 25:03:47. 102 starters, 56 finishers. Starting at midnight this trail race follows an 81km route in the Province of Trieste from Sgonicoto to Bora Village, Sistiana. The mens race was won by Paolo Alessandrini (ITA) in 9:21:57 and the women's race was won by Maja Urban (ITA) in 9:54:44. 114 finishers. [Full results.](#)

14.01.2023
Long Haul 100 Mile
Ultra-Marathons
100mi USA

Taking place for the last time at its current venue in Florida, the Long Haul 100 mile trail race is a Western States qualifier. The course is 10 x 10-mile loops with a 30-hour cut-off. Mens winner was Kalo Axsom (USA) in 15:18:36. Women's winner was Amanda Richmond (USA) 19:47:14. 110 finishers. Results on [UltraSignup.](#)

15.01.2023
Manila to Sorsogon 380/100
Mile
Endurance Run
380mi PHI

The 1st Manila to Sorsogon 380-Mile Endurance Run saw three men finish the race. Runners have 6 days and 8 hours to run the 380 mile route from Luneta Park, Manila. The race had a 2am start while the hundred miler

began at San Fernando, Camarines Sur on January 19th with a 12am start.

15.01.2023
Two Bays 56 km Trail Run
56km AUS

Two Bays 56 km Trail Run is a 28k out and back loop starting and finishing at Cape Schanck. First proposed by Stefanie Rennick in 1984 as part of the Victorian 150th anniversary celebrations, the 28km Trail traverses a diverse range of landscapes for which the Mornington Peninsula is famous. A third win for Dion Finocchiaro (AUS) in 4:10:10. Sarah-Jayne Miller (AUS) won the women's race finishing in 4:59:42. 246 finishers. [Full results.](#)

15.01.2023
11th Spine Race
268mi GBR

One of the highlights of the Winter ultra scene in the UK is the Montane Spine race. With four events from the 46 mile Sprint up to the full 268 mile Pennine traverse during the coldest period of the year.

Spine Race - Women Claire Bannwarth (FRA) 97:39:58 Men Damian Hall (GBR) 84:36:24

Spine Challenger North Women - Irene Kinnegim (NED) 72:16:52 Men G-B Hutchinson (IRE) 61:13:59

Spine Challenger South - Women Sarah Hodgson (GBR) 33:26:44 Men Rory Harris (GBR) 26:25:30

Spine Challenger MRT - Women Steph Dwyer (IRE) 36:59:44 Men 34:42:59

Mike Bottomley (GBR) 34:42:59

Spine Sprint - Women Louise

Venables (GBR) 11:39:21
Men Jon Shield (GBR) 8:10:22
All results can be found on the event website thespinnerace.com

20.01.2023
Trans Scania Winter
246km SWE

Trans Scania Winter is a completely unsupported, (not even a dropbag) 246 km trail run (with some road parts) across Skåne, or Scania, the southmost province of Sweden. The cut-off time is 55 hours and 59 minutes. The men's race was won by Pål Andersson (SWE) in 31:45:44 and women's winner, second overall was Sandra Lundqvist (SWE) in 37:48:25.10 finishers. [Race website.](#) Results on [the DUV.](#)

21.01.2023
Hong Kong Four Trails Ultra
Challenge
298km HKG

This is an Invitation-only event that follows the 100km Maclehose Trail, 78km Wilson Trail, 50km Hong Kong Trail and the 70km Lantau Trail. Finishers have 60 hours and Survivors have 72 hours to complete the distance. Women's winner was Hong-Kiu (Kimmy) Leung (HKG) in 68:17:00 and men's winner was Tomokazu Ihara (JPN) in 54:02:00. 15 completed the distance. [Results on the DUV.](#) More event details on the [Race Instagram.](#)

22.01.2023
Trans Volcano 66 km Trail
66km FRA

Réunion Island, a French department in the Indian Ocean, is known for its volcanic, rainforested interior, coral reefs and beaches. Its most iconic landmark is Piton de la Fournaise, a climbable active volcano standing 2,632m (8,635 ft.). Trans Volcano 2023 saw women's winner Marie Sallet (FRA) finish in 9:24:36 and men's winner Jeannick-Olivier Boyer (FRA) finished in 7:32:02. 334 finishers. Full results on www.sportpro.re

27.01.2023
9th The Arc of Attrition 100
Mile
100mi GBR

Billed as the UK's toughest winter 100 mile ultra footrace the Arc of Attrition is a point-to-point race from Coverack to Porthtowan which completes an Arc around the entire south west foot of Cornwall. The race has a strict 36hour cut-off with additional checkpoint and safety cut-offs on route. The event also features a 50 mile race from The Minack Theatre, Porthcurno to Porthtowan. Conditions were more ambient than in recent years and first woman home was Emma Stuart in 21:22:16. First man was Gavin Dale (GBR) in 19:56:58. The 50 miler saw Lucy Williams cross the line as first woman in 10:20:22 and Mark Darbyshire (GBR) finished in 7:39:31. Race website is at mudcrew.co.uk. [100 mile results](#) and [50 mile results](#).

BRITISH TRAIL RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2023

The British Trail Running Championships - **Short Distance** event for 2023 will be the Forest of Dean Half Marathon. The race will be held on Saturday 2nd April 2023. Full details of the event can be found on the FodHM website here.

(Link: https://www.forestofdean-halfmarathon.co.uk/spring_trails)

The - **Ultra Distance** event for 2023 will be the Ridgeway 86. The race will be held on Saturday 3rd September 2023. The course is 86 miles from Ivinghoe Beacon to Avebury Stones along the length of the Ridgeway National Trail. Full details of the event can be found on the Ridgeway 86 website here. (Link: <https://ridgewaychallenge.com/>)



The **Middle Distance** event, will for 2023 Lakes in a Day, organised by Durty Events. The race will be held on Saturday 7th October. The course is 50 mile/80km course with approximately 4,000m of climb from Caldbeck to Cartmel in the Lake District. Full details of the event can be found on the [LAKES IN A DAY](https://www.lakesinaday.co.uk/) website. Checkout the [Trail Running Association](https://www.trailrunningassociation.co.uk/) for more news.



The **22nd Kalahari Augrabies Extreme Marathon (KAEM)** is a 7-day, self-sufficient, extreme marathon taking place in the Kalahari desert, the oldest desert in the world, covering increasing distances every stage, with day 5 a rest day to be enjoyed along the Orange River. Now in its 22nd year, the event attracts a host of stage racing junkies and adventure hikers from many countries around the world including trail runners and hikers of all abilities. The race will start at 8:00 from the Day Picnic Area at SANPARKS Augrabies Falls National Park on 30 September 2023. For more information and to get your entry please visit the website at www.kaem.co.za, or on our KAEM Facebook Page at @kalahariaugrabiesextrememarathon, Instagram and Twitter @KAEM250km.

Portugal 1001 is a new event being planned for September 2023. A 15 day stage race will cover the distance from Chaves in the North to Sagres in the South, on and off-road. The race takes place September 30th to October 25th. Details on the [race website](https://www.portugal1001.com/).



John Radich (left) wins the Littlewood Cup in 2009 presented by RD Gary Cross



The Arizona 6 Day Race hosted by Gary Cross in Douglas, AZ, is on April 2nd 2023. This year's event will be the 18th edition and the event takes place in downtown Douglas around a baseball diamond. The course, though flat, changes surface 11 times per loop and features 2 hairpin bends. If there's a baseball game on during the race the course becomes congested at certain points. John Radich (USA), who's DUV history goes back to 1983, has won the event 8 times and holds the course record of 377.75 miles. The women's record of 228 miles is held by Barbara Szeprethy (HUN), the winner receive the Littlewood Cup. Entry is \$100 and \$40 for locals. Dog friendly. Contact Gary on (1) 520 504 7477.

Some of this year's upcoming multadays:

01.03.2023	UMF Winter Edition	1000 m	ITA	Policoro (MT)
08.03.2023	UMF Winter Edition	1000 km	ITA	Policoro (MT)
12.03.2023	4th 6 Days UMF Winter Edition	6d	ITA	Policoro (MT) GOMU WC
17.03.2023	JOGLE Ultra - John O'Groats to Land's End	854m	SCO	John O'Groats
02.04.2023	Arizona 6 Day Race	6d	USA	Douglas, AZ
15.04.2023	XVIIè 6 Jours de France - Run/Walk	6d	FRA	Vallon-Pont-d'Arc
17.04.2023	25th Sri Chinmoy 10 Day Race	10d	USA	New York, NY
21.04.2023	23rd Sri Chinmoy 6 Day Race	6d	USA	New York, NY
22.04.2023	2nd K6 Czech Ultramarathon Festival	6d	CZE	Konstantinovy Lázně
22.04.2023	Cursa di Ciclopi	7d	ITA	Cefalù, Sicily
26.04.2023	9th Thames Ring	250m	ENG	Streatley-on-Thames
08.05.2023	3 Days At The Fair	6d/72/48/24	USA	Augusta, NJ
10.05.2023	No Finish Line	5d	FRA	Nice
21.05.2023	Cape Wrath	400km	SCO	Fort William
16.06.2023	6 Days In The Dome	6d/72/48/24	USA	Milwaukee, WI
18.06.2023	4th Mi Mil'Kil	500km	FRA	Lignac
18.06.2023	The Line Ultra	300m	ENG	Sand Le Mere
26.06.2023	2nd Transylvania 6 days	6d	ROU	Reghin
13.08.2023	3rd Viadal Ultra Six Days	6d	SWE	Förslov
27.08.2023	L'Etoile Verte D'eguzon	300 km	FRA	Lake Eguzon
04.09.2023	8th Dragon's Back Race	380km	WAL	Conwy Castle
08.09.2023	Tor des Glaciers	190h	ITA	Courmayeur
08.09.2023	Tor des Glaciers	190h	ITA	Courmayeur
08.09.2023	Brutal 300	300/200m	WAL	Llanberis
23.09.2023	Pennine Journey 247 Ultra	247m	ENG	Settle
14.09.2023	12th EMU 6 Day World Trophy	6d	HUN	Balatonfüred
01.10.2023	Australian 6 day	6d/72/48/24	AUS	Adelaide, SA
01.10.2023	Portugal PT1001	1001 km	POR	Chaves
12.10.2023	Lon Las Cymru	250m	WAL	Holyhead
04.11.2023	No Finish Line	8d/24 hour	MON	Monte Carlo
17.12.2023	Running Festival Circuits	20d/6d/48/24 h	RSA	Wychwood, Germiston
28.12.2023	39th Across the Years	6d/72/48/24	USA	Phoenix, AZ

The [Anglo Celtic Plate 100k](#) takes place in Craigavon, Co Armagh, NI on 2nd April, 2023.

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Photo: X. Mauban



Reviewed By Antonio Codina

PROTEIN REBEL MAPLE IGNITE

I was quite curious when I received these little beauties. They look rather small! Each gel weighs 36g, to put it into context the size of my usual gels is about 60g. But as we all know size doesn't (always) matter, and these little gels pack a punch. For those nutrition geeks reading this, each gel gives 97 kcal and 24g of carbohydrates, which is equal or even more than what most gels out there. How is this possible?

The team behind Protein Rebel makes products using natural products and their gels follow this principle. Their only two ingredients are maple syrup and sea salt and with those simple components they have an impressive performance. I find this quite remarkable in a world of sports nutrition where many brands use very technical recipes to pack carbohydrates and electrolytes in a gel.

The maple syrup is of a light variety, the taste is lovely, like a delicate and smoky salted caramel. Their small size makes them go down very quickly. I have friends that find normal gels too large to have on one go so they would like these.

I tried them in January, first during training sessions and then while racing the Spine Challenger South. On both occasions I found them really easy on the stomach and could feel the slow energy boost.

In summary, a great product from Protein Rebel. Something to try if you fancy a small sports gel with a natural twist.

PART 1 THE RUNNING ADDICT

By Kate Maltby

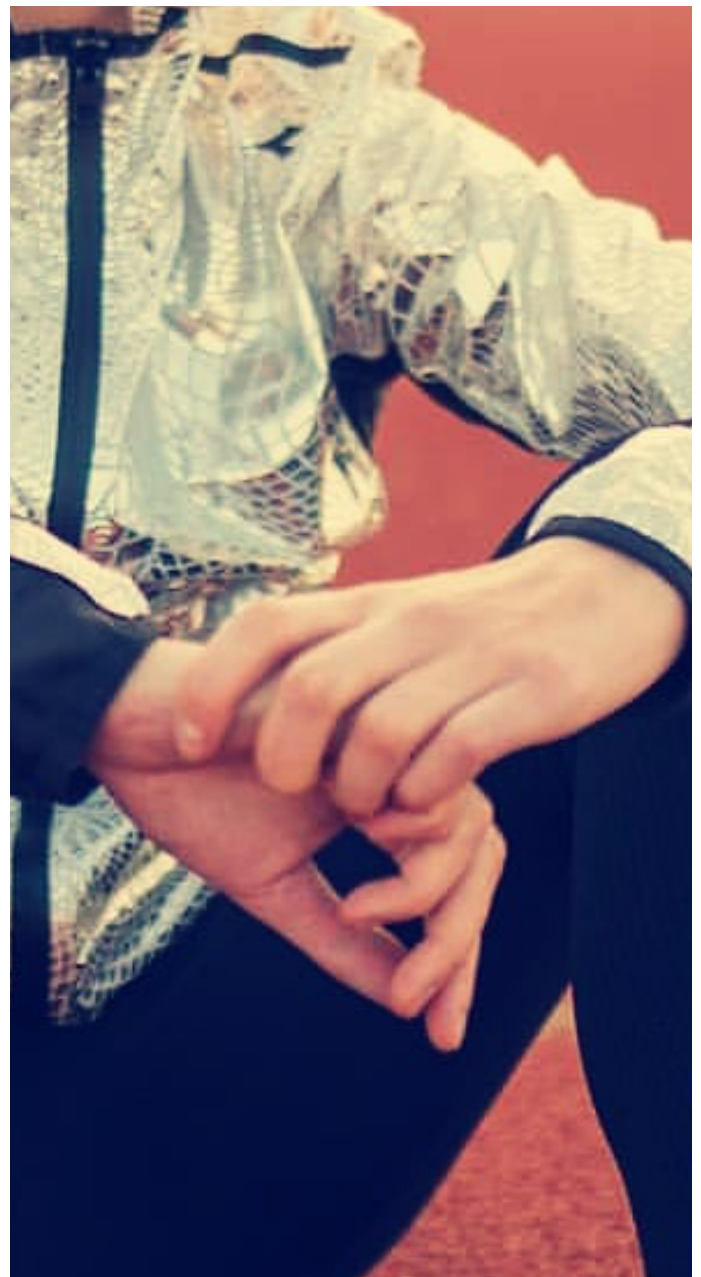
Are you addicted to running?

