



ADVENTURE STORIES

SEASON 1



Adventure Stories

Portraits of modern adventurers

What this series is about

Adventure Stories is a series of portraits and interviews conducted by Uptrack Club. We met adventurers from around the world to produce the most inspiring and motivational content. Trail and ultra runners, hikers, wildlife lovers, entrepreneurs... These adventurers have no fear, and even though some of them are young, there is a lot to learn from their commitment, dedication, and discipline.

Real inspiration

We all have dreams. But do we actually go for them?

Inspiration is what gives us direction. These adventurers show us that anything is possible: From crossing the US by foot, to being a pro athlete as well as an ambitious corporate at the same time.

Pure motivation

A personal, ambitious goal - whatever the distance, or how hard it seems to others - can only be achieved thanks to deep motivation.

With this interview series, we aim to supercharge your motivation to achieve your personal goals.

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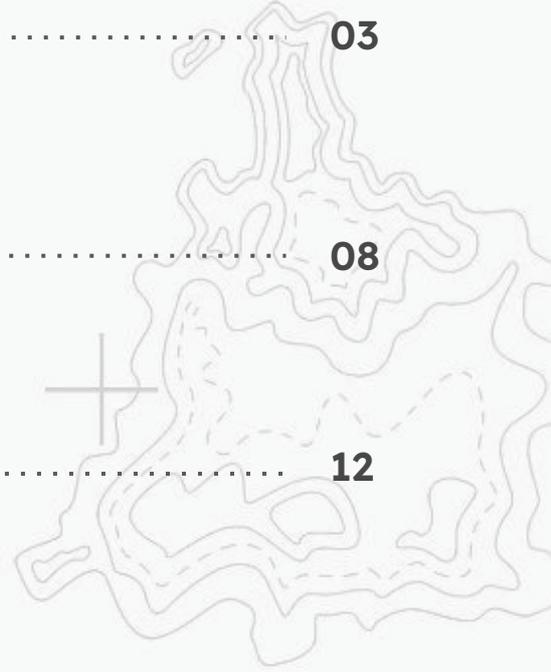
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Renee Metivier

When knowledge serves performance



Renee was 12 when she started running after a gymnastics injury. But what was supposed to be part of a rehabilitation process became her main sport.

"Running captured my heart".

Not only did running capture her heart and become her main passion, Renee also started performing immediately.

A stunning career in high school and college

As a young athlete, Renee trained for races from 400 meters to 2 miles. That's when the magic started to happen.

When she was in high school in Texas, she was a three-time state champion. Then she won the varsity All-Americans championship 11 times, over various distances, representing the University of Colorado and Georgia Tech.

Disappointment leads to reconstruction

But sports careers come with many challenges.

While training very hard for the 2012 US Olympic Trials, Renee suffered a serious Achilles injury. She went to Sweden, was operated by the best surgeons and went through a very intensive rehabilitation process.

A few months later, she was able to participate in the American Olympic trials for the 5000 meters. But because of this imperfect preparation, she underperformed. Renee failed to qualify for the London Olympics.

"It was tough, it definitely choked me up. I had to build from that."

It is your failures that make you progress and become a better athlete, a better person. 2016 and Rio weren't Renee's time to shine either.

Maintaining motivation, Renee's secret to performing

Staying motivated in the very long term is not an easy thing. But training consistency brings performance. And that's probably Renee's secret sauce: maintaining the motivation to perform over the long term.

"I always try to keep some excitement in everything I do. Trying new things, new distances and new disciplines is key for me. I keep running some 5,000 meters, but I also run distances a lot longer now."

Renee now runs a crazy wide range of distances and she is very competitive on all of them. She ran her first Marathon in Chicago in 2012 in a blistering time of 2:27. A performance that attracted a lot of attention.

She also did her first skyrunning race a few days ago at the Broken Arrow Skyrace and took a great 5th place. In the meantime, she is preparing for a particularly challenging SwimRun which will take place this summer in Sweden.

"What I love about starting something new is the opportunity to learn. In trail running, I usually don't have a lot of experience running fast on the really technical parts. It's new for me and I like it. Progressing in something is very motivating."

Not only does preparing for very different races help her stay motivated, but it's also a pillar of her training strategy.

