

**Longer ultrarunning**

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**Age is just a number**

**Theo Grent**

## **Colophon**

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In the text, 'he' is used when referring to a person, as these are masculine/neutral words. You can therefore also read 'she' instead of 'he'.

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# Preface

Every serious ultrarunner has a moving story. Here is mine!

*Longer ultrarunning* is a comprehensive book with advice on how to get started in the sport and advanced methods to become a better ultrarunner. It gives everyone, from young to old and from beginner to advanced, important information on what this wonderful sport is all about. Many insights, ideas and advice have been gathered here. Some of it comes from the more than 2-metre-long bookshelf I have collected on the subject over the years in the Netherlands, the United States, Scotland and Germany (see ‘Bibliography’ at the end of the book). Most of it, however, comes from practical experience. I have spent decades writing it all down and working it out.

In many ways, writing is in a natural extension of ultrarunning. The steady accumulation of pages mirrors the accumulation of miles. Both forms of disciplined exhaustion bring satisfaction and pleasure. Writing, too, requires a seemingly infinite number of repetitions to improve the pace, power and effectiveness of the words until everything seems easy.

I have not written this book as a guide to guaranteed success in ultraruns, nor to highlight my own achievements. However, I have written it to show what it means to participate in this sport. As it turned out that my knowledge was far from complete, this book is the result of interviews, conversations and training runs with several people who were kind enough to share their time and knowledge with me. Although most of the content comes from information available in the field, I have also taken texts from the sports literature and incorporated my own ideas as much as justified. During this process, I have discovered new perspectives for my own development.

*Longer ultrarunning* contains little information about my personal achievements because I see myself solely as a knowledge provider. Since authors, critics and readers have benevolently sought facts from my life to substantiate my achievements, I have found myself in a conflict situation. However, I believe that facts about my life should not be used to validate the authenticity of information, just as they should not be used to persuade people to read the book.

During my time abroad, I learnt more about the secrets of ultrarunning than during my Dutch years. Since then, I’ve been running longer and longer distances, but I don’t talk about it much. Although I have passed 70, I have realised that for “longer ultrarunning – age is no barrier”. When I decided to take up the sport more seriously, I wondered if my experience could be useful to others. It turned out that not many people know very well how to prepare for an ultramarathon. There is a lot to learn, and the information in this book will make that clear.

Whatever your motivation, you have picked up this book because you are looking for information about ultrarunning. You will have a lot to learn on your way to a valuable journey of individual discovery. These lessons can be slow and sometimes painfully self-taught. This book has been written to shorten the learning process and minimise unnecessary suffering by informing you about the specifics. Since everyone is different, there can’t be one way that produces the same results for everyone with a single approach. I have no truths or answers to offer, just directions based on what I have learnt; insights, if you will. The most valuable approach is to experiment and experience. Don’t hesitate to get started with this information!

I take responsibility for all the words in this book, but I certainly can't take all the credit for the ideas. This text would not have been possible without the contribution of others. Sharing information is more important to me than what I do myself. But 'good' writing is not easy, it is the result of careful consideration of a topic and constant revision.

The most valuable advice may be different for different people, so I want to present options and not simply impose my own choice. The 'most valuable' is actually a moving target. New research, new theories and new products are constantly changing the sports landscape. And far too often you find conflicting information on the same topic. This book does not give clear-cut advice in every case, but helps you to make the right choice.

*Longer ultrarunning* is not a book that you read page by page, but a reference work from which you can choose the topics that interest you. It doesn't contain rankings with names of famous ultrarunners or an up-to-date ultramarathon calendar. After all, in this day and age it is child's play to obtain such information via social media.

The book is divided into 10 chapters. Consider each chapter separately; they are all enjoyable and interesting on their own, but even more so when combined. Each chapter has the same format. It begins with 'how-to?' This information is in second person singular. In this person form in the present tense, 'you' is written. At the end of each chapter, I write in first person singular – in the form of 'I' – about my personal experiences with the previous topics.

