

***Amelia Earhart - "Never interrupt someone doing something, you said could not be done."***

Firstly, and most importantly, I would like to thank Jane (her comments are in italics), my pacer, my crew and my rock. You are simply awesome and this is our buckle. Secondly, I would like to thank Dave & Alex, and everyone connected with Daytona, for putting on an awesome event. If this was the inaugural event, I can't wait for Daytona 2.0. Thirdly, I would like to thank all of the wonderful crews and supporters who I encountered during this great event; YOU were awesome and YOU convey an energy and support which drives runners forward.

My favorite part of any ultra is standing at the start and looking around at all the other runners. One of my passions in life is to promote equality and the principle that irrespective of one's origins, anyone can achieve anything. Ultra's have an amazing ability to demonstrate this important concept. Perceived differences of background, experience, sex, age and race are dissolved by a unifying commitment to pursue our dreams and reach new frontiers. It is always an honor to stand amongst people who undertake these challenges.

*The elusive sub-24 hour 100 miler. Ummm, I mean the elusive back-to-back sub-24 hour 100 miler. Yep, that's right. Javelina Hundred in the dry desert heat to Daytona 100 in the sweltering humidity, just barely 7 days apart. I crew. I pace. I manage. I'm the other piece of this ridiculous idea. Only 9 weeks since Leadville, the goal at Javelina had initially been just to finish it. However, when Will decides at mile 82 that we should go for a sub-24, my initial yells of, 'let's just get this done,' are quickly replaced by a respect for this cavalier stance, and a realization that maybe we can do this. So 7 days later and despite his claims of 'let's just complete Daytona', I knew what was coming and I was ready for a similar discussion.*

At 6.00am Dave starts the race and we leave the tranquility of Atlantic Beach. 'Just finish this Will, and take it easy', I kept repeating. The Daytona course was beautiful, simply stunning at points. Running along the beach, passing through the mansion lined streets and visiting the breathtaking town of St Augustine; I really enjoyed this course. The first 30 miles were ok, and I was enjoying Britney Spears 'hitting me one more time', and Vanilla Ice 'grabbing a hold of me tightly'. Hey, I'm running on A1A, it would be rude not to right ☺. The Beatles classic, 'Here's Comes the Sun' graces my little ears, and the irony makes me smile as I realize it's becoming a tad hot out here. Within the space of a few miles, problems arrive in form of shoulder pain and my legs slowing down. Aid station #4 was much needed, and like a Formula 1 (sorry Daytona 500) pitstop, the aid station crew descend upon me with a cool towel, words of encouragement and assistance that you would struggle to find at a 5-star hotel. They were awesome!!!

Cooled, fueled and ready to continue the fight. I continue, and nothing can stop me now...7 mins later and, hang on I'm missing something. Where is my effing water bottle? Argh. What a muppet! What a 5-star muppet with a lifetime membership to Jim Henson's muppet club. Back to the aid station and an amazing lady comes running out with the lost water bottle, 'Thank you!', I turnaround and continue my journey. Headphones back on, and now I'm Freddie Mercury singing 'Don't Stop Me Now', live at the MSG; seriously I am.

*I caught a flight out of Colorado and flew to Jacksonville on Saturday, jumped in a rental (nightmare in itself) and took off to find Will somewhere on the A1A. Thankfully, I had already downloaded the unbelievably detailed course map onto my iPad and knew exactly how to find him. I saw him trotting along and I quickly took the first turnoff so I could give him a massive hug and find out what I was about to be dealing with. I know his struggle miles. I know the head games. We've got this.*

Jane was the reason I went sub 24 hours at Javelina, plain and simple. Her advice on nutrition, her discipline, her calming words, her ability to react to environmental changes are world class. Completing Daytona was originally our priority, and despite the shoulder issue and lead legs, as the day unfolded, I started to feel another sub-24 was possible; but, I would need my rock as it was going to be close. Seeing her on the A1A was a huge sense of relief and a massive motivator.