"While I know I'm a bit extreme in my distance range, balancing speed and endurance is an effective training method. It's very complementary and it helps me vary training cycles and how I solicit my body."

And when running outside is not an option, she takes it as a new challenge, in the same way.

"During the pandemic, I broke the 50K treadmill world record."



@trailjunkiphotos

Sharing her learnings with the wider community

Since she started her running career, Renee has had many experiences: from preparing for races to dealing with injuries.

This knowledge that she built, she now wants to share. That's what she does with RechargeSport, an Oregon-based training and rehabilitation center.

"I want to make this knowledge available to the public, and above all I don't want anyone to give up on their sporting goal."

RechargeSport brings together many sports and medical professionals: chiropractors, biomechanics, acupuncture specialists, nutritionists, physical trainers... With Renee as head coach.

This crew is dedicated to helping amateur and elite athletes prevent and recover from injury, and perform at their best.

She's not going to stop!

As well as starting to compete in trail running races, Renee is gearing up for a huge SwimRun this summer: a 250 kilometers (alternating swimming and running sections) race across Sweden.

"I swam when I was younger so I have some skills, but I'm working really hard on my swimming for this race."

In the longer term, we should see more and more Renee on the trails (and the ultras?). It's not impossible that the insatiable runner from Oregon also intends to qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympic Marathon.

Jeff Garmire

A love for ultra-wild adventures



From working in finance in Denver to becoming an "ultra-adventurer". This is the story Jeff started writing in 2018, when he quit his job to pursue his passion for hiking and the outdoors.

Long outdoor adventures have always appealed to Jeff. When he left high school, he decided to go on a big bike trip and cross the USA from the east coast to the west coast, at only 18 years old!

"I asked my father if he was ok with me going on this trip. I didn't know how he would react. But he told me to go after my dreams."

But in 2018, Jeff took it to another level and decided to go for the "Triple Crown Trails", a long, very long hike across the United States. And a big challenge at only 25 years old.

Crazy long, crazy wild

The Triple Crown Trails consist of hiking the 3 greatest hiking trails in the United States in one calendar year: Pacific Crest Trail, Continental Divide Trail and Appalachian Trail. A crazy long trip of about 8000 miles that crosses 22 states in the USA!

To share his experience with his friends and family in Colorado, Jeff decided to write 1 blog post a day during this adventure.

We asked her what the greatest takeaways from the experience were.

"The main takeaway is the confidence I gained from it. During all those days and nights outside, I had to deal with many difficult situations, from encounters with wild animals to the shortage of food and spending a lot of time alone."

It was probably when a moose tried to attack him that he crossed the lowest trough of his adventure. Fortunately, he managed not to hurt himself!