It's a fine line between training hard and over training. How many times have you done a good training block and then unconsciously added a little bit more exercise on top and subsequently picked up illness or injury a week before your race? Or put too many races in a season and end up chronically fatigued? Or found yourself feeling depressed during a taper or a recovery period or even at a race? So, the question is what causes this and how can you find a balance between training, resting and building a meaningful life alongside your running?

If you consider running as a form of addictive behavior, this begins when dopamine is released into the brain when you experience the pleasure (endorphins) of running, coupled with the feelings of freedom we feel from the polarity of being outdoors with the increased dependency on technology and inside working environments and/or being part of a social running community with the additional benefits that the internal/external rewards have on a fixed athlete identity. The hippocampus in the brain responds to dopamine by recording these memories of pleasure. Then the amygdala creates a conditioned response to these memories, meaning that when you are thinking or planning your running, you get an intense craving for it and a release of serotonin. Serotonin regulates the limbic system for mood, memory, cognition processing, emotions, aggression, sleep, appetite, anxiety and perception. The whole limbic system becomes dependent on serotonin for regulation; it means without running, serotonin can drop and the craving begins.

Some key signs of addictive behavior are: obsession, negative consequences in other areas of life, a lack of control and denial. Addiction is often coupled with the feelings of being stuck and trapped with nowhere else to go. If you feel like your running is the only object that is regulating your limbic system and serving a function as relief from pain, fatigue, stress, boredom, negative emotions or psychological suffering, but causing more pain, fatigue, stress and psychological suffering, then it may be time to pause and reflect on how much running is controlling your life.

To help you with this reflection, consider using



Yoga. Many people conceive Yoga to be about handstands and bright leggings, but I want to introduce you more to the theory side of Yoga and show you that with the right Yogic thinking, running can be a source of complete joy and be part of a balanced lifestyle, and even at an elite level.

Yoga begins by being completely present. By this I mean being in this moment now. Not thinking about your past or the future. Just exactly where you are right now. Reading this, breathing, noticing your breath as you inhale, exhale, noticing your thoughts or emotions as they pass by. Bring this awareness of the breath to the forefront of the mind. Awareness is presence.

Often our egos which develop when we are young, push us into a form, which is like wearing a suit, it brings us into a sense of dualism, meaning we are busy thinking, judging, planning, organising and surviving as that identity and we either think we are/should be, or what other people project onto us to be, rather than allowing us to simply be present in this moment now. It is often this dualism that brings people suffering, which links to using addictive behavior.

Ram Dass describes how to understand this concept by imagining a grey cloud in a frame. When we are identifying with our thinking mind, 'the ego suit', the frame is small and all we see is cloud, but when we are being present, being the noticer and in conscious awareness we have a large frame and we see a small cloud in the picture and we also see all of the blue sky around it.



So, using meditative techniques in Yoga, such as noticing the breath to stay present brings you into this conscious awareness of the now. When you come into this, notice you create space around everything. Within this space, you can reflect. From a distance you can begin to see the layers of the ego or projections upon you. It is at that point that you may see if you are using running as a form of addictive behavior.

Key points

Are you consciously aware of your running decisions, your training plans and your athletic identity?

Have you got a balanced approach to running with other multiple sources for enjoyment in your life?

Yoga is more than a physical practice. Using awareness of the breath can bring you into the present and create space around the thoughts and emotions that often cloud our judgements.

Further reading

In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts by Gabor Maté

Chasing the Scream by Johann Hari

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle

Becoming Nobody by Ram Dass

The Untethered Soul by Michael Singer

THE 17TH INTERNATIONAL ULTRAMARATHON FESTIVAL

By Dimitra Kefokeri

On October 22-23 the 17th international ultramarathon festival took place in the beautiful town of Loutraki. Loutraki is a small town at the seaside located 80k from Athens. The international ultramarathon festival was held at the municipal stadium Thodis with the participation of 24 athletes. Among the participants two athletes came from abroad.

to prepare their feeding stations and their tents. They also received their participation numbers. Soon the space around the tartan track was filled with running stuff, families and friends of the athletes and the event's grand station.

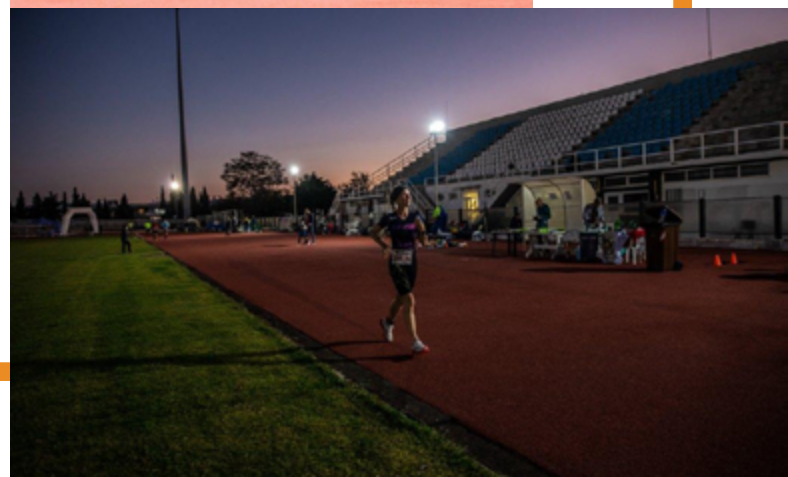


The race started at 12 o'clock. The 24 athletes stood on the starting line with the good weather as their ally. However, as night fell, the temperature dropped significantly, making it difficult for the runners.

AO Poseidon Loutrakiou, the association of Greek day runners and the municipality of Loutraki-Perachora-Agioi Theodoroi, supervised the organization and conduct of the Ultramarathon Festival while Mr. Costas Baxevanis and Mr. John Cortis directed the race.



At dawn on October 22, Saturday, the preparations for the ultramarathon festival began at a rapid pace. The start of the race would be at 12pm. However the athletes were in the stadium area a couple of hours earlier



The winner of the 17th International Ultramarathon Festival emerged as Gabriel-Andre Ailenei from Romania who ran 252,136 meters.

The second winner, first woman, was Noora Katariina Honkala from Finland with 246,496 meters.

The third winner was Koutios Dimitris from Greece with 188,300 meters.

More photos of the race.

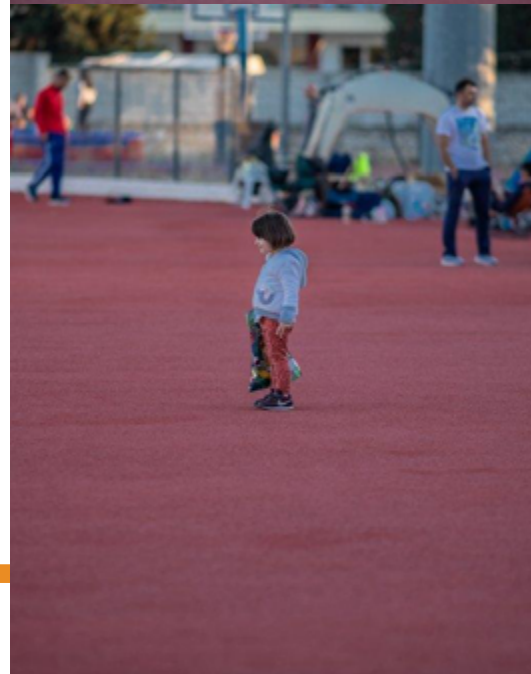


Loutraki 24 Hour International Ultramarathon Festival 2023

Pos	Gen	Name	Ctry	Miles
1	F	Noora Katariina Honkala	FIN	246,496
2	F	Victoria Natsiopoulou	GRC	185,212
3	F	Dimitra Kefokeri	GRC	80,000
1	M	Gabriel-Andre Ailenei	ROU	252,136
2	M	Dimitris Koutios	GRC	188,300
3	M	Dimitrios Besyris	GRC	181,032

Full results available at my.raceresult.com

Looking forward to seeing you at the [18th International Ultramarathon Festival](#), Loutraki, November 3 - 4, 2023.





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CHAMPIONSHIP



STORY OF NOT BEING AN ULTRA RUNNER

By David Jackson

I'm not an ultra runner, I'm an ex-rugby player who retired back in 2013 due to a brain injury. It took me a year to get over that injury and back to running. Nine years later, 135 miles of Anglesey coast path awaited me for my first multi-day ultramarathon – the 'Ring O' Fire'.

I thought I knew what I was getting myself into. I thought doing a recce of a few parts of the route was good preparation. My sister lives on Anglesey, both my mum and late father are from North Wales. I love North Wales and couldn't wait to spend the next three days running around the whole island of Anglesey, I was excited!

So excited in fact, I found it hard to sleep the Wednesday and Thursday night before we started on Friday 2 September 2022. A little bit of sleep deprivation was nothing compared to what was ahead of me.

I'd only run my first ever

marathon in October last year, a coastal off-road marathon in Suffolk. I've always preferred trails and off-road running, a time to connect with nature and connect with myself away from the concrete jungle that surrounds much of our lives. My brain injury back in 2013 had affected my breathing and running had been a way to connect to my breath and train it.

It's extremely common with brain injuries for breathing to be affected because the 'control centre' for your breathing patterns is located at the bottom of the brain in the brain stem. The problem back then was I knew nothing about how my breathing had been affected and given no help or guidance on how to improve it. Over the last few years, I'd become very curious about how I could improve and train my breathing which is where I came across the Oxygen Advantage.

I read the book by Patrick McKeown and was fascinated about the science of breathing and how important it could be for me given my situation. I started enjoying running as a process for connecting to my breath and helping me train it. Running became an



experience, not a training session. That's how I treated my first ever marathon last year, not a race but an experience. I'd enjoyed the 'training' for it so much, my biggest worry going into the event was I didn't want to finish the marathon in a broken state and have not enjoyed it.

Obviously, the fact I'd signed up the following year to a multi-day ultramarathon meant I certainly enjoyed it. I took the same approach into my training for the 'Ring O' Fire'.

Focussing on training my breath, becoming more efficient with my nasal breathing, was helping to reduce my average heart rate at a given tempo and improving my overall running economy.



"Focussing in training my breath"

I knew it was a big challenge, but I believed in my training process, or at least was happy to put it to the test, even excited we could say. I always said that the 'Ring O' Fire' wasn't a race. I didn't care if I came last, so long as I finished!

But... I soon learnt it was a race.

A race against time.

This was because we had checkpoints to make. 16 in total across the 3 days and 135 miles.

I had a love-hate relationship with the checkpoints.

It finally became a 'love' relationship towards the end of day two when I realised without them, I wouldn't have been able to continue. But the time limit on them wasn't easy and made it very stressful when you were hanging on at the back of the pack.

It was an additional stress I hadn't prepared for. In fact, there were a number of stresses that I hadn't prepared for. The lack of sleep between days. The event was so stressful both physically and emotionally, despite being exhausted at the end of each day I couldn't sleep. Maybe 10 or 20 minutes was the most I got each night.

So, what about the 'race'? How did it start? What's the story?

Well, day one was 35 miles (9-hour limit), day two was 67 miles (18-hour limit) and day three 33 miles (9.5-hour limit). The story really begins at the start of day three.

It was 4:30 am, I was sat on the toilet crying (again) saying,

"I can't do it".

I felt physically sick, shaking and couldn't move. I didn't even have the energy to close the toilet door at my sister's house, which was our base for the event.

I was broken.

I was embarrassed.

I was out of my depth.

I had massively disrespected the challenge.

I realised I was totally underprepared.

"What an idiot, you know you're not an ultra runner, why did you think you could do this, you idiot!," I kept saying to myself over and over again.

I had totally given up and I even thought it would be unsafe for my health at this point to continue. It was bringing back memories and the same symptoms of the brain injury from back in 2013.

To be brutally honest, I was also scared.

My little sister, Suzie, had heard me and came down to say good luck for the final day.

With my pants around my ankles, sat on the toilet crying with my head in my hands, I looked up at her and said, "I can't do it, I can't go."

She didn't challenge me, she said the simplest, most beautiful thing.

"Just try and get in the car, that's the first step..."

I said "Ok."

It didn't make me think I could do the final day. But she didn't ask me to run, she didn't even ask me to start the third and final day. 'Just getting in the car' was something I felt like I could do.

I wiped some more tears from my face, got up off the toilet, by which time Sarah, my sister-in-law, was on hand to help me into the kitchen where I burst a few toe blisters and taped each of my toes up to try and give them some level of support.

My feet were so swollen I could only get my right shoe on at this stage. The second toe on my left foot was badly bruised from me kicking a big rock on day one. My wife, Catherine (aka Mrs Jacko), brought my bag, hydration salts, food, race number, everything I'd completely forgotten. I was focused purely on getting in the car.

We did it.

Step one complete. We made it to the start of day three. Yet I couldn't even get my left shoe on at this point and still didn't believe I could finish the final day. I just accepted I was going to start.

However, the embarrassment I was feeling on the toilet, back at the house, was about to get worse as we turned up for the final day race briefing at 5:30 am having only managed three lots of 10-minute sleeps between 1:30am and 4:30am that night.

Hoping to see other runners as broken as me. The realisation that I indeed am NOT an ultra

"She is the hero in all this"



runner hit home harder than ever. Everyone else stood up, talking and walking around relatively normally.

I found a chair in the corner to collapse onto and started crying again.

Why did I think I could do this event? What an idiot. I'm so embarrassed and sorry that I disrespected such a challenge.

I had totally given up and my mind was just trying to work out what the best-case scenario could be. We'll walk the first stage, get timed out, be out of the race but I'll just walk the rest with my amazing family that had come to support and done an awesome job getting me to

the end of day two.

I heard nothing of the race briefing, I couldn't concentrate, I couldn't stop crying.

But I'd got to the start line, so when everyone else jogged off, I gingerly walked out to take my first step on day three.

It took about 20 minutes to do the first kilometre. I know that's not even walking! There was a storm that morning to make things worse. So, at 6:20 am on day three with 20mph winds in our face and rain hammering down I just thought, this can't get any worse, let's just try and get it over with a bit quicker.

I don't know how it happened, but I started running. Still not believing I'd do the whole day but I just went to a weird place. What I now describe as a 'system override'.

One thing I know did happen, Mrs Jacko aka Catherine aka Joicey aka The Goat aka Mrs Motivator was running with me!