*Aid station #5 was a fairly routine affair. He arrives, sits down, gets told what to do. Eats, refuels and we get him looking like a Christmas tree as night time descends. I walk with him for a few minutes just to check he is genuinely all ok. He seems strong as he heads off for another round.*

*Aid station #6. Ah... they were having fun! I met awesome people as I OCD'd my set up awaiting Will's arrival. I think it all made sense once everyone saw how this interaction between Will and I would go down. We have this. The extremely well stocked aid station; wait, this needs attention; hand wipes - love it, baggies - savior, towels - luxury, toothbrushes - seriously awesome sauce! I'm a crew/pacer in heaven. Will arrived and he said he felt good mentally but his legs were dead. He is starting to struggle as he's essentially at 160 miles right now. I had my first ever moment of concern. I wasn't concerned for his finish, I never am, but I so wanted to take the pain away. This was about to get very difficult.*

Volunteers reside at the heart of any ultra. They are all amazing and thank you to every single one of YOU who took the time to nurse, motivate, and inspire all the runners; WE are indebted to YOU. Arriving at aid station #6, and sitting down for a few minutes I am surprised to hear the question, "would you like a toothbrush?" F@#k I'm now hearing things. Same question arrives, this time with a visual of the said instrument. What? What am I going to do with a toothbrush! Especially a tiny one that looks like its been stolen from an innocent squirrel. However, the guy who handed it to me is clearly a magician, because upon acceptance a) my mouth felt minty fresh and, b) I stopped worrying about my legs crumbling into dust and my head falling off. Now I really want that sub-24, but my body wants to kill me, and I feel it plotting to end my sorry ass.

Off we go again as I am escorted across the highway by Jane. After her departure, things go south and this section was proper hard. I was doing my best to embrace the wise words of the great poet Arnie from his classic poem Predator - 'get to the chopper!'. The chopper (or next aid station) seemed an eternity away. To make matters worse I had fallen out with Britney and Tiffany's constant calls 'to run as fast I can' were frankly inappropriate and unhelpful. A saving grace appeared in the form of those wonderful patrons of the pubs and clubs who raised their glasses and cheered whenever a runner passed by. I love you folks!

*Aid station #7. A bit more logistically taxing now, as I am about to head out of the final 30 stride for stride. Before arriving on the course, I had no idea if I was going to be "ok" with this venture, as I would not have access to what I usually have prepared for him. It didn't matter! Every thing I needed was going to be at my fingertips the entire way. From amazing aid stations to on point course markings, and mid-point water coolers, so I threw on my pack on confidently. As we headed out of #7, it wasn't pretty. He was hurting. This was the first race that we talked this much. We talked for maybe 5 miles. The pain was wearing on him; as we transitioned to a run-walk...mostly walk. Time wasn't on our side.*

*Aid station #8. I'm all business. They jump in asking Will if he wants soup and he just looks at me, "do I want that"? We now laugh about how WE do this. Everyone is super helpful and can quickly see*

*that they should direct all questions to me. Perfect! Trusting someone 100% is never easy but it is critical in an endurance event. Its amazing how he just delegates all decision making to me.*

*Back on the course I wasn't excited that the tide came up and we had to stay on the sidewalk. I really wanted that beach. About mile 82 Will does what he usually does "I want to go sub 24"....as expected. Honestly, I wasn't sure if he could pull it off. I told him it was going to be tough and he has to stay with me. Headphones went on, and the montage of nighttime strangers walked along the same path we ran. About mile 86, I knew we had a shot, he was starting to come back. Every time I picked up the pace he responded. Every time I handed him a bottle, gave him food, mitigated the pace he responded. Such a good little runner!*

At mile 85 I start to feel better, much better; but, by mile 90 my sub-24 belief, was diluting fast. The final 10 miles represented the classic 'hanging on'. Try as I might to find another gear, things were becoming a little tricky. Move legs! Damn you! Ok, so screaming at my legs isn't working, just focus on Jane and follow her lead, I repeated in my mind. A random thought appears - I picture Mrs. Squirrel away from home on an important business trip perplexed as to the whereabouts of her favorite toothbrush. Rest my little fury friend safe in the knowledge that your 'tool for teeth' became a 'wand of inspiration' in a 100 mile ultramarathon.