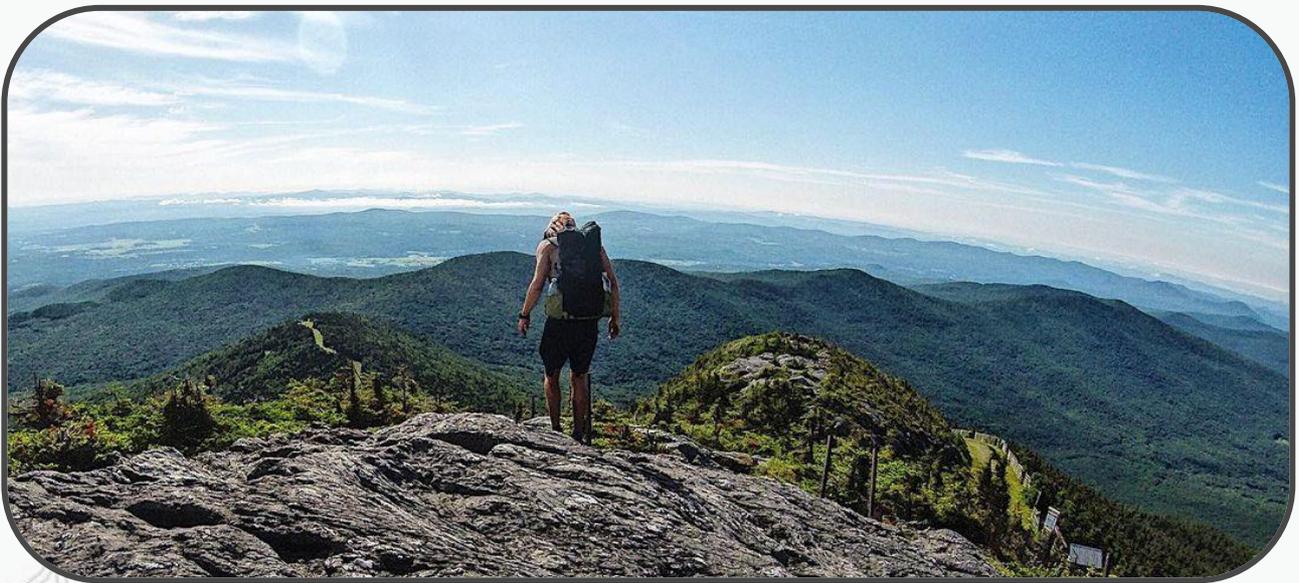
A huge physical and mental challenge

Jeff walked 30-35 miles a day, every day, for 8 months. But the challenge wasn't just physical: The mental dimension was a big part of it.

"It's pretty hard mentally too. I had hallucinations and sometimes talked to myself to feel less alone and not go crazy."

It was also a spiritual experience.

"It teaches you to be present in whatever you are going through. It teaches you to appreciate the world."



@JeffGarmire

An amazing story to tell the world

From these blog posts he wrote during his trip, Jeff wrote a book: *Free Outside*.

The book goes over everything that happened on those trails, and the thoughts Jeff had while walking and dealing with many situations... And a rumor says that a movie could also be released in the coming month!

The call of ultrarunning

One thing is certain: walking 8,000 miles through the American trails is definitely a good preparation for ultra marathons!

Jeff got hooked by the ultra running community, especially after participating in the Cocodona 250 in 2022. He also owns 17 FKTs across the United States!



Cocodona 2022 - @JeffGarmire

Cali Schweikhart

The unstoppable



Overcoming obstacles. That's what Cali does on a daily basis. Not only is she an elite Spartan Race athlete, but she also is an unstoppable person. From tutoring kids at school to training for some of the most challenging sports events, Cali is pushing hard on all fronts.

We interviewed Cali, just after she won her first ultra-distance Spartan Race, with 2nd place overall!

Hi Cali! You're a very complete sports person today. What's your sports background?

Cali: I grew up as a competitive soccer player and basketball player. Basketball was more of a 'fun sport' for me, but I was taking soccer quite seriously. I was a goalkeeper, such as my father who told me everything he knew when I was young. When I stopped, I was looking for something new and my interest in constantly moving and being outside brought me to Spartan.

You started Spartan racing about 7 years ago. What was the trigger that made you try it, and what do you like in this sport?

Cali: A friend of mine told me to give it a try given I was running and doing various sports. It was definitely the best advice. Doing Spartan Races feels like you're a kid in a playground again: You're running up the mountains, then you have to crawl through the mud, overcome obstacles, and then you have these amazing views... Spartan athletes really just want to have fun. But it's also a competitive sport and a very cool challenge. You're all out from the start line. You also meet really cool people, I've made a lot of amazing friends in the Spartan community. I also love Spartan because it's a complete sport. It enables me to use the knowledge I have from my background in soccer and basketball which I find very interesting.

We see more and more people lining up for both trail running races and Spartan races. How do you explain that?

Cali: It's true. A good example of that is Jonathan Albon, who just won the Marathon du Mont Blanc and who is a Spartan World champion. It's interesting to see how trail running and Spartan racing overlap. I think there are a lot of similarities and Spartan and Trail running often attract the same people. Both sports bring together running and strength work. Running is probably 85 to 90% of Spartan. You can go pretty far by just being a good runner.

Spartan comes with some specific exercises and obstacles. Do you train specifically for that?

Cali: Yes, there is a little bit of specific preparation. Especially with the coordination aspect of some obstacles. Some also involve lifting weight and if your legs or your back are not prepared for it, it may generate a lot of fatigue during the race and then make you run slowly. With the growing popularity of obstacle racing, there have been new gyms that have opened that enable you to train for these specific obstacles. Some people find obstacles easier than others and can cross them quite naturally, so they don't need a lot of specific training. Whereas other athletes, who often come from a running background, have to focus more than the others on that. Overall you're not going to have a lot of success without specific obstacles training.

What about elite athletes in Spartan racing? Are there some people who made it their full-time job and can train and race as professional athletes?