I wrote this book with three goals in mind. I want to inspire and motivate people to start ultrarunning, inspire and motivate ultrarunners to strive for more, and promote a healthy lifestyle that ultrarunning is associated with. Whether you bought your first pair of running shoes yesterday or are a seasoned ultrarunner, this book will encourage you to get out there.

Writing about ultrarunning is easy. When I write, I can leave out all the hardships and make it as beautiful as I want. I can turn myself into a hero. Talking about ultrarunning is even easier. All the actions I've ever want to do I've told in an hour, but the real art is in the execution. I share some personal experiences at the end of each chapter and give the reader a glimpse into the timeline of my life, including pivotal points. Although there is a yawning gap between writing about ultrarunning and practising it, there are wonderful examples of the inspirational power of the written word. Reading about ultrarunning can indeed spur people into action!

For me, writing is a metaphor for ultrarunning. It is a solitary task that requires a high degree of dedication. Monk's work. The solitude, the perseverance required, the exhilaration! As reading and writing about this sport is as important to me as training, I do it almost every day. It's my antidote to the daily staccato of emails. Writing requires attention to authentic emotions and reflection and allows a different perspective on people, processes and decisions.

In the meantime, I have learnt that a writer thrives in 'splendid isolation'. Since I don't have a standard 9-to-5 job, I can write a lot, read a lot and experience a lot of things that I can write about. Plus, I'm not accountable to anyone, and I value and utilise that freedom. Although I opted for lucrative self-employment early on, have long since stopped having deadlines and bosses, and enjoy writing, I still occasionally suffer from guilt when I add activities other than 'work' in my daily schedule. So, apart from reading and running, I hammer away at my keyboard every spare second.

Many publishers realise that athlete's writing skills often cannot match their sporting achievements. It is rare that these athletes inspire other people with what they put to paper. A book on ultrarunning should be a complete and thorough work. The author should not only exhibit his knowledge, but also be able to explain it simply and, above all, describe how things work in practice. A knowledgeable author stands out from the crowd and shows what the reflection on paper has over that nervous thumb-twiddling. A well-read author always has enough ideas to surprise his readers. If the material is worth knowing, readers tend to recommend it to others. That is the greatest compliment for an author!

As a sports consultant, I wanted answers to the question of whether the ability to complete ultramarathons can be trained. To this end, I set out to investigate. I spoke to ultrarunners and coaches, searched the world for relevant studies on the subject and collected statistics from scientists and journalists.

It turned out that there was a lot more knowledge than I realised, so I decided to write a book about it. To my surprise, almost everyone thought I was crazy. Why would a sports consultant write about how to perform 'well' in ultrarunning? When I asked the Dutch for an explanation, they referred me to statements such as "the training is not difficult at all" and "it's all between the ears". But they couldn't explain to me why Australians, Americans, Japanese, Germans, French and Belgians do much better than the Dutch: "We just can't do it that well!"

However, all studies, interviews and statistics point in only one direction: the ability to complete ultramarathons can actually be trained. Both ultrarunners and coaches who take this phenomenon seriously can benefit greatly. Of course, even the best-trained ultrarunner will occasionally underperform, but far less often than those who dismiss performance with "well, you just have to have it in you". Time will undoubtedly tell what is true!

When I started writing, I didn't know much about the world of ultrarunning, but I was sure that people would be very pleased with the results of my research. So, I sent the draft text of my manuscript to several opinion leaders in the ultrarunning community. They all found it very interesting but then, without any explanation, said they couldn't do anything with it. These were the first rejections of my research. Many more were to follow.

At first, I didn't quite understand why I received almost no well-founded responses from 'experts' to my submitted manuscript. Why was a study that could help ultrarunners to perform better not taken seriously? The reason lies in what consultants call confirmation bias. Especially in areas that are important to people – such as faith, politics and sports – this bias is very pronounced. When people believe in something, any information that contradicts it is dismissed as nonsensical, ridiculous or wrong. Often without having taken note of the information. People only want to hear, see and read what supports their own opinion. The so-called 'not invented here syndrome' also plays a role. We didn't invent it ourselves, so it's wrong by definition.