When I say 'with me' I mean about 50-100m ahead shouting "Come on Jacko..."

She is the hero in all this. She ran 80 of the 135 miles (including the entire final day) like this in front of me. Before this weekend the most she's even run was 15 miles!

She barely ate, just supplied me with food. She'd not trained for it. She'd not mentally prepared to run with me; she just did it because she knew I needed her.

It's a beautiful thing to be so broken and so vulnerable that

you rely on another human that much. It's a blessing when that human is your beautiful wife.

After a couple of kilometres, we saw some people ahead walking.

I shouted to her, "Let's catch those f*cking walkers."

That was the point we started to believe we might actually make the first checkpoint on day three where I demolished two bacon and egg baps, which tasted like the greatest thing my mouth had ever experienced.

33 more miles went by, checkpoint by checkpoint. More tears, more continuous help and support from family and Catherine guiding me each step of the way.

It's hard to put into words how it happened but by the end of the day I sprinted the final 200m off Holyhead mountain with my late father's words running through my veins "show them what you've got at the end" – something he'd often say during my hardest rugby matches as a junior player when he was one of our team's coaches.

There wasn't actually a sense of achievement when I crossed the line. I just wanted to hug everyone. My mum hugged me like I'd died and come back to life. I'm crying now as I write this. It was a beautiful moment.



The great sense of achievement I had was actually being around 200m before that first checkpoint on day three. Knowing that absolutely no one thought I'd make it to that checkpoint in time, not even me. Interestingly that release of dopamine comes not once you achieve it but when you realise that you will.

"I'm back baby!"

I shouted, coming in (probably last) to that checkpoint. It felt pretty amazing and changed the course of what we believed was possible on that final day. If we could make one, why couldn't we make the next. That was the process that got us to the end. 'Get to the next checkpoint'.

What did I learn?

I feel like the more I've reflected on the event, the more I've learned about myself and processed what it is that we actually learned.

At first, I was a bit confused as only a few minutes after finishing the race, whilst sat down with Catherine having a drink of water (not beer which was all that was offered!) I said,

"Why do we do it...?"

It was a question of 'we' the collective 'we', not just us, everyone there. It was almost too much to process at the time. I also felt a sense of perspective of 'it's just a stupid run'!

But if I question 'why do we do this' I feel I have to also ask the question 'why not do these things?'

Like why do nothing? I know I don't want to do anything. I know for sure I don't want to do nothing. I may not know exactly why 'we' do these things, but I know I want to do something.

I feel by doing something we are living. We are making memories, memories that form connections. The more painful the struggles the deeper those connections.

As I've had longer to reflect now a month later, I've realised that I went into this event hoping to challenge myself, and in doing so connect deeper into myself. I knew I'd be supported but I thought it was going to be a personal experience and I thought that was what I wanted.

What I've realised is that it became (and actually what I needed) a deep personal experience, but more importantly, a deep connection with those around me. I realised there was a parallel between seeing the beautiful relationship between my mother and late father as he was dying from cancer. I was living with them in the final few weeks of his life to help mum look after him. He was totally dependent on her. But totally in love and not only all he needed was her, all he wanted was her.

Strangely to me I found myself in the same situation but for totally different reasons. I feel bad making the comparison because I was clearly not dying. I was in a place of vulnerability and total dependence on my wife, Catherine. I wasn't expecting that to be the case, it wasn't the plan and it wasn't

even a consideration going into the event.

I don't even recommend it to people, in that doing something that is too hard which basically breaks you... but it happened, and I wouldn't change it for the world.

I needed my wife. More than ever. And when up against it all, totally broken and in disbelief of what I'd got myself into.

All I wanted was her.

And all I needed was her.

I didn't do it. We did.

Actually, I think 'love' did it.

By 'Jacko' aka David Jackson

www.probreathwork.com

www.instagram.com/jacko_david_jackson



ULTRA TRAIL CAPE TOWN

By Dawn Nunes



In September 2019 I had major surgery on my left hamstring to reattach it to the bone as it had been detached during hockey in May the same year. 2020, Covid hit, which gave me time to focus on rehabilitation, full movement and strength for my body. As a Sports Physiotherapist and passionate ultra runner I know what it takes to ensure that recovery is not only full, but improved from pre-injury. I was determined to do it right and to set some crazy, silly goals in the process.

In 2021, I completed the 13 peaks challenge in Cape Town which is a route along the Cape mountain ranges spanning 110 km and with over 6,500 m elevation. We tackled this in one go taking 32 hours to complete – the team of five of us. Later on in the year I trained for the Ultra Trail Cape Town (UTCT) 65 km race at the end of November in Cape Town. I worked hard, was consistent in my training and had some great elevation under my belt. I came in 11th lady overall and first in my age category. The bug had bit. This race was phenomenally

organised, included gorgeous routes and had the most dedicated and passionate supporters and volunteers. I wanted to go bigger... thinking about the hundred miler but I didn't know which one in South Africa I would like to run. Most of them just didn't appeal to me at the time.

Then UTCT made an announcement. They were launching their inaugural 100-miler in 2022. Absolutely YES! As soon as entries opened in May I booked my place on the start line. I was also training for the Comrades ultra marathon (the oldest ultra in the world, 90 km, from Pietermaritzburg to Durban) which was a perfect stepping stone at the end of August.

One thing I've learnt in life and as an ultra runner is to be adaptable. Plan, but be able to change those plans as needed, as life, and ultras, seldom go as meticulously planned. In July 2022 I was looking at possible physiotherapy jobs in the UK and I stumbled upon a really great opportunity. I applied without thinking anything more of it... but all this changed when four weeks

later I had been offered the job and accepted it. This meant moving to London, packing up my life in five weeks and leaving my family and friends behind. I left at the end of September to start the first week in October. Anyone who has moved jobs, or countries knows how much admin, sorting, stress and effort there is... now combine both of these while still training for my first 100-miler and being separated from my family and friends.

My new company, Pure Sports Medicine, has been beyond amazing. They agreed to let me start in October but to then come back at the end of November to race and see my family. London was an incredible eight-week blur of working, sightseeing through running, Spartan and Epping Forrest 50 km race, weekly track sessions and some cross country with my new club, London City Runners. It helped to get involved as soon as possible as my motivation to run in the last four weeks was awful. The race kept me focused and I was thankful that I had this crazy goal to keep ticking towards.



I flew back to Cape Town landing on 24 November, Thursday morning at 7 am. Registration was that afternoon with my race starting the following day at 5 pm. I did not sleep a wink on the plane despite my efforts. There is so much that goes into a race of this magnitude and it was my first. It was also a pretty intense 100-miler with over 7,500m of elevation in the 166 km race. A lot of people had questioned whether I would finish and also how I had chosen this as my first one. My answer was simple: it excited me.

We finally arrived at the Gardens Rugby Club in Cape Town to start our race. The nervous energy at the beginning in the start shoot with 154 other starters was palpable. Only 11 women had entered this inaugural 100-miler.

And we're off. A zillion thoughts run through my head, but all my mental planning and preparation paid off. Start slow. Walk the hills. And I did. 5 pm, Friday 25 November, my life has changed. I started the journey of my dream which I had worked so hard for,

planned loads and sacrificed so much to be at this start line, ready to take on my first 100-miler.

We made our way around Signal Hill, Lions Head up Kloof Corner and onto Platteklip, climbing Table Mountain, where the dark descended. The bells of Kloof Corner long gone, quiet descended, except for the wind – our absolute constant companion during the full race gusting, billowing, fighting us the whole way. We persevered. Almost to the top of Platteklip I packed the poles away and put the rain jacket and gloves on as I needed to use my hands to hang on the rocks to steady myself against the wind and the cooler temperature nipped at my exposed skin.

Except for three and a half hours, I ran this whole race solo. Thankful to have the most dedicated seconding team Se7en, hoods, Liezl and Brett who looked after my every need.

We clambered down Llandudno, and for those of you who know it, it is extremely technical. Add darkness

and wind to make it an interesting descent.

My team!!! Overjoyed to see them at Llandudno aid station. I gave my seconders two rules. Their job is to keep me going and to ensure I have eaten and leave with food in me at every aid station. They did this meticulously. From Llandudno we made our way up and over Suther Peak in the dark. Had a lovely little runnable section leading to this infamous peak of 2 km climbing. Darkness was still all around. Poles away as we had to scramble as we neared the peak. Up and over, then the descent. Lovely route downwards with the sun rising as I entered Hout Bay beach. My climbing legs had already been tested. I had a slight left-calf cramp and on stretching it the front muscle then started to cramp. So I walked it out... eek and I was only 56 km in...

Here was the crux. Kalk Bay. Just before the aid station I sent an extremely emotional voice note to Glen, my husband, and Se7en. I also sent one to Steve (100-miler friend)



just moaning how I'd only done 70 km and how could I do over double this distance still?

"Come to us. We have you," was the reply.

I arrived at the aid station, welcomed in, and the perfect words were said. Quitting was not even mentioned, let alone entertained. I ate. Put sun cream on as I was continuing, I think. And the pinnacle was Sophia. Dear Sophia. She crouched down next to me and just said that I had no choice. I chose this and signed up for it and she knew I could finish it. You see, the problem when people like Sophia speak, is I can't say anything, because my 100-miler is like a warm up for some of the things she has accomplished. Sophia completed the Dragon's Back Race in Wales and came sixth lady.

So up I got... and I never looked back.

From being completely and utterly broken, I knew I'd finish... and I did. I had three little naps around an hour in total. I ate and drank constantly and definitely got my fuelling right. I took it

super easy on the technical parts so that I didn't get injured.

Cape Town Ultra Marathon is an extremely technical trail race with huge elevation and added to it was the billowing wind. At some points we had to cling on to the side of the mountain and wait for it to settle before continuing on. From Kalk Bay we continued through to Blackhill, Simon's Town, Kommetjie and from here we then took to the beach to Noordhoek. Dark descended once more and we made our way up the steep and technical section of Chapman's Peak. We dropped back down into Hout Bay and got onto a shuttle as a fire had broken out on the side of the mountain. We therefore had 8 km less to go but safety was paramount. Despite the lack of sleep my energy levels were high as I entered the final stations of Alphen Trail along Newlands Ravine contour down to the final aid station of UTCT. The sun had risen along the contour path and the 35 km runners were starting to pass me along the final stretch up to the block house – a steep section up to the last contour to Dead Man's Tree and down to the finish.

That feeling knowing that I was going to finish. That despite all the changes, and supposedly lack of elevation training, I had prepared my mind above all, continued to be consistent and conquered with the most amazing friends and family supporting me.

I finished in just under 42 hours with a recorded 8,200m elevation. Out of the 155 starters only 94 finished with 9 of the 11 ladies completing the 100-mile journey.

These were the main points I would share:

Prepare your mind, body and know your emotions will go through everything.

Break it down to small, manageable pieces.

Test your gear!! I had the best.



Nutrition, nutrition, nutrition. We got it right.

15 minute power naps. Yes.

Hypafix... magic for blister prevention

Most importantly, BELIEVE in yourself. I had some people who questioned me finishing, and that's ok, but I stood firm in knowing I could do it.... and I did.

This was most definitely a team effort. With 99 people on a WhatsApp group following me and many others dot-watching, it helped me push through to the end.

A 100-miler journey is something to behold.

I am busy writing my book and am so excited to share my journey through my book.

Follow me on:

Instagram [@dawnnunesza](#) or

Facebook [DawnNunesza](#) or LinkedIn

Dawn Nunes

Would love to hear from you.





“Just how appetising can sheep really find bamboo sticks?”

I groaned. That remark, minus several choice expletives, was repeated several times on the first day alone, as we scanned the fields for any hint of a blue or red flag lying on the ground.

Ultra X holds ultramarathons in stunning locations all over the world. The events range from 21km to 250km (or 256 if you have a tendency to get lost like myself) in distance, and are accessible to beginners as well as professionals. They organise five multi-day events in Jordan, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Tanzania and that exotic hot-spot – Wales! Each

Photos by
[gilly_photography](#)



ULTRA X WALES X 2022

By Emma Morton



event takes place over five days and covers distances ranging from 42km to 66km to a total 250km.

Proving myself over such a distance became a bucket-list dream about three years ago, and although I'd have loved to have travelled to Sri Lanka or Mexico, Wales fit the bill perfectly as I got to fly over and spend precious time with my family and visit old haunts in North Wales.

This wasn't a self-supported event in its truest sense. The organisers provide hot and cold water for our food and drinks. They also take charge of your bag for the week, which I took advantage of and packed a warmer sleeping bag knowing how fickle Welsh weather can be. As campsite locations changed during the week they took down and set up our tents for us. All we had to do was turn up at the start line every morning and run roughly 50km – again and again. Easy, right?! I say campsite in its loosest sense, we were camping really in farmers' fields. Hence the lack of showers, but there was always a stream or river nearby to wash off at the end of the day and that freezing water was perfect recovery for our legs.

Runners need to bring their own sleeping bag and mattress, dehydrated food for the week as well as the usual mandatory kit. I had to smile when I read my kit had to be packed in a waterproof bag – yes, I was heading to Wales after all! Food for the week was an interesting adventure in itself, finding and testing calorie-dense but tasty food. I fell quickly (Monday night) out of love with the only brand of dehydrated food I brought with me (I wonder if the pack was maybe out of date or gone off somehow). In a cruel twist of fate I was saved by a fellow runner donating me his Expedition Meals which were really tasty and a lot more digestible. I say 'donating' as sadly John timed out on Tuesday night and so left the event. Then the on-the-move snacks to fuel our time in the mountains; I've never been a fan of sweet, sticky gels but from my training run tests, I ended up enjoying and choosing Torq gels and oat bars, Maurten gels amongst other goodies (Jelly Babies, salted nuts) with Tailwind electrolytes for my hydration. Each day's supplies had to be labelled and calorie counted for the kit check at registration. I actually found it hard to eat once back at camp after a day moving. My stomach just wanted to rest. I knew I had to force food down in order to fuel the following day.

