



TRAIL RUNNING
ASSOCIATION OF
QUEENSLAND

Trailrunning News 2012 #1 January

Coming up in or near Queensland

Mt Glorious Mountain Trails – Saturday 4 Feb – 22k and x climb/descent – nearly full!

TRAQ AGM – Sat 25 Feb – 1pm Bunyaville Sports Centre

Speewah Legend (Cairns/ASNQ) – Sun 18 March – 4/8/17k

Water World (Red Rocks-Coffs NSW) – Sun 1 April – 45k

Mini Kokoda – Sun 1 April – 50k

Wild Horse Criterium – Sun 8 April – 11/32/53k

Pinnacles Classic – Sat 14 April – 18k 18 hills

Gold Rush Trail Marathon (Cairns) – 22 April – 42k

TRAQ Membership 2012

Membership (\$30 or \$45 family) is always available online from our website www.runtrails.org and entitles you to discounted race entry. All memberships paid from October will cover you for the whole of 2012. We also encourage members to help out at one event a year, since all our events are low cost and rely on voluntary helpers.

Link: <http://runtrails.org/articles/membership>

Brisbane trails social running groups

Bunyaville continues to be a popular training outing. Times are at 5.30pm on Wednesday, with occasional other outings. Meet outside entrance carpark off Old Northern Rd. Email bunyavilletrailrunners@hotmail.com for more info. Updates on the Coolrunning thread:

www.coolrunning.com.au/forums/index.php?showtopic=27467

Glasshouse Mountains: contact Alun Davies at ag.davies@hotmail.com

Women's Group Run Southside: contact Tamyka Bell at tamyka.bell@gmail.com

Women's Group Run Northside: contact Lynn Davies at lynn.davies@workcoverqld.com.au

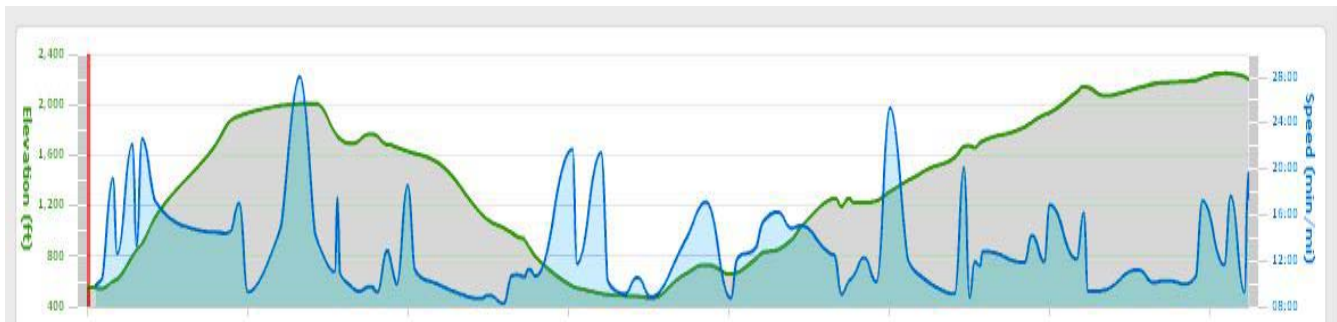
Mt Glorious Mountain Trails 22k & 1200m (up, that is)

With two weeks to go there are only 30 places left so if this is on your “must do” list this year, you need to enter now. This is a course for seriously fit runners though – a total distance of 22km with 1200m of climb and 650m of descent – so for some, another year’s training might be a good backup plan!

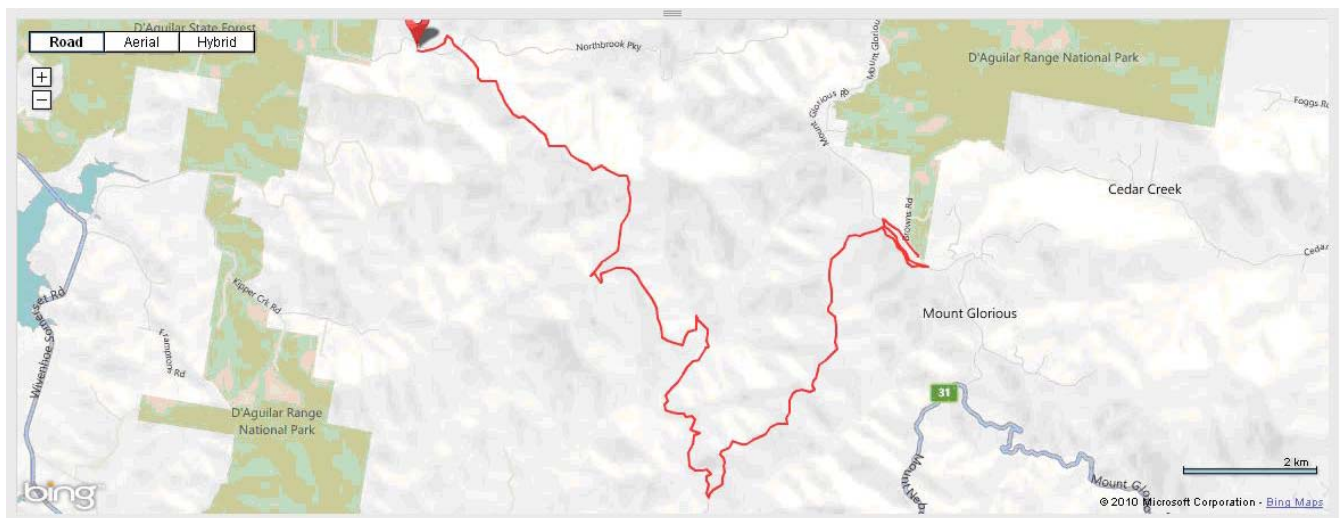


We have a great new course starting from Cedar Flats, following a steep ridgeline trail up to Northbrook Mountain, then down down down to England Creek before a 600m climb to finish along stone-lined single-track through rainforest to Mt Glorious. Bagpipes send-off and bus transfers included in entry. Note change to Saturday 4 February, not Sunday as in previous years.