To dispel such prejudices, we need practitioners to show what is possible. I consider the fact that many ultrarunners have dared to ask me questions as a breakthrough in the rigid thinking I have encountered. Think of all the invaluable knowledge you have accumulated during your lifetime. More people should pass on what they have learnt through experience so that others can grasp its meaning.

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## Introduction

Ultrarunning is a fantastic sport. It has an incredible impact on your health, but it's also a way of life. You get a lot more energy, you feel good, you make new friends, you challenge yourself, you enjoy nature and countless other things.

Ultrarunners are adventurers. They head out, defy storms, rain, hail and wind and enjoy the landscape. This book is full of tips, facts and stories that make ultrarunning even more fun. However, it does not describe cross-cuts through the lives of ultrarunners, nor does it contain detailed travelogues. After all, it's hard to slog through such books when you find little of the real enjoyment in them. Although they regularly deal with torture trips, pain and suffering, they almost never answer the question of why.

For years, I've been looking for an ultrarunning book to motivate and inspire me on those rare occasions I need a push to get out the door. A book that encourages me to take that extra step, that pushes me to conquer seemingly impossible distances, and that reminds me why I love running so much and the amazing feats I can achieve with a little dedication, determination and perseverance. A book that shows me that I 'can' do something, not that I 'can't' do something.

As most books about ultrarunning aren't exactly written with an overdose of eloquence, what I have read hasn't yet aroused much enthusiasm in me. The authors start with good intentions but often run into walls in their enthusiasm. They are mostly driven runners - with big egos - stuck in the past and afflicted by the 'everything used to be better' syndrome. There are endless stories in the texts of these egocentric narrators, but no new insights and twists. They don't tell the whole story. I miss the why. I want to know what drives them, but I don't get it. I also get tired of adoring running gurus from a distant past.

This semi-literary writing sauce is a rather unworldly navel-gazing that doesn't impress at all. Constantly endeavouring to outdo each other, but with little or no reflection, these authors do not paint a good picture of ultrarunning. Their horizons do not extend much further. Reason, understanding and responsibility should not be expected too much here. Such private notes are usually only passed on among family members and interested runners. For the little gods, there is always the internet, where huge chunks of text are published that no dog is waiting for.

Athletes often write in second person singular when they are actually talking about themselves. They see this as a kind of politeness that counterbalances the egomaniacal 'I'. "I am polite, civilised and modest". But false modesty doesn't get you far as an author. So don't be shy and profile yourself as a professional.

Many stories are told in a derogatory tone – "Hey, look at me" - so that the common man in the street is inclined to laugh at the blatant lack of modesty of some self-proclaimed ultrarunners. Of course, it is important for elite athletes to make name for themselves, because national fame has an economic value. But there is also such a thing as serving your sport and taking on social responsibility. So don't underestimate yourself and make sure you are allowed into the hearts of your fans so that the general public becomes your marketing machine. Unfortunately, however, many authors have fallen into the trap of shameless self-promotion. They gloss over failures in training and races as if they were minor annoyances and seem unwilling to learn from their mistakes. They lack the humility of the common man on the street. Too bad!

It is also not inappropriate to point out one of the pitfalls of this sport. Exceeding one's limits can have devastating consequences, not only for body and mind, but also for family life. For some ultrarunners, the price of pleasure was too high. This is the danger of being too fanatical about the sport. On the other hand, health has become an important issue in business. It's important for managers to exude fitness. It's something you can use to raise your profile. You position yourself as someone who is exemplary. It gives you self-confidence and the aura of a successful person.

### **The question of why**

There are always people who know more or have done more. There are none in this book, but it contains information for both newcomers and experienced runners. In chapters one to ten you will read about history, ultramarathon, ultrarunner, philosophy, physiology, running requirements, training, eating and drinking, peripheral factors and races. Through this interrelated information, you will learn that the body is capable of much more than you thought. You will unveil the magic of ultrarunning. You will realise that you don't get to know the magic until after you have run an ultramarathon a few times.