*Finally the beach! The sounds of the waves crashing into the shore and the sky lit up with stars were almost as comforting as the feel of the sand beneath my feet. We moved by groups of runners and found another gear. Again, Will is a freaking star! I can't even begin to explain this unbelievable commitment to the goal in the mist of his incredible pain and fatigue. I hated leaving the beach but that lead us to Aid Station #9. I wish I remembered their names, the sweet teens there; his 5 Ultras and her 1st. We didn't need much because at this point it's usually water and magic beans—chocolate covered espresso beans. Yup. I'll feed him a little bit but ultimately its go time. We cruised the side streets and as I hoped to see the beach. Will took a quick walking break and then jumped right back on my stride and finally the Lighthouse was in view. What a sight! In more ways than one.*

Leaving the trials and tribulations of Mrs Squirrel and returning to earth, we approach the lighthouse accompanied by a dual sense of relief and panic. Yah we are almost there and shit we only have a few minutes to achieve a sub-24. "Flash Flash I love you but we only have 24 minutes to save the earth!" rang throughout my mind from the 80's Flash Gordon movie (Soundtrack by Queen ☺). Jane had travelled half way across the galaxy to help me today and there was no way I was going to let her down. Just match her pace, that's all I had to do. Good news! Tiffany and I had resolved our differences and I conceded she had a fair point; and we were now running 'just as fast as we can'.

*With little knowledge of the mileage, I noted Will looking at his watch. I had exactly 24 minutes to find that finish. I could feel his trepidation yet I pushed on. He matched me. We needed to be doing sub 9:30 min miles, if not faster. We see a red light ahead. Is that the finish, a bird, a plane, nope its Brandon (congratulations on your sub-24), not the "turn" to the finish. Next, I see a white light ahead.... it's not moving! That must be the turn. I have 13 minutes to get him to the finish...I worry it may be a trek up the road...a bridge just too far for us...but I knew Will would accept it; he would fight and leave everything out there. So I ran faster, matched once again by Will. My eyes adjust and I hear their voices...."Will that's the finish!" Our stride opened one more time and we flew. At 23:49 Will crossed the line, achieving not only the incredible feat of back-to-back sub-24 100s, but also including Leadville, 3 100s in 10 weeks. Unbelievable!!!*

*The beauty and strength of the sea combined with the heart and soul of the bravest, is simply beautiful and intoxicating. There is a drive and inspiration present which we can only hope to understand. I see Will smiling to himself as he cradles his buckle, so I turn to him and ask what he's thinking, "Oh I'm just getting warmed up!" Stay tuned folks!*

Authors of opportunity like Alex, Dave & Sue, and their sensational crew, who host great events like the Daytona 100, enable dreams to happen. To them all, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Sitting down for a few minutes and looking at the shining Daytona belt buckle whilst watching the sun emerge, it started to dawn (pun of the day) on me what WE had achieved. What started as a crazy idea four weeks earlier had been realized. An intergalactic thank you to Jane for ensuring we were successful, and I want to finish by saying this. I am Mr. Average; at best. I finished last at my school cross country run and have the hand to eye co-ordination of a broken potato. But if I can do this, then anyone can do anything. Whether its ballet, writing, setting up a company, overcoming tragedy, guaranteeing equal pay for female athletes, or entering your first 5k. Everyone must believe they can do anything they want. This is a universal truth which has no respect for any attempt to categorize people into static boxes. I hope, and we hope, this evolving story helps to remind people (people with far more ability than me) what they can truly achieve.

To be continued...