The GPS profile below shows the elevation change over the course. The last section doubles back just before the end to follow the singletrack northwest, climbing the stone stairway to Western Window and back along the top trail to finish in the clearing opposite Maiala Park.



I will be marking the course this Saturday so anyone is welcome to check the course over on Sunday, two weeks ahead of the race. If you haven't been there before, the start is hard to spot - after the big descent by road from Wivenhoe lookout there's a clearing on the left with a gravel circle for the emergency helicopter response to road accidents. Park beside the road there and backtrack about 100m to a gate on south side of road. A grassy trail drops down to the left and after 50m crosses the river and rounds a bend to the right, heading up a very obvious and steep ridgeline firetrail.



Just remember this is a point-to-point course so you either need a) a friend and a second car; B) an MTB to drop at the top before driving to the start (bottom); c) or be really crazy (I don't recommend running back down, hammers the legs too much, and remember Lawnton Road is a washout). Do not try any other route here without a Brisbane Forest Park map and bush skills as you can get seriously lost in this area! There are lots of old overgrown trails.

Entry Fees: \$36 for TRAQ Members \$40 for Non Members

Link for race information: <http://runtrails.org/articles/events/glorious>

Mt Glorious Sat 4 Feb: helpers wanted

If you consider this mountain run a bit too much for summer, perhaps you can help out your fellow trail runners by manning registration or the finish. Or if you are running but your partner can help, you get a free entry.

I'd also particularly like a 4WD and driver who can get to visit the normally closed road from Mt Glorious to Northbrook Mountain via England Creek, to deliver water for checkpoints on Friday 3 or Saturday 4th with early start, early finish (or stay if you can, as emergency backup).

Email mandy-leenoble@bigpond.com if you can help.

TRAQ Calendar 2012

Jan 8 Woodford Hares & Hounds	Jul 29 Glasshouse Mts Flinders Tour
Feb 4 Mt Glorious	Aug 12 Lake Manchester Trails
Feb 25 TRAQ AGM Bunyaville SC	Sep 15 Glasshouse Mountains 100
Apr 8 Wild Horse Criterium	Oct 7 Bribie Beach Bash
Apr 14 Pinnacles Classic	Oct 21 Washpool (north NSW)
Apr 22 Mt Mee to Dayboro	Oct 27-28 Lamington Classic
May 20 Glasshouse Mts Cooks Tour	Nov 4 Rainbow Beach

Report - Fats Festive Fatass, Brisbane Forest Park

I heard about this event going up a mountain. It is a 24km fatass (informal) run to Mt Nebo. That's for me, I thought. Coming from the Cordillera mountains, anything with 'mountain' sometimes piques my interest. The event was scheduled for the 27th of December. Good to sweat off some extra weight put on during Christmas.

The previous day (boxing day) was quite warm. Even until late in the night the heat was still there, and I could not get to sleep until after midnight. Sometimes mountain runs make me anxious. It shouldn't though because I race mainly with city slickers/ runners from the big smoke. Yet one of the mysteries of my running life that I'll never understand is how everyone goes faster than me. Maybe I'm getting soft and slow in my old middle age. Maybe they're just slick.

On the day I turned up early and eagerly for the start at around 5:30am. I joined the group gathering at a makeshift carpark on the grassy verge of the junction of Payne Road and Dillon Road in the suburb of The Gap.

The sight of these battle-hardened elite mountain runners was very intimidating to a newbie funrunner attempting his first run up mt nebo. I said hello to a couple of familiar faces and met a few more runners who posted in the coolrunning forum for this run.

This run is along 'south boundary road' in the southern section (formerly Brisbane Forest Park) of the 36,000-hectare D'Aguilar national park. This national park in Brisbane is the only park this large just 12 km from the CBD of any Australian city.

Some 20 to 25 runners turned up for the run. A couple of the veterans gave instructions and directions for the route. Others kindly dropped off water and drink replenishments up along the way, and at the end of the route, 24 kilometres away in mt nebo. And as we started it was then that the actual difficulty of this run hit me. It wasn't just 24k, it's a full 48kms up and down!

It was too late to organise a lift back so I thought of doing 12 or maybe 15km and then walk back. That was the plan. And it was a good plan - at the time. Good I had all day.

The folly of the plan immediately laid itself bare. First of all, this was the first time I had to run with so much extra weight on, and not just from indulging excessively in some rich Christmas fare. I had a 2-litre hydration backpack. On top of this was two 250ml smaller bottles (one with water carried in hand, and the other with juice in the pack), a digital camera, mobile phone in belt pouch, energy bar, gel pack, electrolyte sachet, extra pair of foot pads and socks. Everyone else had packs on, but I bet I had the heaviest. And they're veterans, I'm just new at this. And this was not a stroll down some paved path down the road to a park. This was a mountain run with an elevation gain of some 450m over at least 20km.