The question that is almost always asked about ultrarunning is: Why? Why run such long distances, which in almost all cases lead to hours of pain and fatigue? Why participate in ultramarathons that bring little recognition from others? As with other complicated questions, there are many different answers. The most common answer is the challenge for each individual to find out where the limits of endurance lie. The appeal of this sport lies precisely in the fact that it is so difficult. The possibility that someone may not be able to run a long distance consecutively - or that they may have to use their physical, emotional and spiritual resources to do so - is precisely the element of challenge and competition that many people are looking for.

The answer to the question of why we want to run for so long time at a stretch lies on a deep emotional level, is incredibly complex and affects all areas of life. The motivations are very diverse: the need for challenges, to prove oneself, to get in shape, a seemingly impossible goal, the self-confidence that grows after fulfilment, the love of running in nature and the joy of performing in an environment that brings out the best in people.

It is in our biological heritage to run long distances. the imprint is in our biomechanics, physiology and mindset. Since the invention of weapons and the advent of agriculture, humans have not only transformed the earth, but also their lives. We no longer had to run after prey to find food. If we did have to, we developed a highly effective weapon that we still use today. We developed the power of our imagination. The ability to think well in advance about how the prey would disappear from sight or what the finish of a race would look like. People embarked on a long trek because they enjoyed the thrill of the chase, with no immediate reward in sight. But there was a chance to be rewarded, to come home with prey, to cross the finish line.

We cannot revive those times. But the mindset is still there and the body for an ultrarun is moulded by the mind. You don't have to think crazy to be an ultrarunner. We simply follow an age-old script to get in tune with the conditions we have adapted to. This book will help you read and follow the script, a contemporary manifestation of millions of years of evolution.

Running long distances is easy, but it's a skill that needs to be constantly nurtured. The memories of each run become stronger the better you understand its meaning. So be patient in your search for the magic of ultrarunning. *Longer ultrarunning* holds a secret after all, and those

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who know it love its charm. This book teaches you how everything changes when the secret of this sport is revealed.

### **Dreams**

Dreams are important. They activate the brain in us, and in all living beings the brain activates the body. We are shaped by intoxicating dreams that enable us to achieve feats that would otherwise be impossible. Making the desired adaptations is a challenge. It requires drive and a sense of responsibility from those who want to change, as well as a willingness to be open to new experiences and developing new habits and skills. There is nothing better than testing your limits, discovering how much you can really achieve, pushing yourself to the limit and seeing the results. Get excited about continuous learning. Pursuing your next big dream will fill your life with incredible passion (again). When you step out of your comfort zone, you will be able to realise your biggest dreams. Take your time, but if you really want it, all your dreams will come true!

The psychological side is just as important for human development as the physical. More than any other sport, ultrarunning encourages people to introspection. When we get answers to the eternal question of 'why', we learn that it is ultimately the experience that draws us to this sport. But there is more to it than that. This book shows that anyone, right up to old age, can take part. All it takes is a bit of commitment, a bit of training and the attitude that you can do it. Really, you can do it!

Hopefully, none of us will ever stop running such long distances!

### **Admiration**

People who do extraordinary things deserve admiration. Especially when they do things that add a special dimension to life. Acting, art, science and sport practice, for example. Such people have one thing in common. They do something that gives their lives meaning. They pursue their passion. That makes their lives so much richer!

New records are constantly being set in endurance sports such as skating, rowing, canoeing, cycling, swimming, triathlon and ultrarunning. Part of the explanation for this development - in men and women and from young to old - can be found in training principles developed by sports physiologists. The measurement of heart rate during training and races, with or without a lactate test, has become an integral part of sports physiology. Improved knowledge of eating and drinking has also contributed to this. These principles apply to athletes of all levels: elite athletes, competitive athletes, recreational athletes and rehabilitating athletes. This book is aimed at them, but also at coaches, sports physiologists and other specialists in the support teams of endurance athletes.

However, certain achievements are difficult to achieve by reading books alone, without an experienced person to explain and guide you. In general, you need a teacher or a role model to emulate. Once you have developed certain qualities yourself, you can begin to actively help others. However, development takes place step by step. If you compare your performance today with that of 5, 10 or 15 years ago, you can see what improvements have been made.