For the 42km on Monday I took almost 8 hours to complete the run, and that set the scene for the rest of the week. In France to climb a mountain the trail meanders gently up, a very pleasant and relatively rapid climb. And vice versa. The Welsh are seriously tough. They stand at the bottom of a mountain, see the summit and simply decide to climb up it in a straight line. And the same on the descents which led to a very slaty, slippery and scary descent down Cadr Idris on the Tuesday afternoon. I was dreading how my legs would cope with all the vert, especially as I'm notoriously tense on descents leading to very painful thighs the next day. But I needn't have worried – there was a wonderful team of osteopaths on hand the whole week. Those girls worked seriously hard, even ready at their tables at 3.30am for our 5.30am start. I also got first-hand care from the team of doctors too (I think they were relieved to have to deal with something other than manky feet!). Thursday proved

gruelling – 66km which took me 13 hours after developing a shin splint at around 40km. Once back at camp I think my body just gave up after all the effort of the day, my blood pressure plummeted and I ended up on a drip. Friday morning, albeit a little wobbly (which I hid from Doctor John, ssshhh, don't tell him) I took my place on the start line. I'd at least try to finish, I hadn't got this far to quit. I'd listen to my body and common sense if I began to feel really unwell.

The locations and views the whole week were breathtaking. Just wilderness as far as you could see (and those #@%\$% sheep!) And not a single drop of rain. At the Sunday night briefing we were told we could ditch our waterproof trousers from our bags. Wales was in a heatwave. My sleeping bag was way too toasty. Mind you, getting out of the tent at night to cool down gave me the Milky Way in all its glory. I was utterly mesmerised, and probably sleep deprived from staring so long at it. Every participant found the 27-31 degree heat hard going at some point. For me coming from 40 degrees plus in the south of France it felt positively cool. We started on Monday as 20 and there were 10 finishers on Friday, which gives an indication of just how brutal runners found it. The climbs and descents are really no trifling matter, nor the sheer effort of having to line up morning after morning knowing you are going to be on your feet running, walking and shuffling for 10-plus hours. You really do need to have properly trained for this event. And not be scared of cows or bulls. Monday saw us have to cross a field with a herd. They were loitering right in front of the gate we needed to access. The guys I'm with (gallantly) hesitate and suddenly I'm the one in front. So I wave my poles above my head and call out politely to the ladies for them to stand aside. The next thing I know is they stampede into the distance, ground trembling and leave us coughing dust. From then on I was known as the "Bull Chaser" and sent into fields first on a regular basis.

I learned a lot about myself that week, not only in terms of managing my food intake and fashioning a comfy pillow out of a down jacket and socks, but just how much a body can adapt, cope, reset and restart. On Saturday morning all of us girls agreed that there was absolutely no way we could even run 2km more. We looked dreadful. Bags under our eyes, swollen feet and ankles. Limping wrecks basically, yet only 24 hours earlier we had been dancing on our last start line full of smiles.

There was no lack of support and encouragement thanks to the boisterous volunteers and staff. Each aid station is roughly 10km apart, never time to feel lonely. The cheers and whoops everyone gave as they could see us arriving was so motivating and really helped me to ramp up a gear. A big shout-out to Paul who, throughout the week, was always slightly ahead of me. Each time hikers approached him, he'd always ask them to "say hi to Emma from Paul". It was the kindest gesture and always gave me such a boost, and by Wednesday a little cry. We all got such kind words of support, waves and smiles from people on the route, always interested in the event, distance and craziness of it all. A lot of my friends were keen to say I was crazy spending my summer holiday running such a distance and 'roughing it'. Some were following my dot on the tracker from their poolside lounge or bar, cocktail in hand. Each to their own, but... rather crazy than lazy!

◇

LEEDS & LIVERPOOL CANAL RACE

(LLCR130)

By Laura Watts



RACE REPORT: VICTORY UP NORTH!

Having arrived in Liverpool on Thursday, we had plenty of time before the race and avoided the bank holiday madness of last year. We even went for a better hotel, runner's privilege! The day before the race I went for a nice easy run along the Mersey and the Albert Dock whilst it was nice and quiet in town. Afterwards we picked up our last-minute supplies then checked in for the race. That evening we went out for a lovely dinner at San Carlo. Thankfully, I slept soundly and was at the start line with Matthew at 05:45am just prior to sunrise along with all the other runners and the seagulls.

I had Matthew's warm fleece jacket on at the start line as I always do at the beginning of an ultra to keep as warm as possible until the last 60 seconds before the start. Dick did his short but humorous pre-race briefing and at exactly 6am to "On your marks, get set..." I hit the start line and 130 miles lay ahead.

As I started my ultra canal journey, Matthew, my crew chief, went back to the hotel to continue his sleep until 11am. He would meet me around five and a half to six hours later in the race so he would be fully rested and able to support me when I needed him most in the last sections and throughout the entire race. This is a tried and tested routine for us at long ultras. Running ultras is so much better with support from someone you know and trust to get things right and be there when needed. I can also unload my displeasure from tiredness on him. That's also tried and tested.

On the start line of the Leeds and Liverpool 130 Mile Canal Race I had one mission... to get to the finish line no matter what. I had to pull out of the LLCR130 last year at 58 miles due to foot pain caused by the metal plate which held my fused big toe in place. The plate has thankfully gone now and even though my big toe doesn't bend, it works. I have had a great 2022 of running so far having completed both the ultra hot and humid Keys 100 followed by the savage heat of Badwater 135 ultramarathon so I was feeling confident the canal weather was not going to be a factor and I felt I could raise my game here.

I had some secret goals in the back of my mind of getting a sub-32-hour finish and my absolute dream result was a sub-30-hour race. I knew what pace I had to stick to to achieve it. I even had hopes and aspirations of getting a top three female finish place but this was between Matthew and I and a glass of sauvignon blanc at dinner the night before.

I started well, also a bit too fast. My early goal was just to get to the next checkpoint without thinking about the whole 130 miles ahead of me. I went straight through the first checkpoint at Mile 14.5 and just topping up on some aid station H2O.



The behind-the-scenes logistics at the canal races is so slick. They have your bag waiting for you at each checkpoint in advance – as Matthew was going to be supporting me later on I only had a small plastic carrier bag unlike most people who had massive heavy sports bags. The race staff and volunteers seemed quite amused by my lightweight plastic bag and several said they wished more people had small bags like me.

Wigan were playing Burnley that afternoon so I was glad to pass by Wigan before the match had started. Last year I made a navigational error in Wigan so I was careful not to make that mistake again. After Wigan there was the first climb of the race, a series of ascending locks, so I took the opportunity to have my first power-walking break of the race.

So far so good.

Matthew joined me at Mile 40 and it was great to have him supporting me on the course. Such a great boost to know he was there for me.

At Mile 40, my shoes were starting to rub and cause discomfort so it was time for a shoe change to my bigger pair of Hoka Bondis. Early detection of any niggles can really pay off on occasions. I had some melon and took an M&S flapjack with me to appease an insistent Matthew (as I was feeling sick) but I threw it in the canal for the ducks to enjoy. Matthew instructed me to slow down as he worked out I was going way too fast - which I took onboard. I had wanted to make a really good start to the race which I felt I had done. It was getting warmer but the heat wasn't affecting me at all. Heat training really does work.

Mile 47 was just a quick hello from a random bridge – I have been guilty in the past of stopping too much, enjoying a lean and wanting to have a chat with Matthew, but in this race, I was focused and on a mission to get this race done as efficiently as possible.

Matthew was managing to get to bridges and support

points every five miles and appearing out of nowhere which was great. We were both incredibly organised during this race as Matthew had two replacement bottles of water and electrolytes ready to switch over as soon as I got there which cut down stopping time even more. This was part of our pre-race strategy, to cut down the stopping as much as we could.

In 2021, Mile 58 was where I stopped and my race ended last year so it was a moral victory to pass that point. Funnily enough it was at an outside bar which was playing the loudest music in the day time, it was like a concert.

Matthew found an ice cream shop on the side of the canal and got me a tub of mango sorbet – heaven, I had two wonderful mouth fulls until I dropped it on the towpath as my hands were so clammy. So that went into the canal as well.

I passed through Blackburn and was in the midst of a lot of Blackburn Rovers Football supporters who all seemed quite subdued... I later found out they lost 1–0 to Stoke. I met Matthew there and had a Hawaiian roll with cheese (these worked brilliantly for me at Badwater) but I wasn't loving them today, it was taking me ages to chew the food and forever to swallow it. I took some Pringles with me and my small Petzl Bindi head torch as it was still two hours 'til darkness, but this was just in case Matthew didn't manage to get to me in time, I just didn't want to get caught short. We did once and I used my iPhone.

It was now 8pm and the sun was just setting, last light at 8:30pm and Matthew was there again at Mile 68.5 on the outskirts of Burnley. It was now time to change into my night gear as it was cooling down rapidly. I hadn't actually estimated it getting so cold so I wore all the layers I had although I hadn't brought my leggings or gloves. The forecast was not even close to it being 10°C. I put on my unbelievably bright Kogalla waist light and a super bright Petzl IKO CORE head torch and was ready for the night shift. Armed with a Wispa and a Diet Coke I was off into the night. Matthew had seen Finn, the ladies' race leader, go past about 11 minutes ahead of me so I had her in my sights. I was the hunter.





The Canal Races are non-tracking events so you don't know where your fellow runners are. At the next checkpoint, Mile 70.6 in Burnley, Matthew hid behind a dumpster and watched the first lady Finn come in and sit down (and reported to me that she stayed for about 20 minutes) before I whizzed in and out. We didn't want her to see Matthew as she may have suspected I was close to the aid station and therefore would have lessened her time there. Race tactics! I had a rocky road bar which I took with me and off I went again reducing that margin between first and second place again.

Runners are allowed to have buddy runners with them from 70 miles onwards but I didn't have anyone, I prefer it this way and ran the majority of the race alone with just my music and occasional fellow runners.

I was still running really well and on target for the sub-30 hours. I was loving this race. Next up was a bit of a tricky navigational section where the canal goes through the Gannow Tunnel and the towpath is diverted through some subways beneath the M65, it felt like a bit of a maze and I didn't see the signs to follow for the towpath. There were no runners around and it was dark so I checked Google Maps and hoped for the best and miraculously managed to get myself back onto the towpath and back on the canal. Getting lost sucks and is utterly demoralising. Avoid at all costs.

One of the 'Seven Wonders of the Waterways' is the Burnley Embankment which was at Mile 73 of the race. I had hoped

to see it in the daylight as it is a mile-long stretch of embankment which carries the canal through the centre of the town, up to 60 feet above the buildings below with beautiful countryside beyond it. I'm not sure if the Burnley Skyline is iconic.

Just before the second tricky navigational section of the course I caught up with another runner, Iain, he asked to stay with me as we negotiated the footpaths in the pitch black above the Foulridge Tunnel. I was more than happy with having company and it was nice to chat to a fellow runner as I had more or less run the whole race so far on my own. We then caught up with the First Lady, Finn and Graeme, so the four of us followed the diversion off the towpath, through the village of Foulridge and back onto the canal. It was great having safety in numbers here but once back on the canal I pulled away from the rest of the group and didn't look back. I was sure I was in the lead. This race was going way better than expected!

At checkpoint 6, Salterforth Bridge, I was confirmed as having the female lead and found out I was fifth overall. 84 miles down, 46 miles to go. I took some more chocolate and a Diet Coke with me and off I went into the darkness. It really was pitch black on the canal towpath and covered with crunchy snails and slippery slugs which I was trying to avoid stepping on as well as not falling in the canal.

I predictably started to feel really tired around 3am and ate two Caffeine Bullet chews in succession. I had been feeling sick since about 25 miles into the race and after these two chews I then started to be sick. I would just run, be sick then carry on. I also paranoically kept looking behind me for a head torch in the darkness for anyone catching me up. Now I knew I was in the female lead. I really wanted to win this race but I had no idea how far anyone was behind me or how strong any of the other girls in the race were during the latter parts of the race as I hadn't run with any. It definitely made me move quicker though.

I was in dreamland as I went through 100 miles in 21 hours 37 mins which was a 100-mile PB for me. I saw Matthew at checkpoint 7 at the Bradley Swing Bridge in Skipton and was now freezing cold. It was 10°C. I had a ginger ale to try and settle my upset tummy and had a nice but brief chat with the lovely volunteers. I wanted to stay and chat for longer but had a race to finish. As I ran off into the darkness along the towpath Matthew called out to me and came running after me. He took his shoes off and then gave me his warm socks so I could put them on my hands to warm them up. He is so kind and thoughtful. Now it was just over one marathon to go.



I was so looking forward to the sunrise. It is such a morale boost to see where you are going, warm up and your body clock does some readjusting as the sunlight pours into your eyes. When the first light came there was a fog/mist over the water of the canal. The surrounding countryside was very beautiful. Slowly I was starting to see people again, not runners in the race but people out walking their dogs, riding bikes and out on Sunday morning runs. People were asking me where I had run from and how far I was running. They were totally shocked when I said I was running the whole length of the 130-mile long canal from Liverpool to Leeds.

One of the other 'Seven Wonders of the Waterways' is the incredible Bingley Five Rise Staircase which are the steepest staircase locks in the UK on the longest canal with amazing views of the Aire valley. I was so glad it was a down staircase and not up! It really was steep and I enjoyed the free gravity assistance.

When I got to checkpoint 8 in Shipley at 114 miles I was still first lady and instructed Matthew to stay back at the checkpoint for at least 45 minutes to see how much lead I had on the second-placed female. I wanted this win but I was so worried I would be overtaken as I was now really feeling the faster than usual 114 miles I had put on my legs but was still run-walking and only sat down twice for a couple of minutes during the whole race. Matthew reported back there was no sign of another female or any other runner so I was quietly confident that I wouldn't be overtaken. Thank you to Finn for pushing me in the early stages of the race where I probably wouldn't have pushed myself. Matthew said I was really upbeat at this point and I had some watermelon and some soluble painkillers as my feet were getting sore and off I went again.

There was one more crew point at mile 123 where I saw Matthew. I had a quick photo and didn't stop. I just couldn't stop looking behind me, even though I knew there wasn't another runner for at least 45 minutes. I started being sick again on this last section but it was literally vomit and run, repeat! It was more embarrassing now as there were loads of people around but I was on a mission to finish this race. The last few miles seemed to be downhill which was wonderful.

So after 28 hours and 35 minutes setting off from Liverpool I crossed the finish line. I was absolutely ecstatic with my result!

First Lady

Fifth overall.

100-mile PB

Spartathlon qualifying time and Badwater 2023 qualifying race.

I was also the fourth fastest woman in the LLCR history.

Compared to the two American races I had run this year, the finish line was very low key.

I was welcomed in by Race Director Dick and had a few photos with him and was presented with the magnificent LLCR130 Female Winners trophy which will be engraved with my name and time for all to see. The finishers medal is also really impressive and heavy. I had some more photos with Dick, Matthew and the trophy, then I sat down in a chair trying to process and reflect on what just happened. I absolutely loved this race. I ran really well and my race strategy worked so well too. I achieved all my pre-race goals and more and was one hour ten minutes ahead of the second lady.