Cali: If you talk to a lot of the best athletes of the sport, you can observe some professionalization happening, but that's not to a point where they make it their job. The prize money is growing but it's still low compared to other sports. The top 5 athletes of the sport can pretty much sustain their life with the prize money and the sponsorship contracts. We also have a lot of multi-sport athletes who combine Spartan racing with other sports at an elite level (trail running, ski mountaineering, mountain biking...), and that enables them to be professional athletes. It's also cool that this sport is not too professional yet. It keeps something authentic in the community and makes it welcoming for everybody.

You're still very young - 26 years old - and you have a big room for improvement given it's been only 4 to 5 years that you train in a competitive way for Spartan Races. What will be your focus in the coming years to get even more competitive in the sport?

Cali: I like to remind myself that it does take decades to build a proper aerobic base. I've made some errors in the past few years, namely overtraining. I now have a coach that helps me

to structure my long-term progression. I feel fortunate to have started the sport young enough to take all these learnings and to be in a position where I can improve in the long term.

Spartan training might be very demanding. What does your daily life look like today?

Cali: I actually have a couple of jobs that I piece together. I've been a private tutor since 2015: I mainly work with students in the middle school range, mostly on Mathematics but I tutored multiple subjects and I really enjoy it. I also help children who are homeschooled with the administrative part: coordination of tutors, registration for standardized tests, university application... I am also a certified strength training specialist, so I enjoy coaching people in strength training and fitness in general.

What's next for you?

Cali: I would like to try to hit the 24h Spartan Race World Championships this year. That's something that really inspired me last year as I was crewing a friend there. It seems like a really tough challenge and that would be completely new to me.

Ashley Brasovan

Balancing elite racing and a demanding job



From never-ending injuries to finding the perfect balance: This is the story of Ashley Brasovan. Although her career as a college runner had not been the success she hoped for, the balance she has found in her life today makes Ashley a very competitive athlete.

The maturity she has built overcoming these challenges also made her move to a very interesting long-term, incremental progression strategy as it relates to her running career.

Besides being a professional runner for Hoka, Ashley also has a great professional career. She is working in business development and account strategy within an energy-efficiency consulting company, McKinstry. Her specialty? Working on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and battery storage projects for local governments across Colorado.

We had a great conversation with Ashley about her journey, her life, and her next goals.

Hi Ashley. Can you tell us about yourself, your sporting background, how and when you started running?

Ashley: I'm from Florida. I grew up being an avid swimmer and started running in middle school to cross-train for swimming. I started running competitively around the age of 12. I raced in high school and won a few national championships in the United States, then I was recruited to race competitively in Division 1 at Duke University when I was 18. I did a master's degree in energy management during my time there and an undergraduate degree in Oceanography. I was pretty injured the whole time I was there with 4 femur stress fractures in 4 years and was diagnosed with osteoporosis. So I didn't have a good sporting university career and I decided to focus on my studies.

After graduating, I moved to Colorado to pursue a career in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Then I started to gradually get back into running to see if I could be competitive again. And it's been pretty good so far. I started working with

Hoka as a professional runner in 2018, and since then I have found a great balance between work and sport.

Is it a goal for you to fully switch to professional running now?

Ashley: Not necessarily, I really like my career and my job and it makes me feel fulfilled and I'm really passionate about offsetting greenhouse gas emissions and helping to combat climate change. I don't feel running could give me that satisfaction fully, I just feel I have a good skill set and I need something outside of running to really drive me for the rest of my life. Also, when running is not going well, it's great to have something else to focus on and not put all your eggs in the same basket. I've had 6 stress fractures in total and I've gone through quite a lot of drama so I need to have this balance now.

You come from track and field and are now focusing on trail running. How did this transition happen, physically and mentally?

Ashley: In high school, my focus was on cross country and track. Everything between 1 mile to 10k pretty much. Post college, I also did a little bit of road running, with some road marathons and half marathons. Then in 2017, I switched over to the trails. I still do some road races, I ran the last marathon Olympic trials in 2016 and 2020. This evolution felt quite natural.

You have gone from quite short distances to longer ones (marathon, 50K trail running races...). Do you think you've found your favorite format and distance, or do you plan to continue evolving to longer distances in the future?