The start was okay. I plodded along and settled into my pace. But almost immediately started panting and sweating profusely.

Craig a very coolrunner , kindly stocked up an esky with plenty of ice and water at the 6km mark off Hillbrook Road. I thought I was okay for water so I just left an empty 250ml bottle for when I got back. Soon I got to some familiar trails which were part of the Pinnacles classic last April. I did not really recognise too many landmarks of the 4km or so trails common with the pinnacles route, but that's how it is with running. When running in a race, you're usually simply intent on putting one foot in front of the other, and not notice too much of the surroundings. But at about the 8- or 9-km mark, I could only walk up the ascents. And so from about one-fifth distance I walked the uphill and jogged the downhill of the rest of my eventual 40km journey.

Craig was waiting patiently at the 14km mark to make sure we didn't take a wrong turn towards lake Manchester in the south. He also advised to take a left turn at a shed near the 17km mark on Scrub Road.



This is the 14km mark. You can make out Craig's makeshift right-turn arrow.

I noted all the instructions at the race start but thanks indeed for responsible people like Craig. This being a fat ass event, he did not have to worry about directing other runners and providing water for them, yet he did, so good on you mate. May your tribe increase - at a fast rate.

At the start of the race I ran with Keith who I knew. He did not seem too well and gave me a handicap start. I then tried matching it with Nikki, but after a couple of kilometres I could not stay with her, so I told her to go for it. I then alternated with a couple of speedy ladies who were not impressed with me pretending to sprint past them once or twice. They eventually got so far ahead of me and left me to my own battles with just the serenade of the bellbirds for company.

I managed to keep pace with Jeff/Geoff for one or two kilometres before he scooted off into the rainforest where now we are deep in. Boombana is a dry type subtropical rainforest with eucalypt woodland commingling.

Chris and another runner went past me at the 17km mark. Then the backmarkers also eventually caught me near the 18km mark, and so I brought up the rear as usual. The reluctant rear guard was put in his place, on his post and on his own again.



Sometimes I turn, there's someone there, other times it's only me....

I kept an eye on my watch to just past the 20km mark, at a junction in the tracks on 'township break' where I stopped, then turned back. My outward run took almost 3 hours which was fair enough going generally uphill, but the return also took about 3 hours!

Just after turning back I met Keith who kept soldiering on though he was obviously not well. He wished me the best of 2012, but really he should have stayed home. Dare I say it but Keith is the epitome of a runner – of the never give up kind. I simply said 'see you later'.

On the way back I did take time to look around and about. I even took a few photos. I wasn't resting, no... Somewhere down the road, a girl runner went sprinting past me like a gazelle. I believe she won the race if anyone cared to note.

A few minutes later, another runner (male with his shirt off) went scooting past. And then at the 12km mark, I was putting on my extra pair of foot pads when a third runner (redshirt) came past asking if I was alright.

See - running's not always about winning or getting a PB. Many a runner I met over the short three years I have been running, have always lent a helping hand first and foremost, before worrying about their finishing time. If the general society learned this attitude from the running community, life would be so much better.

So ladies and gentlemen take up running, you'll unleash the better angel inside of you. And if you're already a runner, you should have this event on your must run list. You'll discover things about yourself.

I was parched and wobbling in the legs but the only way home is down by the trail of broken paths of this forestry road, where nobody's hiding their fears. My body had stopped sweating and I was feeling as if I was dehydrated.

I still had a little water left but I was mindful not to drain the pack dry. I had resorted to a walk/jog tempo since the 8km outbound mark (walk uphill jog downhill) and on I walked and jogged.

Back at the 6km mark off Hillbrook Road, I stopped to see if there's any water left in Craig's red esky. There were still two full 600ml bottles buried in ice. I filled up the 250ml juice bottle I left earlier that morning for a cold slaking drink. Ahhhh. And then I trudged on down the road...



Near the 3km mark I paused to take in the sights of the Enoggera reservoir now and then and to rest the wearied legs.

Source: <http://anigorotodyssey.blogspot.com/2011/12/mt-nebo-festive-fatass-trail-run-2011.html>

Report - Hares & Hounds, Woodford swimming pool

The 5th Annual Hares & Hounds Trail Run offers a 5 or 10km fun run, or for teams of two or four as 'hounds' who try to chase down the solo runners (hares) on a 55km adventure to Beerburum and back. Short course shown below – if you finish with a swim in the Woodford pool, this is a great summer training treat anytime:



Results: <http://www.glasshousetrails.com.au/hareandhounds.htm>

“Well, what a welcome to running in the Qld summer! Well done to everyone today, organisers, volunteers and fellow runners. At the start I was cursing the 3:30am start (having got only 2rs sleep) but once the sun was biting at only 8:30, I was thankful. Crrrrrikey it was hot out there today. There should be a pool at the end of every ultra, don't you think? Ooooh, that swim was the best.

flying emu

Source: <http://www.coolrunning.com.au/forums/index.php?showtopic=33512>

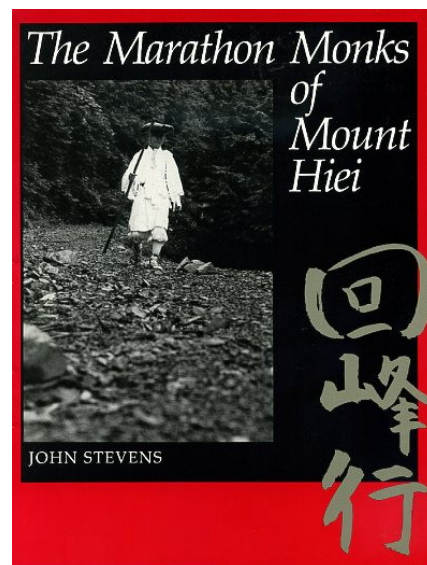
Feature articles:

Marathon Monks and the appeal of ultra distance trail runs

1. The Marathon Monks

The Kaihōgyō is a set of the ascetic physical endurance trainings for which the Japanese ‘marathon monks’ of Mt. Hiei are known. These Japanese Monks are from the Tendai school of Buddhism, a denomination brought to Japan by the Monk Saichō in 806 from China.