Special thanks as always to my rock Matthew for supporting me and spending his weekend driving around in the middle of the night looking after me. To all the volunteers out on the course who were so lovely and kind, and of course the race directors for putting on such a well organised and brilliant event.



VIKING WAY ULTRA

By Mandy Foyster

The Viking Way Ultra appealed to me because it was reasonably close to where I live in the East of England, good value for money and an exciting-looking winter challenge. I'm not sure why but I also had the idea that it would be one of Mark Cockbain's easier events. For anyone unfamiliar with his races they are described as low key, back-to-basics events for the hardened ultra-runner. They are extremely difficult to complete with usually only a handful of finishers. My lead up to the race went okay, I run regularly anyway, I completed a 100-miler in August and then did a good block of distance training in the eight weeks prior to the race including plenty of hill and strength training. Standing on the start line on a cold December morning with the 22 other competitors I was utterly determined to complete the event which consisted of running 147 miles along the Viking Way trail within 40 hours.

We set off with the beautiful lights of the Humber Bridge shining behind us. The Viking hat donned for the first part and my Teeny-Tiny Sheep mascot in my ultra-vest pocket made me feel very excited. The early miles ticked away comfortably, and I chatted with other runners making new friends as we trotted along. We were only allowed to use OS maps for navigation, no GPS, and I was quite comfortable with this as I had done many previous adventures using just maps. It wasn't long before it started to rain which took us all by surprise because the forecast had been so good for the weekend.

I was prepared though and popped on my waterproof jacket to keep dry.

The terrain was constantly changing from running along a trail through endless gates and stiles, then a short road section, across muddy fields, grassy tracks and soon we started to go up and down hills through the Lincolnshire Wolds. I caught up with my friend, Karl Baxter, and a small group of us trotted along for a while together until Karl stopped to buy a coffee in a small town and I continued with the others. I very quickly teamed up with the only other female runner, a lovely young lady called Bev and we were so evenly paced we ran along together. Bev told me how she had attempted the race previously but she didn't finish; we were both very



determined to finish that weekend. At the 50-mile checkpoint it was great to see Mark and enjoy a lukewarm Pot Noodle, one of the famous hallmarks of his events. My hands were already numb and swollen from the cold which made it hard to do fiddly things. Me and Bev both changed our socks, I donned more warm clothes, a fresh set of mittens, and we set off together into the night.

It wasn't long after that when Bev started to limp as she was running along. Very early in the race she had unfortunately turned her ankle on a pothole hidden in a puddle. She stopped to loosen her shoe and I suggested that it may wear off if we took it steady. We continued, walking when necessary and with Bev adjusting her shoes regularly to try to help her poorly foot. At one point we passed some amazing sculptures including an incredible Viking ship which I had to stop and take a photo of. My friend Andy Bailey, from the sheep sanctuary I support, sent me some encouraging messages from him and the sheep and my lovely family were also willing me on from home. When we passed through the Woodhall Spa golf course I took a photo of one of the signs and sent it to our son Danny who had played golf there. I received a message back warning me not to fall into any of the bunkers – lol.

Sadly, Bev's foot got worse, and she had to stop and call it a day at checkpoint four, so after a hug and farewell, I continued on my own into the night. It soon began to rain again and turned into a cold and damp night. I was constantly checking my map, anxious to stay on the correct route. I had made little notes about potentially tricky parts of the trail, particularly on the approach into Lincoln. There were many times when I went slightly the wrong way or hesitated for too long wondering and checking that I was in the correct place. All this hesitation lost me valuable time which was going to

add to my downfall later in the race. At one point, going across a muddy clay field, I almost despaired, the mud was making my trainers twice the size they had been and three times as heavy, and I wasn't always sure until I got to the other side that I was going in the right direction. The joy when I reached the end of the field in the dark and spotted a Viking Way sign was enormous.

Trotting along next to the river was easier but it was very cold, and on reaching checkpoint five just before Lincoln I asked if I may sit in the car out of the rain to put on my warmer padded jacket. The wonderful kind lady called Jodie made me a huge mug of tea and I enjoyed some



melon and salted potatoes to eat. Feeling determined again I set off into Lincoln which proved to be far easier to navigate than I had anticipated. I was amused to see how busy the city was even at 4am in the morning, and the fish and chip shop was open! I toyed with the idea of buying some chips but then decided I wouldn't be able to eat many of them, so it wasn't worth it. Nausea was beginning to set in and eating was becoming a real struggle, not good with so many miles still to do. Finding the route out of Lincoln was a bit trickier and again

I wasted time looking for the correct roads. Eventually I was back on the trails and looking forward to daybreak. I hadn't really struggled with feeling sleepy, possibly due to being so cold and there was always something to do whether it was checking my maps, trying to eat something, or wiggling my hands and fingers inside my mittens to keep warm. I used hand warmers for the first time and they were brilliant but unfortunately, I only had enough for the first night, another error and something else I learnt from the event.

A beautiful red sky welcomed me to a new day, but I didn't take any photos because I was concentrating now on the maths and trying to set a pace which would keep me on schedule to finish. The 97-mile checkpoint was a very welcome sight and Mark Cockbain kindly made me a porridge pot, which went down quite easily, and a cup of tea. I got going as quickly as possible after restocking my ultra-vest with goodies. Mark warned me that there was some difficult terrain ahead and that I would be wise to run as much as possible while I could.

I heeded this advice and trotted off down a very long straight stretch of road and paths which were easy to navigate. The terrain varied from muddy paths to good paths and stretches of grass too. It was gently undulating, and I felt I was pushing on quite well. I could feel my body beginning to struggle as it does on these very long events, but I was utterly determined, and I filled my mind with thoughts of how lucky I was to be able to do this sort of thing and enjoyed looking at the scenery around me. I wondered many times how my friend Karl was getting on and on occasions I glanced behind me hoping he might suddenly catch me up being a faster runner than me. Unbeknown to me Karl was also struggling with a foot injury, and he had to pull out at 110 miles.

I kept trying to eat little bits, mainly iced party ring biscuits and Hula Hoops. It

was incredibly difficult to keep the food down and on a couple of occasions I found myself being poorly at the side of the trail. I'm quite used to this though and cheerfully reminded myself that I really wanted to do this race and ploughed on across the muddy fields. As darkness began to fall again, I started hallucinating seeing Viking-like faces in the wet green leaves and I also kept imagining I could see other runners ahead of me on the trail. Maybe this was wishful thinking after being on my own for so long. My head was still doing the sums and I was feeling more confident now that I would be able to complete the race so long as I could keep up this steady pace. My feet were okay and, apart from the usual aches and pains of long-distance running, I felt in reasonable shape. Then it all started to go horribly wrong.

I'd been wondering what Mark had meant by the difficult terrain ahead but suddenly I knew. The trails turned into mud-filled swamps with deep ruts and huge murky puddles. I was devastated, this would affect my pace and my plan, if only I had a Viking longship to sail across those puddles. Still determined I began to run even harder, leaping from grassy tuft to another grassy tuft and from side to side on the trails desperately trying to keep the momentum up and find the best path through. It was working reasonably well although I was concerned about the quantity of energy I was using as I was already running on empty. I used the mile pace function on my watch to try to keep each mile under 15 minutes, this had proved useful but as the muddy trails worsened it became harder and

harder to stay on track. There was a huge hill to trudge up at one point which seemed to go on forever and I can't remember if it was before, or after the hill, that I reached what I can only describe as a muddy sort of bridge which I would challenge a tractor to get across let alone an exhausted, middle-aged lady. I fell three times crossing this part, ripping my leggings on the brambles and I simply couldn't stay upright. In hindsight I was trying too hard to move forwards quickly and despite having on full, now torn, waterproofs the freezing cold mud and puddle water started to seep into my base layers. I climbed back up and said to myself out loud, "I will not give up". I crossed an airfield in the dark where it was difficult to work out which way to go, and encountered more and more mud and water-filled stretches each one adding to my worry that I was losing the pace.

At checkpoint eight I said a quick hello to the kind people who were helping and enquired how far it was to the finish. I set off very quickly again, redoing the maths in my head; it was still possible, I just hoped the terrain would allow me to move in the way I wanted to. Another mile of mud-filled rutted paths and then another... Reality suddenly dawned on me, it wasn't going to be possible to finish in time, but I would still carry on and complete the trail even though technically I would be a DNF. As I began to think about how to tackle the last 15 miles, I became aware of how cold I had become. I looked at the maps and was





struggling to make sense of them, my concentration was rapidly diminishing, it was pouring with rain and I suddenly felt rather vulnerable. I quickly did a bit of reasoning and made the phone call to my kind friend Andy Bailey who had offered to be my emergency pick up should I need help.

Andy left immediately to collect me but, in the meantime, I had an hour to wait and was already frozen cold. I considered climbing into my survival bivi bag but first knocked on a house door and explained my situation to a rather bemused but wonderfully kind young man called Tom. I asked if he had an outhouse I could shelter in whilst waiting to be collected but he generously invited me in where I sat on the floor in his warm tiled hallway covered in mud! Tom made me two cups of tea and a hot water bottle to cuddle, I couldn't stop shivering. I contacted my family straight away to let them know I was okay and the race director Mark, who kindly arranged for my drop bag to be brought to me. Andy arrived soon after and took such good care of me. I was soon warm, clean, and safe in the spare room at his house, The Mirkwood Rest Home for Retired Sheep or in this case a rest home for retired runners – lol. I had a wonderful weekend with lovely, kind people and am strangely very happy with my first DNF because I know I gave it everything I had. The next Viking Way Ultra event will be in 2024. Teeny-Tiny sheep will hold onto his Viking hat, and we will be back with better knowledge of the trail and a determined Viking warrior approach.

Five people finished the 2022 Viking Way Ultra on the weekend of 3 and 4 December. James Parsons, Ronnie Staton, Colin Crowhurst, James Bassett and Ian Leach. I am extremely grateful to Mark for putting on the race, to all the helpers and volunteers at checkpoints and my wonderful friend Andy for rescuing me. Finally, the kind stranger called Tom who I have written to and sent chocolates to say thank you, and my lovely family for their support.

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BRING OUT YOUR DEAD 2022

By Robert Dale

The Roseland August Trail (RAT) normally consists of a running festival over a weekend, in August, with a selection of races to partake in too. This year, however, for reasons beyond the event organiser's control, there was no running festival. Just the usual races, in July. 'Bring Out Your Dead' being at the extreme end of the spectrum, and the only one that really appealed to me. Nearly 5 miles out and back along a tough section of coast path, as many times as possible in 24 hours.

Two weeks before the race, during my last long training run on the race route down in Cornwall, the weather was overcast with intermittent drizzle and heavy rain. 'This would be perfect on race day!' I thought to myself during my four-lap training session. Come race day we were reaching the peak of a heatwave, with barely a cloud in sight throughout the entire race. This is my worst-case scenario. My preferred race being in a mountainous area



or during the colder half of the year.

My usual tactic is to start nice and slow, let the majority storm off ahead, then pick people off later in the race as they crash and burn. Today was different – off the line I found myself out in front. As far as I could tell I was running at a reserved pace, but maybe the adrenaline and excitement of starting my first 24-hour race has gotten the better of me; maybe I'm actually running too fast?

Having the sun shining down on me was a constant reminder to not only drink plenty of water, but to take in electrolytes regularly too – tablets to swallow, dissolvable tablets, coconut water, bananas – I had plenty of options. My biggest mistake occurred once the sun had set. Even though I was still too hot and sweating continuously, for some reason electrolytes slipped my mind now that I was relying on a head torch to light the way. Minimal experience racing in such temperatures is likely to blame, beyond my own forgetfulness.

It was 2am by the time I realised that I was badly dehydrated, whilst briefly stopping at the side of the trail. Now the race was on to overcome this issue before the sun was up. All my electrolyte options were unleashed, along with lots of water; the more I could get in and keep down the better. Luckily, through the night I tend not to eat as much when racing, so this focussed my water intake on rehydrating my body and by 7am my urine was back to a desirable colour – just in time for the sun, and just in time to start eating more again. PBH sandwiches and home-made fruit cake were calling me.

I have tried going down the route of gels and drinks, but proper food always seems to sit better. Although I did have more GI issues than usual, which I need to get to the bottom of. I assumed it was mainly the weather that made things more volatile. However, I have since competed in the Devon and Cornwall Backyard Ultra, where the weather was far more favourable, but my GI issues were substantially worse. I believe long-term stress may be playing a key role.

It took many laps for me to realise that I had indeed been running a good pace; my pace was fairly consistent and I had no perceived dip in performance until later in the race (18+ hours). By this point my legs were burnt out from the 500+ steps per lap, and generally rough off-camber terrain. Much like my usual tactic, being out in front also focuses my attention on efficiency. I managed to complete 16 laps within the 24-hour limit, which earned me the first-male trophy, and first overall.

After maybe a few dozen traditional ultras in previous years, this year has consisted of my first 24-hour race and my first backyard ultra. As I am due to start new employment in the coming months, I have no more races booked and nothing much planned other than target PBs for marathon and 100 miles. It would be nice to see the RAT in all its glory, so I may well be back in the future.



PERSONLIGA REKORDENS TÄVLING

THE 2022 EDITION OF PRT24

By Enar Warfvinge



Back in 2019 my neighbor convinced me to join him and run PRT24. That was the start of my 100+ miler running and I've been consistently improving my results, and moving my goals ever since. I've gotten better at both the physical and mental parts of long-distance running, better gear and preparations have reduced or removed discomfort such as chafing. Earlier this year I signed up for a fun little 50 miler in November where I ended up spending the whole race making a new friend. Sussi was going to PRT this year. That woke the hunger in me to return and see what I could achieve with three years of ultrarunning experience under my belt. After a few days of pondering and making sure my wife was okay with me leaving for yet another weekend of running, I got my race entry and train tickets booked and I was ready!

Last time every part of the experience was new. I made many, many mistakes and learned many, many things. One being that chafing between the butt cheeks really hurts. Now, with a total of ten 100+ milers completed and around twenty 50+ milers I was curious to see how far I could go. The goal was set at 200k, with a fallback goal of breaking my old record: 180.483 meters.