Ashley: I think I'm a little nervous to move to longer distances too soon. I will be doing OCC this year, which is a longer 50K, but I think I'm going to stick with the 50K/marathon format for a few more years, and then I might look to move up. I like to take more of a long-term, incremental approach so I don't want to jump into a 50 or a 100-miler yet. In the next years, I might do that but I want to let my body have the time to adapt, namely given the injuries I had in the past.



@AshleyBrasovan

How do you design your seasons today?

Ashley: I do around 5 to 10 races per year. So far this year, I have done Broken Arrow and Way Too Cool 50k and I will be doing Sierr-Zinal and OCC in August out in Europe. After that, I will do a little break and probably find the last objective for the end of the season. I try to do cycles: Usually, I like to do a spring push and then take a break, do a summer push and then take a break... Taking breaks and making sure I'm not training all out year round and packing out some A races and B races is key. It's hard to be fit all year, and it's not sustainable in the long term.



@AshleyBrasovan

Hoka is your main sponsor right now, and you started working with them 4 years ago in 2018. What did it change for you to become a Hoka athlete? And what is it like on a daily basis?

Ashley: They've been really great to work with and it gives me the possibility to race much more as they cover the budget associated with many races. The products are awesome and the support they provide is really great as well. Also, the Hoka professional athletes community is very active, we all fit well together and we chat almost on a daily basis.

What are your next personal and sporting goals or projects?

Ashley: Well, I'm getting married this year! It will be in August which will definitely be an intense month as I'm running the Sierre Zinal and OCC at the end of August as well. On the professional level, I have a big project that is moving to construction with Denver International Airport to help them offset thousands of tonnes of carbon emissions on a yearly basis. I also was recently promoted at work to Senior Account Executive and will be taking on more responsibility in the office. So all of that should keep me busy for the coming months.

Stuart McConnell

Spreading the South African running culture worldwide



For anyone running in South Africa, Stuart McConnell is a go-to person. Not only is he a very talented runner and a great ambassador for the country in the world when he runs the most iconic ultramarathons (Western States, UTMB...) but he is also a community catalyst locally.

Stuart is the race director of the Ultra Trail Cape Town (UTCT) and he founded the Tuesday Trails community, which became an institution in Cape Town and around.

We met Stuart as he was recovering from the 2022 Western States to learn about his life and next projects.

Could you introduce yourself?

Stuart: I am the race director of UTCT and a runner from Cape Town. I am a father and love to spend time outdoors hiking and running whether alone or with friends. Tuesday Trails is our community and UTCT is our race.

Ultra running training takes time! What does your days look like today, how do you invest your time?

Stuart: I usually train in the morning, starting my run from home near Newlands forest. Weekends I'll try to get away to run other trails but we are very spoiled here with a lot of variety and options so any local lap suits.

You're from South Africa. The ultra running / trail running culture there looks awesome. Could you tell us about it?

Stuart: It really is, trail running here is very inclusive and fun to be a part of. We have a lot of different races across the country and the communities have grown as the sport has grown. Cape Town is seen as the hub locally but there are amazing areas right across SA which makes the sport really exciting for everyone.

What does your training playground look like in South Africa? What are the key places for trail running?

Stuart: For me it's Table Mountain, which is a lot bigger than it looks and offers a large variety of trails and areas to explore. Outside Cape Town I love the Cederberg and the Drakensberg Mountains for training and racing but that isn't everything and I'm still exploring.



@si_pocock

You just did the Western States in a very competitive time. Could you tell us about your experience there? How did it feel running such an iconic race?

Stuart: Western States was very special, it's a dream for me to have had the chance to race it. Regardless of the outcome it would have been amazing. I really loved the community atmosphere and how everyone was giving of their time to ensure we (the runners) had a special day. Each volunteer knew how special the opportunity was to race WS so they went out of their way to ensure it went smoothly for you, it's an experience I'll cherish forever.

What's next for you this year? Any projects or races incoming?

Stuart: I'm back home now, recovering and looking forward to UTCT in late November, we're running our inaugural 100 miler so we have a lot of work to do before that. I'm really excited to see how it goes and what the world thinks of the course and the new format of events. Hope to see you there!

Lara Hamilton

The rising Australian skyrunner



Lara Hamilton is an avid trail runner from Sydney, Australia, currently living in the USA. The debuts of the young athlete - she is only 24 - on the Golden Trail Series recently are promising.