Their quest is to serve Buddha through many duties but they are best known for their physical endurance in running, a form of extreme asceticism. The school is based north of Kyoto, at Mt. Hiei, which overlooks the ancient capital city.



The Monks and their quest for enlightenment:

Part of Tendai Buddhism's teaching is that enlightenment can be attained in the current life. It is through the process of self denial that this can be achieved, and the Kaihōgyō is seen as the ultimate expression of this desire.

There are many serving priests at the Temple on Mt Hiei, but very few of them have completed the Kaihōgyō. Many who have completed it come from outside of the Order.

The selection process for the Kaihōgyō is after the first 100 days of running, the Gyoja (trainee Monk) will petition the senior Monks to complete the remaining 900 days. In the first 100 days, withdrawal from the challenge is possible, but from day 101 onwards the Monk is no longer allowed to withdraw; he must either complete the course or take his own life. The mountain has many unmarked graves from those who have failed in their quest, although none date from the 20th/21st century.

There are many parts to the Kaihōgyō, but the main challenges can be broken down into the following sections:

Running: The ultimate achievement is the completion of the 1,000-day challenge, which would rank among the most demanding physical and mental challenges in the world. Only 46 men have completed the 1,000-day challenge since 1585.[1]

The Kaihogyo takes seven years to complete, as the monks must undergo other Buddhist training in meditation and calligraphy, and perform general duties within the temple.

The training is divided into 100-day sections as follows:

Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4 Year 5 Year 6 Year 7

30 (40) km per day for 100 days. 30 (40) km per day for 100 days. 30 (40) km per day for 100 days. 30 (40) km per day for 200 days. 30 (40) km per day for 200 days. 60 km per day for 100 days. 84 km per day for 100 days, followed by 30 (40) km per day for 100 days.

(The numbers in parentheses indicate the distance of the Imuro Valley course which is slightly longer.)

The running is punctuated in the middle of the term by the Katsuragawa retreat which takes 4 days. Although not required all modern initiates have been known to add the missing days due to this retreat onto the end of their course, thereby completing the full 1000 day term.

Doiri or "Entering the Temple": During the fifth year of the challenge, the running is punctuated by what many consider the most daunting phase of the process. The trainee Monk must go for 9 days (216 hours) without food, water, or rest of any kind. He sits in the Temple and prays constantly. Two monks accompany him, one on either side, to ensure he does not fall asleep. At 2am every night he must get up to fetch sacrificial water from the well, around 200m away, as an offering for Fudō Myōō.

Source: Wikipedia. Footnote 1. The Daily Yomiuri, Sept. 19, 2009, p. 3



2. Japan's Marathon Monks

ABC broadcast transcript 14/09/2004 reporter Mark Simkin

SIMKIN: On the outskirts of Japan's ancient capital, Kyoto stands a sacred mountain. It is here, on Mount Hiei that the marathon monks live, pray and defy death.

The monks pursue enlightenment. What they put themselves through are so utterly extraordinary, it must rate as one of the most incredible and dangerous feats of endurance. These men may be the world's greatest athletes.

It is 1.00 am and Genshin Fujinami is preparing for what lies ahead. White is the Buddhist colour of death. He wears it as a reminder his journey will take him to the limits of life itself and quite possibly, beyond.

Fujinami's pilgrimage is more than 80 kilometres long. The monk will traverse the route every day for the next three and a half months. He'll sleep for just two hours a night, then walk for seventeen hours only stopping to utter a few secret incantations.

An Olympic marathon is 42 kilometres. On each of the next 100 days, Fujinami will cover twice that distance. Unlike a professional athlete though, the forty four year old must traverse treacherous mountain trails, often in complete darkness. There are no high-tech supplements to keep him going, just a daily rice ball and a bowl of noodles.

The monk is approaching the conclusion of the "Kaihogyo", seven years of tests and trials. By the end of it, if he survives, he will become a living saint.

Fujinami writes of a need to worship from the bottom of his heart. He once worked as a salary man, an office worker, but couldn't find fulfilment. Eleven years ago he came to Mt Hiei, cutting his hair and all ties with his family, so he could join the marathon monks.

FUJINAMI: When I was a salary man, my life was passive. I was told to do this and that, and that was all. Since I was a child, I've dreamt about doing something where I can think by myself and there are many things in the monk's world where I have to think for myself.

The purpose of the marathon is not to walk per se. We visit places of worship and we go there on foot. It is like a pilgrimage.

SIMKIN; The road to enlightenment is strewn with jagged rocks, poisonous snakes and uneven ground. And yet it is traversed with hand-made straw sandals that offer little protection.