### **Training**

Many people love to train. But what if there's nothing to train for? Aren't all those hours a week of sweating, running and panting actually a prayer without end? By any rational analysis, all that hard training is useless. But for most athletes, and probably for you too since you are

reading this book, hard training is both useless and essential. For most people, training is an intrinsic part of their identity and their self-esteem and something that is as important to their mental state as it is to their physical state. And why? We feel the need to keep training hard and improving our performance, but sometimes it becomes a journey without an end goal. Sometimes we are groping in the dark looking for answers, and then a seemingly unrelated and random coincidence suddenly shows us the way. Some people call this prophecy, but we prefer to believe we can take our destiny into our own hands.

We all know that we must train, but few of us do it properly. To distract the mind from the hardship and banish boredom, some shut themselves off from their bodies. The secret, however, lies in the opposite approach. A better connection between body and mind is the key to an enjoyable and safe approach to ultrarunning. Experienced athletes strive for that elusive exertion euphoria, the zone where peak performance is achieved, where there is no more room for thought and everything melts into a magical moment of perfection, a total harmony of body and mind.

This exertion euphoria, in which dynamic physical activity goes hand in hand with inner calm and serenity, can be experienced by anyone, but is not easy to induce. It is usually no longer about how much we do, but how relaxed we do it. The zone is hailed as the key to developing physical and mental potential. The formula to reach this zone is the same as that for optimal health and activating our full potential.

In practice, taking part in an ultramarathon requires careful preparation and discipline. It requires sacrifice and is not easy, neither for you nor for the people around you. You have to believe in yourself, even when everything is against you, and you have to dedicate yourself seriously to training, otherwise you won't make it. Many people train with their peak race in mind. Their week-to-week schedule is like a sawtooth profile on the way to the most important ultramarathon of the season.

The better prepared you are, the more you will be able to enjoy yourself along the way. To just keep running, rather than hobbling. There is no way to bluff your way through an ultramarathon. The best ultrarunners associate their sport with fun, excitement and smooth running. Pain and hobbling have never played a major role, and for that they are very grateful. They don't look down the long training runs, they look forward to them. They run such long distances purely for the fun of it.

### **Perspective**

Ultrarunning is a sporting niche, far removed from sponsorship and big money. Many ultrarunners are perfectionists by nature and have specific knowledge. A few people have endeavoured to structure this in recent years, but in the small world of individualists this has regularly led to conflicts and misunderstandings. Fortunately, the experts recognise the different qualities of the ultrarunning world, but isn't there a better way to make the existing knowledge accessible?

The perspective used in stories plays a big role in how an author puts the material on paper. Who tells the story? What are the turning points in the development of ultrarunning and its practitioners? Who changed your perspective? Mentor, role model, teacher? It's about success stories and great moments. What made you proud and made you shine? But it's also about the 'deep shit': fiascos, blunders and catastrophes, as well as 'wake-up calls': dramas, conflicts, moments of crisis, powerlessness, secrets. Ask a group of regular ultrarunners if they want to

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keep doing this for the rest of their lives, and almost all of them will say yes. Ask one of them to put some of it down on paper and it remains disturbingly silent.

This book allows you to learn from experienced ultrarunners. Many elements are similar in the stories you will read. It's about hope, friendship, community spirit, self-control, selflessness and ultimately triumph. There is a lot to learn! The stories will convince you that even when a muddy and mountainous trail brings you to your knees, all you can do is get up and keep going. And you will learn that no matter how strong you feel, there will come a time to step out.

For many people, ultrarunning is an inseparable part of their lives. For others, it's just a short journey of discovery. Either way, we gain a lot of knowledge and experience through our own attempts at running long distances. It's a wonderful way to learn more about ourselves. Not only about our physical abilities, but also about our motivation and mental attitude. This book can help people get started in this sport or take them further on their personal journey of discovery. If they are successful, this book will have achieved its goal!