We met Lara and chatted about her passion for running, and trail running. We asked her about the Australian running and outdoor culture, her move to the US, and her next projects and objectives.

Hi Lara. Could you tell us more about your running and sports background?

Lara: I originally began competing as a Nordic skier, around the age of 11. Yes! Australia does have snow and we have some awesome Nordic skiers who are killing it overseas too. In the summer time and around training on-snow, we would spend time running, biking, surfing, swimming and roller skiing. It built my endurance engine from a young age, and crafted me into a well rounded athlete.

In my final year of high school I was recruited to run a few cross country meets as they needed to fill spots on the team and according to the coaches I would be fit enough to run. I started to perform well, and win races. It was in 2016 I got a team and coaching support (RunCrew) and begun to focus more on running. In 2017 I won the Australian U20 XC Title, and was lucky enough to represent Australia at the 2018 World University XC in Switzerland.

In 2019 I moved to Boise, Idaho, to complete my masters and run Track/XC at the NCAA for Boise State University.

How did you started trail running?

Lara: I began trail running without really defining myself as a trail runner. For Nordic training we would run around ski mountains in Australia and Europe with poles for cross training. I would add in local trails to my training runs too. It wasn't until I studied in the US that the coaches encouraged many of our runs to be specifically on the trails in Boise.

The city has 190 miles of them - what an awesome playground!

In 2021 when I graduated, I was lucky enough to go to Salomon Running Academy in Moab, and win a few trail races in Australia and the US. It really kick-started my focus on this aspect of the sport.

What are the achievements are you the most proud of in trail running?

Lara: Winning and setting the course record in my first ever trail race, which was a short and fast 10km in the Owyhees in Oregon (2021). It really boosted my confidence after a hard few years experiencing Covid in a foreign country.

More recently, after being diagnosed with an autoimmune disease in late 2021, I didn't know if it would be possible for me to run at a high level again. Since diagnosis, I have run the most consistent I can and have come away with a win in a trail marathon, a podium in a trail half marathon and a top 15 at Broken Arrow Skyrace 52k. I proved to myself I can do this, and people can persevere despite adversities.

How do you see your trail running career evolving? Do you have any long term objectives, or any race that is on your wish list?

I hope to continue to make trail running a large part of my life, and to have more time to compete in my home country, Australia.

lia, and in Europe. I am working my way there!

I currently partner with Dynafit, which has been awesome so far. I hope to continue to explore this and racing opportunities!

In the short term, I hope to race well in Stranda Fjord in Norway, and World Sky Running Championships in Italy. In the long term, I hope to be able to race more of the shorter majors in Europe, like Zegama and Marathon Du Mont Blanc. I'd also like to try a few UTMB races such as UTMB Kosciusko in Australia. This is with the hopes of one day running a UTMB Mont-Blanc Race. In maybe 10 years, you'll see me give Hardrock 100 a try ;)

There are a lot of trail runners in Australia. How do you explain that as an Australian? How is the trail running community there?

Lara: Australians in general love the outdoors. We are a large country of around 26 million, which is very small compared to countries of a similar size. Whilst much of it is desert, there are so many places to run, even in the bigger cities. It's motivating, when one Sydney park has hundreds of runners in it every morning, all pushing to better each other. Then, only an hour away is the Blue Mountains with endless (technical) trails!

The community aspect is also a major player. Local running stores incentivize the community to get amongst it, hosting races, challenges, group runs and often supporting local athletes. I really loved this about Australia running culture. Teams such as Run Crew, my home-town squad, mean you

always have someone to run with if you want to. There are Run Crew members all over the world. I'm very thankful to be apart of that community.



@scottrokisphoto

You also have a background in marketing and brands development. Could you tell us more about that?