Fujinami goes through at least two, sometimes five pairs a day. His feet are left blistered, bruised and broken but he cannot stop. Under his robes Fujinami carried a rope and knife. If he fails to complete his mountain march, no matter what the reason, he must immediately hang or disembowel himself.

In the final year of the Kaihogyo, as the Cherry Blossoms begin to bloom, the running monk exchanges the solitude of the mountain for the bustle of urban Kyoto. The new route takes him past geisha houses and love hotels, to the old part of town.

Fujinami visits the city's ancient temples and shrines, stopping briefly at each. During this part of the challenge, some of the devoted walk with him. This man's been helping the marathon monks for half a century.

PARISHIONER: I serve them because I believe they are living Gods of fire. In the old days it was an unsafe society and the parishioners wore swords. Their main duty was to guard the monk from ruffians. Now, our main duty is to control the traffic.

SIMKIN: There are other duties too. Providing food, money and a more physical kind of support, one of them pushes Fujinami along. Believers who cannot walk line the streets, begging for a blessing.

FUJINAMI; The Kaihogyo is not about the individual. It is something that is handed over, passed down from generation to generation, through oral tradition. Everything including the clothes is the same as it always was. The individual is not significant.

SIMKIN: Once a year, the marathon monks and their attendants venture deep into the mountains for a special retreat. It's very different to the restrained, aesthetic world the men usually inhabit. The founder of the sect discovered God by jumping into a waterfall. His followers imitate the leap of faith. This is a select gathering. The Kaihogyo is so gruelling only 46 men have completed it in the last four centuries.

Of those who did and are still alive, Yusai Sakai is the undisputed champion, a national treasure and media superstar. These days he spends much of his time signing the many books that have been written about him.

During World War II, Sakai worked for Unit 731, the biological warfare unit that killed vast numbers of Chinese. When the war was lost, Sakai's family started a noodle shop. It burnt down. He married a cousin, she committed suicide. Depressed and aimless, Sakai joined the marathon monks and began to run. He raced through one seven year challenge then, though aged in his fifties, began a second.

YUSAI SAKAI: Because I was lazy and had a good-for-nothing life, there was nothing else for me to do. Furthermore, when I was a child at school, I flunked my exams again and again. I

completed the pilgrimage once but because I'd needed to do everything else in my life twice, I thought I'd better walk twice if I really wanted to achieve something.

SIMKIN: Looking at him now, it's hard to believe how close this living God came to death. Sakai was attacked by a wild boar. His foot infected, the pain excruciating, the monk remembered that failure to complete the course requires suicide. He ensured that he would die if he passed out.

YUSAI SAKAI: After I lanced the wound, I propped the knife under my stomach like this. But fate intervened did it not? I do not know how or why but I survived.

SIMKIN: At age 61, Sakai completed his 2000th day on the road. Soon after, he was back on the track, revealing the mountain's secrets to a new monk. The novice's name was Genshin Fujinami, the man now undertaking a Kaihogyo of his own. Sakai is his master, responsible for guiding him through the seven year challenge.

YUSAI SAKAI: The message I wish to convey is please live each day as if it is your entire life. If you start something today, finish it today. Tomorrow is another world. Live life positively.

SIMKIN: It's a message his disciple has taken to heart. Today, 1000 days and more than 46,000 kilometres after he began, the end is in sight. Fujinami has travelled far enough to have circled the globe. It's an historic occasion. The journalists and disciples have come from across the country to witness it. The believers receive a final blessing and then, almost anti-climatically, it is all over.

FUJINAMI: I feel that I have accomplished a job. That is all. I do now know whether I should call it "enlightenment" or not but the training has taught me that everyone and everything is equal. Everything that is alive is equal. A human being is not special. There are no special things.

SIMKIN: The celebrations are held in Kyoto at the ancient Imperial Palace. Eight hundred people, including Fujinami's master, Sakai, and the head monk, Uehara have come to pay their respects. Fujinami is now a national celebrity, an inspiration to Japanese workers.

JOHN STEVENS: The inspiration that if you train, no matter what it is, you can accomplish this and the whole idea is to bring out your inner nature, your Buddha nature. It's realising your potential.

SIMKIN: Fujinami is a powerful symbol, embodying the determination and discipline that turned a war-ravaged nation into an industrial superpower.

PARISHIONER: The marathon monks who risk their lives by undergoing their training, sweep away our feelings of laziness. When I think about them, I am inspired.

SIMKIN: But fewer and fewer people are inspired enough to join or support the marathon monks. Fujinami believes young, modern Japanese have little interest in religion, sacrifice and tradition.



FUJINAMI: Japanese culture is gradually dying. I deeply regret the way Japanese people are embracing anything new and are not making much of the old things.

SIMKIN: And so, amid the celebrations, there are hints of uncertainty. The monks have a wonderful history but they wonder and worry about their place in Japan's future. Who will be next to walk in Fujinami's shoes, to follow in his footsteps.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2004/s1199164.htm>

3. Tendai Marathon Monks - The Run of A Lifetime

by James Davis - The London Observer

Some of the world's best athletes gave a very good run for their money in the London Marathon, others picked up their appearance fee and potted round without threatening to win. The world's top distance runners are well rewarded - the best earn one million dollars a year - and they reckon to run only two or three marathons a year.



What a comparison that is to a group of men who can claim - though they never do - to be the greatest, toughest, most committed athletes in the world. They run for no other reward than spiritual enlightenment, hoping to help themselves along the path of Buddha towards a personal awakening. They are the so-called 'marathon monks' of Mount Hiei, Japan.