### **Literature**

For many insiders, this book about ultrarunning will come as a surprise. After all, there are countless athletes who have accumulated more miles and achieved better race performances in their running careers than I have. But writing about sport is an art in itself, not every ultrarunner seems to have mastered it. Many stories are nothing more than glorified race reports for a select audience. This book is different because the stories also address the questions of a non-specialist audience. Therefore, this book is valuable to better understand ultrarunning. You can pick and choose the information that interests you. It is definitely helpful to have the available information listed once! Of course, there are thousands other things a readership could be spoilt for, but this book is limited to conveying one thing: a passion for ultrarunning.

One of the things that I love about running and makes it so unique and special is that success or failure is up to me alone. Don't get me wrong: team sports like football, basketball, volleyball and baseball are great, but the success or failure of the team is based on everyone's efforts. When I run, I can only blame myself if I fail or thank myself if I succeed.

The depth and breadth of my knowledge and experience in sport is unique in several respects. After being asked as a goalkeeper in professional football almost 50 years ago and completing football coaching qualification, a three-month stint as a soccer coach at a 'Summer Sport Camp' in America led me to become involved in athletics. Because I loved what I was doing so much, I took running courses, attended seminars, read an extensive body of work and developed a successful running training program. It incorporated both my philosophy and the best of what I had learnt up to that point. Deep down, however, I knew that my preparation for ultramarathons still had some shortcomings. As I was always looking for improvements and was never afraid to ask for advice, I consulted numerous experts.

After reading a lot of literature on sport in general and ultrarunning in particular, I realised that there was very little information on the best approach to taking part in ultramarathons. Most books stop at the 100-km race distance and offer everchanging new approaches. When I spoke to experienced coaches and ultrarunners, I also came across very different approaches. What's more, some people prefer to keep their approaches to themselves. It is therefore practically impossible to find and present a standardised training plan for ultramarathons.

## **Reviews**

Many writers are downright awful because they have longer toes than everyone else. They are all hypersensitive and neurotic. They are often sensitive souls with egos the size of a small village that can be punctured with a single pinprick. But all the reviews in newspapers and magazines are forgotten within a few weeks. If a budding writer has not yet learnt to protect himself from the incompetence of critics, a badly reviewed work can plunge him into a deep depression. Or the first review may be a long time coming, which is even more agonising. However, many points of criticisms can be safely ignored. That saves a lot of aggravation!

The response to the information offered in my book has exceeded my expectations. I am also pleased with the online reviews and emails from insiders who speak of a positive contribution to the available sports literature. However, not all readers agree with me. A few readers not only disagree with me, but pointed this out to me emphatically and in rather harsh terms. I have treated these comments with great caution, largely assuming that the material has also impressed them. In general, I do not feel called upon to respond to this relatively small group of critics. It is precisely because some of these seemingly well thought out comments are quite widespread that some ultrarunning friends have asked me to reconsider this stance. So, I have sharpened my pencil to reply to them!

Reviews can be intelligent and thoughtful, written by people who have read a book from beginning to end and respect the intent of the book. However, there aren't many of those. The most hurtful reviews are written by people who are angry or bought the book for someone and had no intention of ever reading it properly. Amazon reviews bring out the worst in reviewers. However, experience shows that it's better not to respond to such negative reviews because you can't win them anyway. On the other hand, it's naive to step into a boxing ring and expect not to get punched!

The reactions of many critics are rather defensive and don't really address the content of my book. That's unfortunate, but let me say a little more about it. My central aim is to apply and translate existing expertise so that it actually works in practice. This endeavour has made me a very practical sport consultant. I don't want to pretend that I am trumping existing expertise with my contribution. I wouldn't even dare to do that. I only note that existing knowledge and experience rarely lead to practical application. With my book, I want to bring the topic into practice in an accessible way. In this sense, I want to pass on the existing expertise. My book can act as a catalyst. I have not yet given up hope that it will be read by ultrarunners!

## **Motivation**

Why do I do ultrarunning? Because it is an essential part of my life. The training gives me a high level of fitness. All my activities revolve around it. If there's no room for a training run on a trip or holiday, I don't go. I run - apart from a few rest days a year - 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year. On the rare day that I can't run, my body doesn't feel good. Wherever I am or whatever work is waiting me, I make time for it.