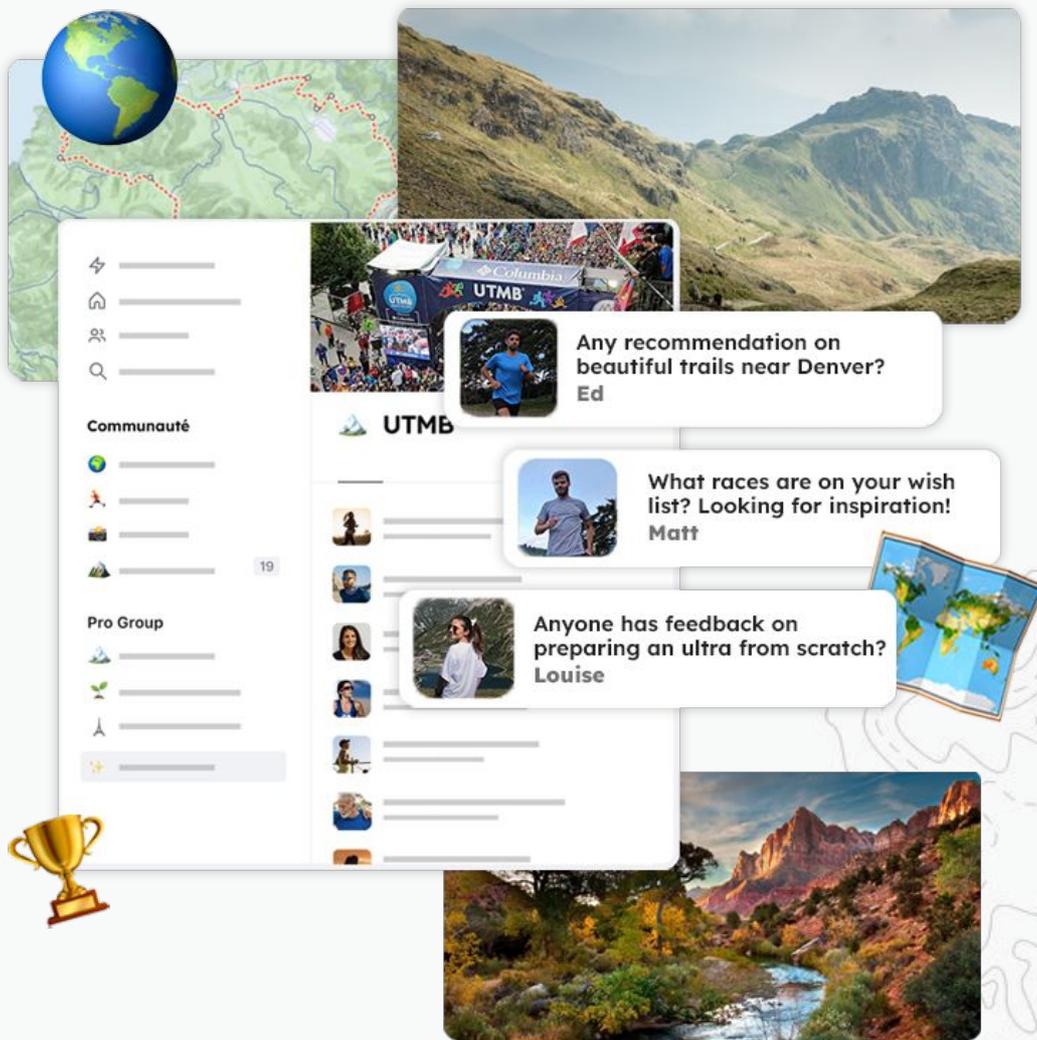
Lara: I do! I started this as a side hustle in my early days of college. I knew it would translate well if I ever wanted to work for myself or develop my name as an athlete or musician (I studied opera for both my degrees). I have pursued this and created my own website, with articles that rank well on the internet around popular running topics and things that need to be spoken about more widely, such as climate activism in distance running. I currently work as a Digital Marketing Manager in the USA. It is a job that allows me to find time to train around it, and I'm thankful for that.

What are your days like? How do you organise your time between your various activities?

I'm very busy, as are most athletes. I still need to earn income as running typically doesn't pay all the bills! I almost always run in the mornings, spend my day working, get out here and there for some sun and light movement during the day. Dealing with Ankylosing Spondylitis, I have to be very diligent about my prehab and recovery routine in order to run at all. This means lots of sleep, specific stretches for my hips and spine in particular, special medication, plyometrics, strength and a low-inflammation diet (when I can!). Balance is very important, so I do make sure to have fun with friends, spend time with my partner who is also an amazing trail runner (Kieran Nay), and catch up with family on FaceTime!

About Uptrack Club

An open community for trail runners and outdoor sports lovers



Join us ! (it's free)