As I have become more and more

comfortable with the concept of really long races I've recently started experimenting with cutting the total time away from home by going directly to the start of races without spending the night before at the location. When the race is far away and starts early this means taking a night train, something that has been a mixed bag, but Växjö was close enough and started late enough that I could sleep at home. I got up at 04:45 to take the bus to the train station. A fairly uneventful and enjoyable train journey later I arrived in Växjö, only to find that my bus was "15 minutes late". I had 40 minutes to the start, so this was a bit unnerving. After contacting the RD to let him know I would be coming in hot, I eventually got on a bus and had all of five minutes to spare before the obligatory race information at 10:45. As I entered the arena I was greeted by Anna and Mathias whom I got to know at Kullamannen Dark Trail back in early 2020. Mathias was going to fun-run the 24-hour race and Anna was there for the 6-hour race. They helped me collect the chip and bib, set up a table and fill my soft flask. By pure chance I ended up at almost the exact same spot as in 2019, but the things I had packed for the race differed:

"70 or so gels; two mp3-players;

phone; three pairs of headphones (crappy, Bluetooth in-ear; noise canceling over-ear); power bank; two pairs of Fivefingers KSO EVO, one pair of Altra Lone Peak 4 and one pair of flip flops; basic first aid plus toothbrush and paste; chewing gum; Coke and the very Swedish "julmust"; a kilo of assorted candy."

Three years of experience later, turned into:

About a kilo of homemade GU knockoff gels in Twistshake refill squeeze bags; an empty soft flask; 20 candy sticks ("pingvinstång"); noise-canceling headphones; a pair of sandals; a pair of Altra Escalantes; painkillers, Leukoplast and anti-chafing cream.

The pacing plan was "run at a comfortable pace, walk a lap every 30 minutes. Eat and or drink while walking. Adjust as needed during the race".

After placing my gels, candy and soft flask on the table, putting my outdoor clothes under the table and changing from travel shoes to sandals, I made it to the briefing just as the RD began talking. I was too busy finding old acquaintances and calming down from the last leg of the journey to catch much information. What I caught was nothing new: how we were expected to behave; when and what would be served at the food table; when and how the change in direction would happen. All normal stuff I had heard and read before. With a final "good luck!" we were left with a few minutes to mingle and walk to the starting area.

I started off at a comfortable sub-6:00 per km, letting the heart rate set the pace and making sure that I did not waste energy overtaking slow runners and walkers in the tight passages. Time passed, distance passed. First walking break felt unneeded, but I had A Plan, and I would follow it. I felt that while it would be possible to wing it during the first half of the race, in the middle of the night when the mind and body is tired it's best to have the routine almost down to muscle memory. So I walked and drank or ate at least something every 30 minutes right from the start.

The first 10k took just shy of an hour. It felt good to build up some buffer for the later part of the race and nothing was bothering me. An hour later I had



run over 20k. The first marathon took 4:10; ten minutes after we had the first change of direction.

Somewhere around this time I started wondering about hydration. The arena is supposedly 17 degrees celsius and I was sweating a lot, drinking a lot and not feeling the need of the bathrooms at all. I made sure to drink half a liter every 30 minutes for a few hours, just in case.

After five hours I set a new 50k PB and we were served falafel and rice as our first hot meal of the race. By now I was slowly losing speed and was around 15 seconds slower per lap than at my fastest. This was still faster than I had expected. My sandal-clad feet were hurting a bit, but otherwise nothing was bothering me.

The hours kept passing and I kept running. The plan seemed to work fine, though I grew tired of energy drinks and changed to Coke and water instead. My gels gave me plenty of sugar and tasted better, so there was really no need for more liquid calories. My feet hurt and eventually after what I think was around 80k (so near when I set the second PB of the race at 50 miles) I changed shoes from sandals to Altra Escalante to avoid risking that the feet would fail me and ruin the race. I was still having fun, though I was getting tired. It was around 8 pm. I began incorporating short rest sessions on the hour. For a few minutes I'd lay down on the ground with my feet on a chair and close my eyes. That did wonders and I felt like my pace increased enough to make back the time the following hour.

More and more people were walking or had stopped, and for a few hours before the 12h start at 21:00 it was just us 24-hour runners on the track. I felt strong and fast, giving and receiving compliments as I passed and was

passed by runners. At the six-hour split I had been the tenth man, now I was number eleven. Robert, a friend I've made from several ultras the last few years, was trading the number ten spot with me as he alternated between running, where he is faster than me, and not running, where I'd overtake him again. My pace had slowly dropped from 2:10 per lap at the start to 2:30 and everything felt really good and under control. I even chose to deviate from the plan in order to skip a walking break and sometimes would only walk half a loop instead of the full.

After almost eleven hours I had run 100k. I celebrated this moment with my slowest lap of the whole race. I don't remember what I did but probably a long rest on the ground combined with a bathroom break made this lap take almost fifteen minutes. I was getting tired again and had a cup of coffee from the snacks table. Then it was back to running in circles. Soon, 12 hours and almost 108 kilometers had passed. I was still on track for 200k. After thirteen hours we were served hot food again: meatballs and mashed potatoes. This lifted my spirits and gave me energy for a few hours more. It was nice to have the fresh 12-hour runners on track as company to us mindless 24-hour zombies.

Run, run, run. Walk and ingest gels and drink. Run, run, run. Lay down for a minute or two. Rinse, repeat. With fewer and fewer competitors running and more and more walking or resting, I slowly began climbing the leaderboard.

At hour 17 I had run 146 kilometers and the average pace had dropped to 7 min/km. Some quick math gave me not-quite 8 km per hour needed to reach 200k. That's 7:30-pace. Should be doable if I only kept on running. I was getting increasingly tired though, both mentally and physically, and began

Race Report

having problems with motivation. A new PB was all but guaranteed unless I completely stopped moving, while a 200k+ finish would force me to keep on running with no long breaks for seven additional hours.

After 18 hours and 53 minutes I passed the 100-mile mark. This was an hour faster than my PB at GAX a few months ago, and three hours faster than my best result before that. Now I had to manage a pace of around 7.6 km per hour, almost 8 minutes per km. It felt doable, but I kept coming back to the last four hours of GAX where I had to cover 30 km to manage sub-20 and what an effort that was. The fact that this race was indoors, flat and with no additional weight from a vest or headlight was nothing I took into consideration at the time. It was six o'clock in the morning. Breakfast was in two hours. While the front runners were still going really strong, most others were in way worse shape than me. This always helps lift my spirits somewhat. My relative suffering and discomfort pales in comparison to those limping around the track, clearly in pain; laying knocked out on a bed next to the track; or throwing up in a bin.

Run, run, run. Walk and ingest gels and drink. Run, run, run. Not laying down anymore as I feared this would reduce my pace too much. It was also getting more discomforting with my legs cramping up when laying down or rising up.

Finally at 8 o'clock it was time for more food. Pasta bolognese. I took two servings to make sure I'd have energy for the last push to the end. Only 22k to go to reach my goal. When running I still kept my pace below 7 minutes, so it was a matter of not resting too much and it would happen: I would run 200 km in 24 hours. I felt good; strong and fast.

Run, run, run. Lap after lap after lap. Minutes passed, kilometers passed. After 21 hours and 20 minutes I passed my old record of 180.483 meters and got to ring the Record Bell.

With an hour to go, the end was in sight. Only the magic of the Golden Hour remained. Moods improve as many racers get up from resting and start to walk; others stop walking and start to run; runners increase their pace. There is no need to conserve energy for later, every ounce of energy can be spent as the race is soon over. My plan was to run 199 km, then crack open my non alcoholic beer I had brought for this very occasion and have a celebratory walk until the race tracker showed over 200,000 meters.

I ran twelve laps in the company of Tommy, who had planned on walking but after hearing how close I was to my goal, took it on himself to pace me to the 200k. Then before I knew it I was walking, drinking my beer and feeling pretty good about my achievement. Four laps of walking later I rang the Record Bell for the second time of the event as I passed 200 kilometers with 15 minutes left of the race.

When I last ran this race, back in 2019, with fifteen minutes left I completely lost my why, and so sat down and did nothing for the rest of the race. This time was different. I wasn't going to miss those final moments of joy and celebration again. Instead I began running, albeit at a show hobble, and the last fifteen seconds I even took up a sprint! Then the finish gun was fired and we all sat down on the track and waited for our last partial lap to be manually measured, got our medals and that was it. Eventually I ended up covering 201.781 kilometers, enough for eighth place overall and fourth male runner.

I'll definitely do it again, next time I think I'll try to have dedicated support and no walks or stops planned. If that works I might even get a podium finish, or at least a new PB!

Here are the last minutes of the race, captured on video:

<https://www.facebook.com/29191/?id=219930671367843>

Race website: www.prtvaxjo.se



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AUTUMN 100

By San Buckley

Course: 100 miles, four legs of out-and-backs with the central hub at Goring – the central checkpoint where you can have a drop bag. In total, 16 checkpoints on average every six miles.

Training: Base fitness gained from marathon training for the April event. Miles upped to an average of 50 miles per week over five days, various long runs building up to intermediate training race – Bullock Smithy 58 miles then recce at Goring, back-to-back – two legs of course (24/25 miles) three weeks before the event.

Race plan: To finish the course which has a cut-off of 28 hours but aiming to complete within 24 hours. Nominations of 5, 6, 6 and 7-hour split for the four legs (24 miles, 24.5 miles, 25.5 miles and 26 miles).

Kit prep: Standard compulsory kit, prep for drop bag included food for each leg, clothing for each leg (if required), poles for Leg 3, road shoes for Leg 4.

Pacer: Gordon – he is my running buddy – we run together regularly and have raced together from 10ks to ultras; this is not the first time he has supported me on an ultra.

Race Day

For the last few years I have wanted to eventually do a 100-mile event, finally booking onto A100, a recommendation from a friend. I went to get my race number and hand in my drop bag. The village hall is full of what looks like “proper” ultrarunners, some of whom I follow on webinars. I was starstruck!

Leg 1

We (my friend James is also in the race and we travelled down together) are at the start line. Even as I type I can feel the excitement and nerves that I felt at the time. The race brief is tinged with humour – yes, you will be windswept on Leg 3; enjoy the turnaround for more headwind! That kind of thing, but I am still making mental notes at this point: Leg 3, cold – wrap up. We are lucky with the weather, it is mild, there is a little rain forecasted, and up to now, there has been a bit of rain but nothing that will cause us too many problems underfoot.

9am off we go, 234 participants ready to face 100 miles. At this point I note that there are a few that are doing the “Grand Slam” which is four 100-mile races this year, A100 being the last of the series.

The start is straight on to the Thames path, mostly trail, the path is slightly muddy which makes part of it a tad slippery. It is a bit congested as we all file into a line, it is a good thing as we aren't going off too quickly. It's all very nice, the weather is kind, there are what looks like professional rowers on the Thames as we head on out. I try to remember, a drink at least every 15 minutes, something to eat every hour, that's the plan. About six miles in we come to the first checkpoint at Wallingford. I don't need a top up of water but I grab a cheese sandwich and eat as I go. There are a few twists and turns, away from the Thames, onto road and then back on the path. It's very social, everyone asking each other what their experiences are, how many 100s they have done, that kind of thing. I had one guy pull out his spreadsheet whilst running to show me his planned splits. As we go, the person I am running with tells me that we should expect to see the front runners soon. The beauty of an out-and-back is that we can encourage each other. At around mile 10 we see the first of the front runners, this means that they are four miles in front of us already. Fantastic to watch!

At mile 12.5 we get to Little Wittenham checkpoint; a volunteer fills my water bottle for me, I grab another sandwich, a drink of Coke and off I go walking and eating until I've eaten and then I start jogging. It's now back to Goring, cheering on runners we pass and vice versa. It rained for a few minutes but luckily that was all we had for the entire race. I am settling into this race but what is common that we are finding is that Leg 1 is relatively flat which means we have less excuse to walk. I have a gel at some point to give me a little boost and back at Wallingford I use the facilities, grab a sandwich again and head back to Goring. I reach Goring at 4 hours 20, I see Gordon just before getting to there, quickly grab a bit of food from my drop bag, another gel, Eccles cake to put in my running vest, the volunteers fill my bottle (I ask for orange squash), I grab another sandwich and sausage roll and head out to the ridgeway before 4 hours 30 (so it is now 1:30pm).

Leg 2

I have managed to save 30 minutes. I bump into my friend, Alan, who has done this race before. He has come to cheer me and a few others on and I tell him that I have banked an extra 30 minutes so I can afford to take it easier. He tells me, “No, get going, save the time to use at Goring.” I take note and continue. I know Leg 2, I recced it, I know that it is a bit flat until 8 miles in, there's a climb and then a nice downhill to look forward to on the way back. It is now around lunch time, I take a couple of Jelly Babies, and have a bit of Eccles cake. It is a sociable event, chatting to other runners and all in all just trying to stay comfortable.

Race Report

At mile 20 I had already felt that long-distance ache but even though I am currently on about 30ish miles, it has not got any worse. Another checkpoint, North Stoke at mile 29, I grab some fresh fruit, so nice to have. I remind myself to get some more of that on the way back. I like this leg, it is a mix of trail and also goes through pretty villages with lovely cottages. A bit further on we start going uphill through the woods, this is where most of us walk, unless you are one of the front runners. But it is good for me, a chance to catch my breath and remind myself to have a drink and a snack whilst walking. I reached the turnaround checkpoint, Swyncombe at mile 37.5. It is starting to feel cool as we are higher up being on the ridge. I know that it is generally downhill on the way back so I don't put on any extra layers, I get my bottle filled up, have a bite to eat and I head back to Goring. I see a guy that is an ultrarunner coach and experienced runner and notice how quick he is at the checkpoint. Heading back there are a few short climbs but returning through the woods, it is a really nice stretch of down, not too steep, and I am having fun with this. Back at North Stoke checkpoint at mile 46, I grab some fruit and off I go again. Heading down back towards Goring, I am pinpointing runners and trying to keep with their pace so that it helps drive me on.

I manage to get back to Goring at mile 50 and see Gordon an hour earlier than I had originally planned, banking a total of an hour and it is now dusk. I decided that I will allow myself extra time here to sort myself out. I get my drop bag and put a few things in my running vest, have some soup and tea that the volunteers have kindly provided, then get changed into a long-sleeved top, long leggings and put my waterproof jacket on. I grabbed my running poles and having spent a good 30 minutes at Goring, I set off. It has been a long time, so I could have been more efficient.

Leg 3

Back on the ridgeway, another one that I have recced so I know it, I am glad of this. I know the terrain (hence the poles), and I know what it looks like in the light as it is now dark and there's not much of a view at all. It is uphill on the first stretch, on road for the first mile or so and then onto trail. It is warm to start off with, so warm that I take off my jacket. I can see a few red lights ahead, fellow runners, and gradually after about three miles, someone coming the other way, this is the front runner heading back to Goring. He shouts, "Is there anyone in front? Nope, he is the front runner."