The nice thing about ultrarunning is that you can do it without a coach and still perform well. I am currently coaching myself. I've gradually learnt that not all coaches are right for me, let alone that I'm right for them.

Ultrarunning is an extremely individual sport. It doesn't matter how fast or slow a person runs compared to others. Every ultrarunner sets their own pace and measures their own progress. Ultrarunning therefore suits my personality as 'Einzelgänger'. I don't run for anyone but myself.

## LONGER ULTRARUNNING

And, by the way, I'm not running away from something, but towards something! The fact that I limit my social contacts to the bare minimum is my own decision and I am fully committed to it. In any case, I usually find it too difficult to coordinate my training and races with others and prefer to do everything on my own.

There is nothing magical about my running performance. I run a considerable volume every year and do a long training run every week. When I started getting more serious about running, I was still quite conservative when it came to the number of miles I ran. In the first 10 years, my weekly average always stayed under 60 miles. Back then, I trained in the running group of an athletics club and thought that running was mainly about achieving fast times in road or track races.

During my ten-year stay in America (2001-2010), I became interested in longer distances and the magic of ultramarathons. In the early years, completing a full marathon required a considerable effort on my part. Later, the marathon changed from a race to a training run. After shortly moving back to the Netherlands, the focus shifted from participating in ultramarathons to running every day. During my five-year stay in Scotland (2015-2019) and since I landed in Germany at the end of 2019, I have been focusing on what I have always enjoyed most: running long stretches in a row, and if that doesn't work, even longer. I want to do this sport all my life, but no longer in groups, no longer with tight schedules and no longer in races.

I usually recover faster from a marathon than from a few hours of shopping. To aid my recovery, I force myself to go jogging the next day. By the second day, I start feeling fine and can run a little longer without any problems. Nevertheless, I am not afraid to skip a day and on average I have 10 to 20 rest days a year. Rest days I don't plan in advance, but take them when something comes up. They do me good and I should probably allow myself more of them.

The most important factor to explain my success is consistency. Since I became seriously involved in ultrarunning, I have trained at least 3,000 miles and up to 5,000 miles every year. I recover easily and almost never get injured. I could probably do even more miles, but that would make it much harder for me to avoid injury. If I train consistently and stick strictly to the annual program, the risk of overtraining, injury or poor performance is much lower.

I've been running since I was a teenager and have run much longer distances than the marathon. I did it because I was motivated to train hard and put in the miles. Wonderfully simple! Today I realise that I enjoy the long distances more and more. The older I get, the more my stamina increases. My ability to run long distances is improving day by day!

### **Logbook**

Ever since I started running seriously, I have faithfully kept a logbook. Every day I record the significant miles as well as my highs and lows. I complain about tiredness, poor training and races as well as illnesses and injuries. I regularly take the logbook off the shelf and take a quick look at it. It is my most valuable training tool.

In my logbook, I record my training and my races over days, weeks, months, quarters and years. For each day, I note down important data such as course, distance, duration and running speed. To quickly check the degree of effort, I circle tempo runs and underline long training runs. I also use my logbook to record information about the weather, the time of day and any ailments. General comments about how I felt are also very valuable.

One of the secrets to my progress is planning and tracking all my training and races. This allows me to set myself goals, train consistently and make progress. My logbook contains all the facts and emotions of my running experiences. It forgets nothing. I keep it meticulously so that I can analyse everything. When I look back at the weeks that preceded a poor performance, I find revealing data. On the positive side, I look back at what preceded good races and I build on that knowledge. Through trial and error, I learn what works best for me. When I experiment with periodisation and write everything down in my logbook, I get information that no other book can give me.

My logbook is important to understand what works and what doesn't in my training program. As it records my performance as a runner, I look to the past to determine my future. How did I train for my best races? How many long training runs did I do before my peak races? What was my weight during my best performances? What shoes did I wear? My logbook answers these questions and summarises the highs and lows of my running life. I actually find it quite enjoyable to read through old logbooks. Looking back on my past achievements recharges me.

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