

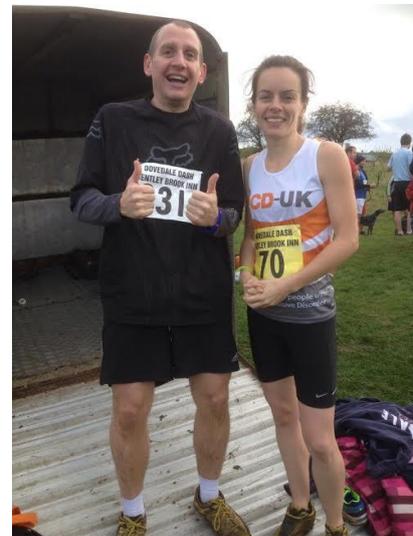


Hey everyone, well as I write this article on a Sunday morning in my local Starbucks with a giant cup of coffee, I begin to reflect on the huge challenge I've let myself in for, a challenge which shall be testing myself to the limit, both physically and mentally.

First, I'll take a step back a couple of years, to the time I decided to run the London Marathon to raise vital funds for DELTA, alongside 4 other amazing people who were doing the same thing for us. Back then, the thought of running 26.2 miles was a daunting prospect, with the furthest I've ever ran being half marathon distance which is difficult enough if you don't run on a regular basis! However, with the help of Hiten Laad, who had already undertaken a number of marathons for DELTA, I chose a training plan and put my head down and got outside running whenever I could after work/before work and at the weekends.

All was going well until about a month before Marathon day and I came down with a serious injury, one which according to my physio, I should have stopped running entirely for a bit. But being a bit pig-headed, I just got on with it and ended up completing a very painful marathon (my hip gave way again only 13miles in, the rest was sheer agony!) but also very fulfilling, seeing all the sights of London and being inspired to carry on knowing I was part of something very special and raising vital funds for a charity so dear to my heart.

Fast forward slightly to last year, I had only just managed to get back into running again, albeit very slow now after needing nearly a year of physio treatment on my hip to get it moving again. I'd got involved with a local running club, using the impetus of a group of people to spur me on to getting back outside and running again. In that time, I'd noticed that I had lost my enthusiasm for road running, not only associating it with my injury, but also finding it boring, with the roads being monotonous. Getting running with the club and one of my best mates, I'd instead re-discovered my love for off-road running (all off-road runners will tell you the same, once you've gone off-road there is no going back!), finding that this enabled me to enjoy the amazing views of our countryside without the fear of being hit by cars (although there is a risk of being chased by cows, of which I seem to be the pied piper, finding for some reason a whole herd following me in any field of cows I enter!). In between off-road running (known as trail/fell running), I had got to talk to several club members who were involved in ultra-marathons. These marathons are essentially any races which are over the marathon distance of 26.2miles. One member put a call out for anyone wanting to join her in a particularly gruelling one, 100 miles over 3 days.



Call it a moment of madness, but I suddenly thought I needed a new challenge in life, and what better than one which would really test me to the limit. The thought of running over 30 miles 3 days in a row to complete 100 miles, and to be able to call myself an ultra-runner hooked me in. Very few people can call themselves ultra-runners, seen as the crazy bunch of the running world, but I wanted to be part of that group! So, I signed up, and started the long process of getting myself to grips with long distance running on difficult terrain. The ultra I shall be doing is the Pembrokeshire 100, running along what I hope to be stunning scenery along the coastline from Milford Haven to Cardigan. Each day will comprise of an ultra in itself, setting off first thing in the morning for 35



especially the steep inclines!

miles, before finishing at a camp site for a quick bite to eat and then a sleep in a tent before I start it all again the next day. Being on the coast in April, I am already mentally prepared for all manner of weather conditions, however I shall be keeping my fingers crossed for dry days, there is nothing more demoralising than running for 8 hours or more in the rain! Luckily, as well as my running club friend, I shall also have the company of a fellow DELTA member in Edd Stuart, so I'm hoping we will be keeping each other going through what will be at times very tough conditions,

I initially was going to do this as just a personal challenge for myself, but I realised this was an opportunity to once more help DELTA out, hoping that people would look to sponsor me on this ultimate challenge, and raising vital funds for the charity. DELTA has no central funding, instead relying on funds bought in through events such as the London Marathon or cake selling etc. Having been involved with DELTA since being a 15-year-old, I have seen the impact it has had on 100's of families since that time. I have seen first-hand families leaving our events with a renewed sense of purpose and belief that their deaf child can have as just a fulfilling life as their non-deaf peers and achieving the same, if not more as they grow up.

So please do support me in this crazy challenge, and feel free to sponsor me, the adage that no matter what is given, every penny really does help! And please do feel free to share mydonate link to as many family members and friends as you can to spread the message far and wide. Huge thanks!

<https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/andystubbs1>