We are getting higher on the ridgeway and it is getting windy, really windy. I put my waterproof on again. Once reaching the top, this leg is very exposed so the wind is blowing straight across. The path is all trail, it is quite rutty so it is essential to be careful with the footing. I reach the next checkpoint, East Ilsley Down at mile 56.3. There's a marquee with pretty lights and friendly volunteers

offering whatever we need. I have a quick coffee, some watermelon and carry on. By now there are some runners that I am zigzagging; that's becoming the pattern where we are taking it in turns to overtake each other. I chatted with some runners, it was a bit of a distraction from the wind, they really were not joking about it in the start briefing.

At last I reach the turnaround checkpoint Chain Hill at mile 62.5 where I have another coffee and as I am typing I have lost track of my food intake. I head back and it is still windy but starting to feel not quite the bashing that I felt like I had on the way out. We are a sea of head torches. It is hard to spot who is who but I manage to spot my friend James, he is only about 10 to 20 minutes behind, he does seem in good spirits. I am trying to make the most of the downhills; this is my tactic, to benefit from the downs with less effort to run down. I notice that some runners have a certain run/walk time regardless of up or downhill. I have another gel, I have had one on each leg so far. Even though I really did not want it, I needed to take it. I actually allowed two for each leg but that has not happened. Back at East Ilsley at mile 68.7 I have a bit more watermelon, I don't know what I want at this point. Back out, I head back towards Goring, it is mainly downhill but there are a fair bit of undulations. I chat to a lady who I have seen lots of. She tells me that it is her fourth 100. Oh my days! I am back on the road section towards Goring and my feet are feeling it with my trail trainers on. At last, back in Goring at mile 75 where I have Gordon waiting to be my pacer. It is quite strict with pacer rules, he was not allowed in the checkpoint until I reached East Ilsley and he had to accompany me for the whole of the last leg. He has a pacer's bib with my number, 155, on it. I have some pasta and a brew (thank you volunteers), put my poles back in my drop bag, change into road trainers and head out. I had planned to have seven hours for this leg but have managed to bank an extra hour. I tell Gordon that even if we walk this leg, we should be back before the 24 hours that I was aiming for. Before leaving this checkpoint we see the male winner, he's walking out with his trophy, his time was 14:52.

Leg 4

Off we go, onto the Thames path now. There is a small stretch of tarmac which is good now that I have my roads on. But very soon we are going across fields and a rooty, undulating path. With being so tired I am tripping over left, right and centre. I do not feel like I can run, the tiredness hits me big time. I am yawning and not thinking well at all. Gordon is chatting away to me, trying to do his best to keep me going. We reach the next checkpoint Pangbourne at mile 79.9 and I need to stop again to gather myself. I don't feel like eating anything or even drinking for that matter, I am just SO tired. I take two paracetamols with caffeine. All the caffeine products that I had put in my drop bag were left at Goring, untouched, I was not thinking straight

and did not grab them. However, we continue towards Reading and are in full walking mode, the caffeine from the tablets is starting to kick in. We see a fellow runner going in the opposite direction, she is being sick. We stay with her for a little while and ask her if we can help in any way, she says she will be okay. As we go on, Gordon works out that (in between running to open the many gates for me) if we continue at the current pace, we will get back to Goring in approximately 23:30 hours. We see the sign "Welcome to Reading" which is nice BUT our checkpoint is still miles away. However, the great news is that this is further than I have ever been! We go over Pangbourne Hill (I mean have we not done enough for someone to throw in these hills??). So we jog the Downs and get back to the towpath along the Thames. Eventually, after making a slight misturn, we get back on track, climb over a bridge and up the steps to the Reading checkpoint at mile 87.5. We have a drink, a snack; another runner turns up that we saw at Pangbourne and then he faints. The volunteers are great with him, they tell him he is likely to be low in sugar and tell him he's not the first one.

We head back at a swift walking pace; knowing that we are returning to the finish might be helping. We are still seeing runners going towards Reading and wonder when we will see James. We see James when we have 10 miles to go (16 for him), he says that he is cold but all his extra layers are at Goring, same as me, not thinking straight anymore.

Our pace is reasonably good considering I don't feel like I can run. We run on the Downs at Pangbourne and head through the fields. I decided that I won't stop at Pangbourne checkpoint at mile 95.1, we should just head back. I feel hungry and have the Hula Hoops that Gordon has given me. He's passed me his gloves too as I am feeling cold. It's dawn now so we can put our head torches away. At this point I am telling Gordon that I can't imagine doing another 100 – this has been so tough – he tells me that I need to wait a few days to let it settle in. We can actually see the little mounds that we had climbed up, as well as many of the tree roots that I was tripping over. I had also forgotten about some of the hills that we had come down. With about three miles to go, we get overtaken by a runner and his pacer, so I say to Gordon, "Let's keep with them for a bit." I think I manage about a mile and start walking after that, and then get overtaken by them again. I ask Gordon what the paths are that are left, I don't remember but he remembers them all. Finally we are back. I have made it! There were a couple of volunteers outside Goring directing us to the side of the village hall. Oh my! I made it in 23:09 hours. I am rewarded with a finisher's buckle with "100 miles - One day" on it for those who complete in under 24 hours, and a much-treasured finishers t-shirt. As well as a bacon butty.

Thank you!

Wow, what an experience! Thanks to Gordon for his support, just amazing, I would not have achieved the time that I did without his fab pacing abilities! Thanks to all the volunteers on this event, they are amazing and provided you with everything. This is a great event for anyone who would like to try their first 100 event. Even though the out-and-back may not sound as attractive to some, it is great for runners to pass each other and offer encouragement and reassurance. At the turnaround points I did feel a little boost knowing that I was heading back to Goring. With it being out-and-back we had plenty of checkpoints for supplies which was also fantastic.

What have I learned?

- I need to be more efficient with my packing. There are things I thought would be good but it is about need, any more becomes confusing.
- I need to be more efficient at checkpoints.
- Write a checklist. Drink now, eat now, caffeine now, Vaseline now. During the run I was thinking when I get back I will put some Vaseline on but when I got to my drop bag, I totally forgot about it. Same applied to the caffeine, I had a caffeine drink that I should have drank but totally forgot.
- As a continuation of the above, I would write specific instructions to myself at each stage and even a checklist of what is in my vest so I know exactly what I have.
- If there is a pacer, give them the extra layer and caffeine supply. Gordon was great and had thought of a lot of the things that I might need.
- Volunteer! It would not have been the same without such amazing support. All the volunteers were so great.

One more discovery: when I emptied my running vest I had carried a croissant around for 50 miles; I had thought about wanting it but didn't realise I had it!

And yes, after a day or two I have changed my mind and would do another 100 mile event – in fact, next year!

THE CHEVIOT GOAT 2022

52ND 15:58:12

By Tom Soop



If you like punishing yourself, rather than self-flagellation, this race is a good alternative. In a word, "Horrendous!"

It's probably worth pointing out that I had an advantage with this race. During registration, Tess had purchased a very nice event hoodie for me that I was too tight to buy myself. This sealed my fate, if I dropped out, there's no way I could wear the hoodie, so it was a done deal. Remind me never to let her do that again.

The race starts from Ingram at 6am with the first few miles slowly starting to climb. However, it doesn't take long before the reality of the day sets in as the time is spent slogging up hills, all of which I'm pretty sure had a minimum of three false tops. The ground underfoot is mainly saturated, slippery mud, or tussocks with saturated, slippery mud, or heather with saturated, slippery mud underneath. It's basically like Dartmoor on steroids. At the top of each of these hills the time is spent bog hopping, trying to avoid sinking up to the family jewels and keeping your shoes from being sucked off! (One chap failed at this, running the last eight miles with only one shoe, his feet were so cold he hadn't noticed the shoe missing for some time apparently, he looks a little deranged in his finisher's photo).

There are runnable stints, but it often still involves a lot of slipping. To combat this, you can run through the heather on each side of these paths. You then discover hidden sinkholes. You start to feel the course has been made by someone getting the map and randomly scribbling all over it. This is because the route will often veer off a perfectly nice path and take you trampling through boggy heather, tussocks or bracken for miles.

Then there are the down hills. There are some nice ones, but many are so steep you can't fail to fall over with the slippiness. Just for added fun there are intermittent rocky boulder fields randomly placed on a couple of the ridiculously steep downhill. I think that sets the scene nicely!!





As far as my race went, I hadn't really been listening to the race brief (just for a change), so was more than delighted to find I'd covered 14 miles by the time I'd hit the first water station, instead of 10 miles which is the distance I thought it was at. Woohool!!!

On the negative, my feet were frozen, which in itself had pros and cons. The negative was the discomfort that came with the cold before they went numb; the positive, once they were numb, I couldn't feel the ankle twists and occasional toe stubs.

The next eight miles to the first proper CP at Barrowburn seemed to take forever, but I arrived comfortably somewhere between 30 and 40th and was happy as I wasn't out to kill myself on this race, primarily using it as a long training run for the ARC in January. After a change of socks and a quick refuel I was off again.

The next 20 miles required some work. Crossing the border into Scotland it started to snow... which was nice. The route carried on through the boggy terrain with spells of snow, sunshine, then more snow or sleet. Reaching the flagstones of the Pennine way was a welcome luxury running on solid ground. I hit the stone pillar at the top of the Cheviot and headed back along the stones until the route turned left and downhill. I smiled to myself at the thought of warmer weather... for about 30 seconds. Bang, straight into another un-runnable boulder field.

Hitting the last CP at High Bleakhope before dark I added another layer and got help filling my bottles as my hands were icicles, then pushed on up the hills.

At 6.30pm a notification popped up on my watch informing me a friend had just finished the race. I reflected on this for a moment... Bastard. He'd be sitting in the warm with a beer while I'd be out here for another few hours.

Still, I only had 17k to go, I could be back in a couple of hours. If only it was that simple. There's no point covering the events of the last section as it was pretty much identical to the previous 40 miles. I did enjoy the last few miles running back into Ingram where an alcoholic drink was waiting for me.

I've run a fair few of these races now and each has its own hurdles, most of which are yourself dealing with your own physical and mental battles. The desolate terrain of this race, added to the cold, created another layer which makes it a thoroughly tough race. If you'd asked me on the day if I'd run it again, the response would definitely have finished with, "off!" A couple of days on and I'm not so sure, but for now, I've definitely had enough of moor running!

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- 09 - Montalbo



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[Taking on The Tour de Geants: 200+ miles and 80K of Gain with Peter Ward](#) Everyday Ultra.

Host Joe Corcione talks with Peter Ward, an ultra endurance athlete who has completed the Tour de Geants, Cocodona 250, and here he breaks down the Tour de Geants, what it takes to complete it, how he prepared for it, and some crazy stories from the race.

[The Tea and Trails Podcast](#) - Episode 9 - Robyn Cassidy - 2023 Arc Of Attrition. This week Eddie [@edwinasutton](#) and Gary [@garythwaites2498](#) are joined by Robyn Cassidy. Robyn was 2nd Lady at the 2023 Arc of Attrition 100 mile race.

[Running 44@60](#) This is the third of Trevor Lee's trilogy of podcasts about the 2023 Arc of Attrition. Vassos Alexander shares his experience of this increasingly iconic event.

[Jack Scott - The Spine Race debrief.](#)

Lots of chats recently with well known ultrarunners including Damian Hall, Alison Walker, Kim Collison, Ultrarunning Sam speaks to Jack Scott who heroically took second place at this year's Winter Spine Race. A race that gained a lot of attention for how close Damian Hall and Jack were as they came in to the finish.



[She Runs Ultras](#) Meghan Gould

Shares what really happens when a typical, non-professional runner takes on the challenge of running an ultra. Got some races planned for this year? Let's train together.

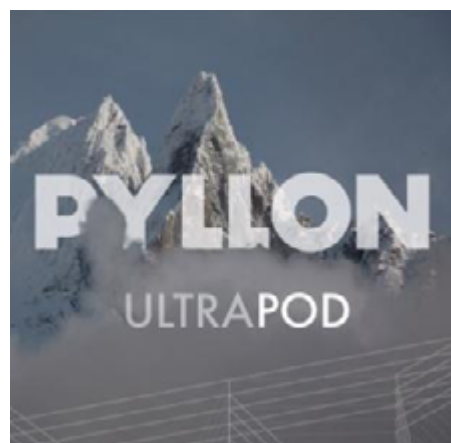
Davy Crockett's [Ultrarunning History Podcast](#)

127: Frank Hart Part 2: The First Black Ultrarunning Star.

Frank Hart, at age 22, broke through racial barriers with his fourth-place finish in the 5th Astley Belt Race in Madison Square Garden, held in September 1879. Despite being black, Hart became a local hero in his hometown of Boston, Massachusetts. He had proven himself worthy of praise, competing on the grandest sporting stage in the world.

Trail & ultra running from Wild Ginger Running

[Your first 100 miler - which one to choose?](#) Are there any "easier" ones? What aspects to consider? This month's training chat with coach, physio and Summer Spine 108 mile winner Tim Pigott from HP3 Coaching. There's also a [YouTube version](#).



The Pylon Ultra Pod Series 6 Episode 5 -

[Threats to Confidence You Need to be Aware of](#)

Conversations on living the ultra life. Hosted by Paul Giblin and James Stewart.

[Episode 200: Finlay Wild on the Wild World of UK FKT's.](#)

The Fastest Known Time Podcast was started in 2018 by Buzz Burrell and this episode talks with Finlay Wild, Scottish resident and recent Paddy Buckley record-setter.

THE SPINE PERSPECTIVE

By Matt Green

When is an energy bar more than an energy bar? We're all familiar with the untold joy of finding a bit of food we thought we'd lost during a long run. That gooey misshapen block of tastiness which looks like it's been hiding down the back of the sofa for six months. At home it would be rejected and put in the cupboard but in your moment of need it's the best thing since sliced bread, better in fact.

Running gives us all the opportunity to have a different perspective. Typically the longer and more extreme, the more mind-bending things can get and there's no better example than the Montane Spine Race. This 268 mile non-stop winter footrace along the Pennine Way National Trail (UK) has recently passed its 10th anniversary. In a race where

participants experience such intense hardship, the grinning face of perspective lies in wait around every corner.

At Summit Fever Media we've had the delight of telling the stories from this one of a kind race since 2013. Every year is different, the weather always at full volume but delivered in all combinations at all hours. Attracting people from a multitude of backgrounds and countries into this melting pot of endurance fanatics, keen to test themselves against this beautiful bog-monster. It doesn't take long before each runner sees a change in perspective. Some which last a fleeting moment, others that last way beyond the finish line.