The monks, known as Kaihigyo, are spiritual athletes from the Tendai Sect of Buddhism, based at Mount Hiei, which overlooks the ancient capital city of Kyoto.

The ultimate achievement is the completion of the 1,000-day challenge, which must surely be the most demanding physical and mental challenge in the world. Forget ultra-marathons and so-called iron-man events, this endurance challenge surpasses all others.

Only 46 men have completed the 1,000-day challenge since 1885. It takes seven years to complete, as the monks must undergo other Buddhist training in meditation and calligraphy, and perform general duties within the temple.

The first 300 days are basic training, during which the monks run 40km per day for 100 consecutive days. In the fourth and fifth years they run 40km each day for 200 consecutive days. That's more or less a full marathon every day for more than six months.

The final two years of the 1000-day challenge are even more daunting. In the sixth year they run 60km each day for 100 consecutive days and in the seventh year they run 84km each day for 100 consecutive days. This is the equivalent of running two Olympic marathons back-to-back every day for 100 days.

Author John Stevens, in his book, *The Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei* describes the running style which dates back over a thousand years. 'Eyes focused about 100 feet ahead while moving in a steady rhythm, keeping the head level, the shoulders relaxed, the back straight, and the nose aligned with the navel.'

What makes all these distances even more amazing is the manner and the conditions in which the monks run. These runs are usually begun at night and are over mountain paths that are uneven and poorly marked. During the winter months the low temperatures and snow are a great hindrance to the runners. These monks do not wear the latest in footwear and clothing, but run in straw sandals, an all-white outfit and a straw hat. They also run on a diet of vegetables, tofu and miso soup, which modern athletes and nutritionists would deem to be unsuitable for endurance events.

Not only do they wear clothes and shoes unsuited to running, but they have to carry books with directions and mantras to chant, food to offer along the way, candles for illumination, as well as a sheathed knife and a rope, known as the 'cord of death'. These remind the monk of his duty to take his life if he fails, by hanging or self-disembowelment. The course is littered with unmarked graves, marking the spot where monks have taken their own lives. However, there have been no cases of monks' suicides since the nineteenth century.

During these long runs the monks must make stops at temples of worship that can number up to 260. This means that the 86km run can take up to 20 hours to complete leaving the monk with very little time for recovery or rest, but as an old saying goes: 'Ten minutes' sleep for a marathon monk is worth five hours of ordinary rest.' They also learn to rest sections of their body while running, such as their arms or shoulders.

And then there is the doiri, where the monk faces seven days without food, water or sleep or rest. During this time the monk will spend his entire day reciting Buddhist chants and mantras - perhaps up to 100,000 each day. The only time the monk will leave the temple is at 2am to walk the 200m to a well and return with water to make an offering. He is not allowed to drink any himself and the 200m walk can take up to two hours in the final days of the fast. During his time spent meditating there are two monks who are in constant attention to ensure that he does not fall asleep.

For several weeks before doiri, the monk will reduce his food intake so his body can cope with the fast. The first day is no problem, but there is some nausea on the second and third days. By the fourth and fifth days the hunger pangs have disappeared, but the monk has become so dehydrated that there is no saliva in his mouth and he will begin to taste blood.

The purpose of doiri is to bring the monk face-to-face with death. During this fast, the monks develop extraordinary powers of sense. They talk of being able to hear the ashes of incense sticks fall to the ground and, perhaps unsurprisingly, of the ability to smell food being prepared miles away.

Physiologists, who have examined the monks after conclusion of the rite, find many of the symptoms of a 'dead person'. Monks talk of experiencing a feeling of transparency where everything good, bad and neutral leaves their body and existence in itself is revealed in crystal clarity. Relatives of those who undergo this rite of passage talk of the difference that the seven days makes to those who undergo it. One remarked, 'I always dismissed Buddhism as superstitious nonsense until I saw my brother step out of Myo-o-do [the name of the temple] after doiri. He was really a living Buddha.'

When the Japanese Emperor maintained his court in Kyoto, the monks were afforded a special thanksgiving service in the Imperial Palace after completing their 1,000-day term and the 'marathon monks' were the only people who were allowed to wear footwear in the presence of the Emperor.



Even today thousands will turn out to watch a monk nearing completion of a 1,000-day term, as he runs the old course that now passes through Kyoto's shopping streets and the entertainment district, complete with its bars, restaurants and strip joints. Many turn up hoping to be blessed by these special monks whom they believe have powers to heal.

Japan has the largest number of marathon runners per capita in the world. From the Arctic northern island of Hokkaido to the balmy tropical islands of Okinawa in the Pacific, each and

every town will organise a number of long-distance runs and each school will have a strong running club.

There is even a corporate-sponsored running league, whose teams are even allowed to have one foreigner in their team. Jeff Schiebler, a Canadian Olympic runner, is the only non-African foreigner who competes. He described what it is like to run in Japan. 'It is totally different from anything in North America. They have multimillion-dollar contracts, team chefs, great training facilities. That kind of thing makes Japan a power in long-distance running. They go mad for road races. Kids there grow up wanting to be the next marathon champ.'

Japan's love of marathon running was epitomised with the incredible outpouring of emotion that followed Naoko Takahashi's victory in the women's Olympic marathon in Sydney last year. The race and the prize-giving attracted a massive 84 per cent TV rating as the fresh-faced girl from the mountains of Gifu became the first Japanese woman to win an Olympic gold medal.

She became an overnight superstar and her face was splashed across newspapers, magazines and on talk shows. She even received The People's Honour (only the third woman ever to do so) from the then prime minister Yoshiro Mori, who said: 'You have given inspiration and encouragement to youngsters as well as a whole people by crossing the finish line with a refreshing smile.'

Very few runners will cross the finish line in London with a 'refreshing smile' after 26 hard miles. Grimaces of exhaustion and relief will be a more common sight. However, after looking back at the 26 miles and a bit, there will be a feeling of great personal pride and achievement in their performance. Many will have achieved personal best times and others will have raised hundreds of pounds for charity. But will many of them be able to say they have gained something spiritually, as with the 'marathon monks' of Japan?

Source: <http://www.howtobefit.com/tendai-marathon-monks.htm>

4a. The Marathon Monks: Stretching the Limits of Human Endurance

There were no running events in the Winter Olympics, staged in Nagano, Japan. One of the most talked about features by CBS however, was the ten-minute piece delivered by Charles Osgood on the "marathon monks," a group of Buddhists who push the limits of human endurance in search of a higher plane of spirituality.

The ritual followed by these monks is almost beyond belief: 100 consecutive days of 26.2-mile marathons, beginning at 1:30 a.m., each day after an hour of prayer. Throughout the night they run and pray, dressed in a white robe and straw sandals. Upon completion of each day's marathon, the monks perform chores and pray throughout the day, until retiring at 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. The ritual begins again a few hours later. If the monk finds himself physically unable to complete the 100-day ritual, he is required to commit suicide by hanging himself with the belt from his robe. And you thought there was pressure in your last marathon.

Which of course begs the question: Why? Why push oneself past the reasonable limits of endurance? Is there anything out there to be gained physically, mentally, or spiritually by racking up huge mileage? Well, the marathon monks seem to have the spiritual angle covered. The rest of us however, are seeking more earthly rewards. As for breaking new ground competitively, forget it. Many of us would like to think that if we can't run faster, we can at least run longer. Yiannis Kouros does both. The planet's most accomplished ultramarathoner, Kouros has set records that are almost beyond comprehension. He ran 303 km (186 miles) in 24 hours last October. That's 7:40 per mile average for a full day. He has also run more than 100 miles for six straight days. So, record-setting is pretty much out of the question.

Most anyone who does go beyond the marathon extols the virtues of the pursuit. One by-product of running long is that you can actually get somewhere. Many of the USA's 17 100-mile

trail runs are staged in some of the most scenic vistas in the country. Running on remote narrow trails throughout the night and seeing the sun come up the next day is something you just will not find in a big-city 26-miler.

There is also a unique camaraderie among runners. Ultra races are usually small affairs. The biggest race in the USA last year was the JFK in Maryland, with 719 finishers. Most are more likely to have 40 or 50 runners. As such, many runners either know each other, or get to know one another during the event. The less frenetic pace of an ultra affords time to socialize. In that way, these races are a lot like marathons were a few decades ago, when those who participated were part of a small fraternity.

Is there something missing in our society today that lures people into undertaking such seemingly excessive pursuits? Some people feel the need to test their limits. Long distance athletic challenges are a way one can create a "life and death" situation, where otherwise it does not exist. Many people thrive on the challenge of "living on the edge." Running in a big city marathon in which there are 20,000 other runners and an aid station every mile does not offer this type of challenge.

Is it physically or mentally healthy to push the limits of your endurance? Like any sporting endeavour, running ultra long distances is an individual thing; it comes more easily to some than others. Women in particular, seem to possess the ability to trot along for hours on end. In addition, advances in nutrition knowledge and producers, along with high-tech gear and shoes have made ultra runs easier than they used to be. For all of us however, running like this will take a toll on joints, tendons, and connective tissue. Furthermore, the training can be time-consuming and tiring. It's tough to squeeze a 30 or 40-mile training run into a busy schedule. It's ironic, that in this day and age of overwhelmingly busy schedules, more and more folks are undertaking runs that consume pretty much the whole day, or even longer.

Should you too try to stretch the limits of your own endurance? As cited earlier, there are some good reasons why you might want to try. The investment you need to make in the sport is substantially larger, but otherwise there are no other requirements needed to try to run farther than you ever have run before or run more marathons more frequently than you have other had before. By reaching beyond what you think you are capable of, you might learn a lot about yourself. You really don't have a lot to lose just by trying—unless of course you are a marathon monk.

By Don Allison posted Tuesday, 17 February, 1998

4b. What you need to know if you are planning to test your own endurance limits:

Here's some advice from Karl King, a respected and knowledgeable expert in the field of ultrarunning.

DA: Can the typical marathon runner complete an ultra distance run?

KK: Marathon training toughens the legs and enhances glycogen storage, but doesn't do much to improve the reaction of the endocrine system to prolonged stress. So, the typical marathoner is close to being able to run an ultra but need to do some longer training runs of 20-25 miles to stress the endocrine system, prompting it to grow and respond to ultra marathon conditions.

Typical marathoners walk as little as possible in their runs. Ultrarunners need to intersperse their running with 4-10 minute walking breaks, especially when running a hilly course. Ultra runners commonly walk the uphill in a race. Marathon runners need to add short walking breaks to their long runs.

Having done that, any runner who is fit enough to run marathons can do an ultra. It would be wise to start with a 50K, and then advance to a 50 mile ultra.