With long stretches between each checkpoint, food becomes more like treasure. Everything from pizza

and pies to rice pudding and doughnuts are carefully zipped and clipped into safe storage in their packs. You might even see a runner carefully de-frosting a chocolate bar that's frozen into a tooth-shattering brick. Of course, post race this feeling of intense hunger can be remedied by our good friend, the fridge - with all its delights.

The sleep monsters are real too. Year after year filming this event has taught us when these monsters come out to play, whispering in the ears of runners that they need to sleep more than anything in the world. A staggering, stumbling tiredness unlike any other you would normally experience in life. Some runners become zombies with icicle dribbles forming, others fall asleep at the first moment of sitting down, while the racing



snakes manage an impressive three days of constant movement with less than three hours of sleep.

The changing perspective of distance and time is one almost every runner experiences. When five kilometres seems like infinity and then one day you do six, our boundaries are constantly getting pushed. Seven days of forward motion along the Pennine Way, all day, all night and every day. The usual tactics of mentally breaking the distance down into chunks become second nature to mentally survive the 268 mile national trail.

While the everyday niggles of bills and commitments melt away into distant memory, the purity

of a singular mission gives every runner strength and purpose. Things which would previously be considered "big problems" like blisters are managed and barely detected on the radar. A brief encounter with another runner can give the untold joy of a brief companionship, united in suffering.

Completing any goal that you wondered was even possible brings a change to the way you look at things, when the goal is as big as the Montane Spine Race, it's not uncommon to bring about permanent shifts in lifestyle. Setting yet more outrageous goals which previously were out of reach suddenly become a possibility, others seek new jobs

that give more satisfaction, some move home to find a new lifestyle.

This journey of perspective is one of my favourite things about The Montane Spine Race, seeing the value of the simple and small, to the large and unimaginable - shifted in such a profound way. To fully understand? I guess you'd need to stand on the start line*

*You can of course also watch the new documentary film "Spine" the story of 10 years of Britain's Most Brutal Race!

Available on Amazon Video and Vimeo on Demand - UK Film Tour starting on 10th Feb 2023.

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GOING SOLO

By Ellie Green



As a child in the 90s I spent my time devouring adventure books, from the exploits of Ranulph Fiennes, Joe Simpson, Arthur Conan Doyle, from the Famous Five to the White Spider, Jane Austen to Jules Verne. So many excellent characters, adventures and stories but bereft of, bar a few exceptions, women having big adventures and exploring the world.

I clearly remember as a teenager thinking how unfair it felt when boys were encouraged to have adventures, explore further, climb mountains, dream bigger whereas the advice given to girls at that time was much more along the lines of 'be safe', 'be careful', 'get a steady job', 'don't go out at night', 'be responsible'. There was an assumption that we were targets or in danger and this was drilled into us from an early age.

Fast forward many years and I began following the expeditions and adventures of Jenny Tough, watching her films, reading her articles and stories as she ran solo and unsupported across mountain ranges around the world. Armed with her 30 litre rucksack and a shit load of hard work and determination she opened up the world to legions of people who thought that adventure wasn't available to them, because they didn't fit the stereotype. I remember clearly when interviewing Jenny she said 'be the change you want to see', and then hearing about Jenny's own experience of looking up at speakers on a stage at a film festival and not seeing anyone she could relate to. Fortunately we have people like Jenny who decide to create their own spaces in these narratives, and who choose to adventure their way.

Her plan started as running unsupported and solo across a mountain range in Kazakhstan, and that soon developed into six mountain ranges. Currently she is the first and only person who has run across a mountain range on six continents. She self filmed along the way and many of her films have been screened at and won awards at film festivals around the world.





My role in this story came about in 2022 when I was approached by Jenny and Montane with the opportunity to combine Jenny's self shot footage and edits with interviews and more filming to create a film that documents her journey, and the mental and physical challenges she faced.

Whether you are completing world firsts running across mountain ranges or smashing your 5km PB, running brings people together, gives you peace in an existence which is increasingly frantic, but it can also leave you raw, and brings you face to face with yourself. There's often nowhere to hide when you're pushing your boundaries and comfort zone, as Jenny was doing on a daily basis and there can be a darkness to this side of extreme running.

I was struggling with the edit one day, working through some audio which was emotional on both sides of the camera, where Jenny delves into some very personal experiences discussing her journey into RED-S and disordered eating. I felt like raging against a world that we've created where your value is measured on some arbitrary number on the weighing scales.

This was a project that was daunting and amazing in equal measure. To take a story which is so immensely personal but equally groundbreaking in the world of adventure, endurance and ultra running and do justice to that journey in 40 minutes is a scary prospect, but a summer spent filming, running, drinking wine, laughing, crying and deep diving into Jenny's journey helped to weave the story together.

We're so lucky that now we have people like Jenny who are inspiring and showing younger generations that adventure isn't just for one demographic, and it doesn't have to cost thousands of pounds. The world of adventure is slowly opening up, becoming more diverse and this is down to people like Jenny who speak up and out loudly to challenge institutionalised ideas.

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RUNNING THROUGH THE NIGHT, THE STRETCH TO RUN 100 MILES

BY DAVID BYRNE
By Antonio Codina

This is the second book from David. I reviewed his first book "Running through the night: ultramarathon adventures in Europe" a couple of years back and I was curious to read his second book and learn about his latest running adventures.

David's books are written as diaries of his racing and training calendar. His first book described his races and travels in Europe, from 2010 to 2018, culminating in his completion of TDS by UTMB.

In his latest book he covers the period between 2018 and 2022 where his initial objective is to run UTMB. To achieve this he will have to deal with several set backs, including the COVID lockdowns, race cancellations and a long term injury.

I have never met David in person, but after reading his work I feel that I know quite a lot of him. He is passionate about long distance races and he is very methodical in his training and planning. And he can be quite competitive, racing quite hard at times!

As in his first book he explains his training methods with a lot of detail. I think many people will find this interesting as he manages to train for some really tough mountain races despite living in a not very hilly part of England. He uses a treadmill to train hill climbing, and does long training runs and hikes through the night even in urban areas to train sleep deprivation. The last part of the book includes tables that describe his treadmill sessions or how to calculate timings for an ultra. He is a "middle of the pack" runner with a normal job that plans his own training, so I think this book is quite unusual as it doesn't come from an elite runner or sports expert.

I like how he plans his year of races, with A and B events. He also finds small events in the UK or Europe that look very interesting, like the XNRG and Climb Southwest races in England or the NUTS karhunkeirros in Finland or the X-Alpine Verbier in Switzerland. I agree with David that small local events are very often the best. His race reports and descriptions of races are very good and could help anybody wanting to do those races.

Like many endurance runners, David also has to fight a long term injury and I find his advice very valuable. More impressively he takes on long distance cycling to train his endurance without aggravating his injury. Despite the lack of running fitness he finishes the 2021 Lakeland 100. A fantastic achievement that should inspire anybody struggling with an injury to find ways to train and recover and ultimately achieve their ultrarunning dream.



A Head for Running

Inside my ultra-marathon triumphs and disasters

by William Sichel

WILLIAM SICHEL

A HEAD FOR RUNNING

When I was asked if I would like to read and review an early copy of William's book, I jumped at the chance.

William is a legend in the world of ultra running as well as a local hero. I had previously heard him interviewed and speak about his running career, so I was keen to read more about his running story and maybe even pick up some tips on how I could improve my own running.

As an ultra runner myself I loved reading more about William's training strategies and the mindsets he uses when racing. However this book is not just for runners. Starting with his first training run, the book's timeline jumps around quite a bit, as he weaves his distinguished sporting career into his life story. It describes his early school days, and how they shaped his personality. His table-tennis playing days where despite his determination and talent he could never quite deliver the winning performances.

How chance led him to meeting his wife and moving to Sanday (Orkney, Scotland). Where together on the remote and isolated Island they made a home and built a successful business together. How the constant daily grind and slog led to him needing a new outlet and challenge and how he found this in a successful running career. How success led to a determination to achieve more and push his limits to see just how far he could push his body and how many records he could achieve.

Throughout the book, William gives a very honest insight into his character highlighting his own strengths and weaknesses. He reflects on the highs and lows of his life with a raw honesty, he doesn't appear to be looking for acceptance or admiration he is just telling his story. And what a story it is! The achievements and statistics are mind blowing.

Chapters go into detail of some of his most memorable running events with whole chapters dedicated to; the 3100 mile race in New York City. Badwater Ultra Marathon. His first multi-day race in Monaco and when he was the first person to run the north coast 500 mile route. Another chapter details how he set himself the target to gather 750 Scottish, British or World age group records. There are also chapters dedicated to his life challenges, his cancer diagnosis and recovery. The chapter called "The

ultimate test" is where he describes the shock of his wife's diagnosis of terminal cancer. How his running was put on hold, so he could be there with her and share those precious 24 days before her death. He describes how he felt his running journey had trained him to deal with this most challenging time of his life "My ability to relax under mounting stress and exhaustion. My stick-ability and bloody-mindedness had never been more needed now." Following his wife's death again he turned to running as his chosen therapy. "My running gave me a vital structure and framework to rebuild my life".

So if you are already a runner, you are going to love reading William's insights into his training and races and you are sure to pick up some good advice as well as be inspired to set yourself new challenges. If you are not a runner, you are still likely to enjoy reading this interesting account of all that William has achieved. However be careful because it might just inspire you to put on some trainers and go for a run, which I warn you can be very addictive and might just change your life!

Sarah Scarth

A Head For Running is available from the [Orcadian Bookshop](#)

Contributors



David Jackson

40 years old former professional rugby player, now Master Oxygen Advantage coach having retired from rugby due to a brain injury in 2013. Using running as a way to train the breath for better health, performance and deeper connections.



Dawn Nunes

Is an experienced sports physiotherapist with a Masters degree in Sports Physiotherapy. Dawn is an extremely dedicated runner, both on trail and on road, and has completed two Comrades Ultra Marathons (90km) as well as Ultra-Trail Cape Town, Two Oceans and a number of ultra trails. Dawn's passion is to help runners of all abilities to thrive.



Dimitra Kefokeri

My name is Dimitra Kefokeri and i am 43 years old. I am a mother of two sons (16 and 17 years old) and a daughter (19 years old). I live in Corinthos and I work in sales and I have my own show on a local radio station. I started running 7 years ago to lose weight and now I run long distance races. I am a member of the running team ΛΥΚΟΙ of Dimitrios Kehayioglou coaching.



Matt & Ellie Green

Founded Summit Fever Media in 2012 and have since built up a reputation for capturing raw and emotional narratives of human perseverance and extreme endeavours in wild and inhospitable locations and on remote expeditions. Our films have been selected for screening, have won awards at film festivals around the world, and have been sold for worldwide broadcast.

Checkout the [Summit Fever Media](#) website for more details and social media links.



Enar Warfvinge

I'm a 40 year old IT-project manager living in Stockholm, Sweden with my wife and two children. I rediscovered running when I was on parental leave in 2018. In 2020 I ran 5000 kilometers for charity, collecting over £7000 in donations for the Swedish blood cancer society. Gax was my third 100-miler finish.



Kate Maltby

Lives in a yurt in West Cumbria with her partner and dogs. She is a qualified Pilates and Yoga teacher. Check out her YouTube channel- Stretch Mountain Pilates and Yoga. Her background as a runner begun aged 15, where she ran for England in cross country and then went on to run for Great Britain in mountain running. Currently studying a PhD in sport at Stirling University focusing on elite athlete's transition to retirement with attention to coping, addictive behavior and intervention, built upon previous studies in sport psychology and coaching. Kate also loves cycling for fun, growing vegetables, swimming, reading short stories and living a balanced life full of all things creative! Kate now teaches Pilates online and provides free videos via her YouTube channel, [Stretch Mountain Pilates and Yoga](#).



Laura Watts

Is an ultra runner who lives near Bognor Regis in the UK. 2019 Laura was first woman in the 145 mile Kennet & Avon Canal Race and set an FKT on the 62.6 km Fox Way in February 2022. Recently Laura finished 20th lady in the 2022 Badwater 135.

Follow Laura on Instagram: @laura_runninggirl



Mandy Foyster

I'm a married middle-aged lady (56 years) with two grown up sons. I began distance running aged 17, almost 40 years ago. I have completed approximately seventy marathons and ultra-distance events including the Winter Spine Race, Thames Ring 250, the Deadman's Ultra, Tunnel Ultra and numerous shorter ultra-running races. My marathon PB is 3.27 and I have also completed five solo self-supported extreme challenges including running across the widest part of the UK from St David's Head to Lowestoft & sleeping outside every night.

Mandy is a keen supporter of the [Mirkwood Rest Home for Retired Sheep](#)



Emma Morton

I live in the south of France, close to the Pyrénées mountains. I discovered trail running seven years ago, aged 41. As mid-life crisis' go, I can't think of a better one! I'm an active member of our village running club, and I love to encourage more women into our sport.



Robert Dale

I'm a keen ultra-runner and I enjoy most things outdoors, especially if it involves mountainous terrain. I've got a variety of ultra-marathons under my belt, as well as plenty of DNF's! My longest race was Lon Las Cymru, coming in at 253 miles in 3 ¼ days.



San Buckley

Don't know how it happened... from plodding around and eventually aiming for a sub-2-hour half marathon to now loving an ultra! A run-of-the-mill homemaker, 51, mother of three! Who likes to balance the food calories with a few miles

Contributors



Sarah Cameron

Is an ultra-running vegan who lives on a vineyard in the south of France with her husband, two children and far too many pets. She juggles family life with looking after said pets, making wine and indulging in her many hobbies, most of which involve either consuming things or attempting to burn them off. Sarah is also an ambassador for Tailwind Nutrition France. <http://cakewinerunning.blogspot.fr>



Tom Sopp

I'm primarily a father and a partner but also a runner and a financial adviser. Judging by my race results the running is further down the list than I'd like it to be. I started running around five years ago. I often reflect that it's a midlife crisis gone wrong; it would have been easier and probably cheaper to have gone down the route of a convertible sports car.



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 4 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.



Sarah Scarth

Was appointed Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Orkney in January 2022. She is a graduate of Glasgow University and as Dr Sarah Stevenson, is a General Practitioner at a local medical practice on the Orkney Mainland. Her husband David is a beef and sheep farmer (and occasional runner). They live in the parish of Birsay with their three children. Sarah is a keen runner and is Chair of Orkney Athletic and Running Club. She is a successful event organiser and has numerous achievements under her running shoes including the Fire + Ice Ultra, Iceland's toughest foot race.



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