DA: What gifts do some runners possess that allows them to perform such incredible feats of endurance, such as Kouros, Ann Trason, and Andy Jones?

KK: World class ultrarunners have natural speed, tremendous cardiac fitness, physical toughness, and great mental toughness. Such runners would have very fast 5K times if they concentrated on that distance. Their cardiac fitness allows them to maintain pace for hours on end. When Kevin Setnes set the North American 24 hour record of 160.4 miles, his pace over the 24 hours slowed only gradually. That kind of fitness is rare, and a function of both genetics and a long history of quality training.

Such runners run 70-100 mile weeks, often on hilly courses. That training toughens the legs to withstand the hours of pounding. Courses such as the Vermont 100 and Leadville 100 have 15,000' feet of climb and 15,000' of drop. If a runner doesn't have tough legs, that much downhill running will turn quads to jelly before the run is over. The average runner who does 10K to marathon distance on relatively flat road courses is not prepared for such ultra courses. It usually takes three years of running hilly courses to be ready. Of course, some ultras are held on a track, so hill training is not necessary for those runs.

DA: How does the mental aspect come into play during ultras?

KK: Good ultra runners are uniquely strong in their belief that they can finish any run. Nobody doubts that they can finish a 10K, few ever drop from a marathon. But when you are standing at the starting line, and consider that the finish line is 100 miles away, it takes mental strength to believe that you can cover that distance. Any runner who believes that he or she can't cover the distance will find it a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It is common to feel very tired after running 40 to 70 miles. Some runners give up, while others rise above fatigue and finish. Finishing a run when you thought you were dead meat is one of the great joys of ultra running.

Source: http://www.coolrunning.com/engine/6/6_1/272.shtml

"Ultramarathon Man" Dean Karnazes

Dean was famous first for his inspiring book about ultra running, then for 50 marathons in 50 days (the last at New York in 3:00), then the Run Across America - and is now planning (of course) a marathon in every country in the entire world, over one year...

A recent article on the man behind "ultramarathon man" told the unusual story of how he got (re)started running. "What really got me going was bad tequila! I had a midlife crisis on my 30th birthday in a bar in San Francisco," he explained to a crowd at a book signing a few months ago. In his memoir, he details how he got seriously loaded for the first time in years, and was hit on by an attractive woman. He loved Julie, whom he fell for back in high school-"not just some fleeting high-school infatuation, but genuine, head-over-heels love," he wrote in 'Ultramarathon Man'.

On the verge of being unfaithful and knowing he'd regret it, he made an excuse to use the restroom, escaped through a back door and made it home. He stood on his porch and just felt like running-something he hadn't done since high school, when he ran track and cross country in his hometown of San Clemente. He found some tennis shoes, took off his pants and jogged south in his silk underwear.



On that night-time run, he grieved the loss of his younger sister, Pary, who was killed in a car crash 10 years earlier on the eve of her 18th birthday, when Dean was an undergraduate. Her death had devastated his close-knit Greek family and prompted Dean to quit partying, earn an MBA and fast track a career in the marketing department of a health-care company.

He also faced the fact his job didn't entirely satisfy him. "I had grown accustomed to the upscale lifestyle, the bonuses, the hefty options packages," he wrote. "But I couldn't ignore the nagging sense that something was missing. I needed a sense of purpose and clarity-and perhaps adventure."

That night he ran 30 miles, ending up in the seaside town of Half Moon Bay. How could he run so far on untrained legs? "It's amazing what you can do when you're drunk," he says. "I was intoxicated... and then I wasn't, and then it started to hurt like hell. But I made it 30 miles and shocked myself."

By the following year he had become an ultrarunning fanatic and entered his first 50-miler. When he heard about Western States, he told himself, "You gotta try to get yourself to that level." It wasn't a desire to do well competitively. It was just, "Can you make it?" He trained hard and, in 1994, finished the tough 100-miler in 21:01.

Dean is no longer as fit or as fast as he once was. Partly that's age - he's 49 now. The other part is the time it takes to maintain sponsorship deals behind his lifestyle. This includes a number of campaigns to raise the profile of running and fitness, which he clearly believes in. If you thought it's all roses being a full time runner, here's a comment from one of his crew on the run across America. Most mornings he received a call from Dean between 4 and 7 a.m. - "a lot of times he couldn't sleep, so he'd want us to get started"-and thus began a day of running 40 to 50 miles, which lasted between seven and 12 hours. Karnazes was "very detail oriented," says Friese, wanting to know the elevation profile and terrain before each day, and he was "pretty regimented with his food." The crew would mix yogurt or Ensure with granola and nut clusters, hand him the bowl, and he would eat while walking. "His big thing was always forward, always moving."

When they reach Washington he got a White House reception on national television, with Michelle Obama telling a group of schoolchildren and the national audience, "I want kids everywhere to look at Dean as an example. Exercise! Eat healthy! Keep moving!" After three hours in the White House, Dean recalled "I finally told them, 'I've still got 30 miles I've gotta run today,'" so he left and kept going toward New York...

Final comment: "It's been a tough thing for me to watch my level of athleticism slip," he says. "My God, I'd love nothing more than to go run hundreds of miles by myself, or to run Western States or Badwater, but to me, the biggest reward is having someone come up and say, 'You changed my life. I'm now a runner because of you.'"

Source: extracts from Trailrunner magazine, written by Sarah Lavender Smith:
www.trailrunnermag.com

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