

ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA50 - Jarred Stevenson

Defining success

2016 was the 4th time I had toed the line for the UTA50/TNF50 and I felt it was the year that I could take it to the next level, my hope to get as close to 5 hours as possible and a top 20 place. Not everything goes to plan...

Taking off in start group 1 I tried to keep a conservative pace along Cliff drive, passing people as their initial excitement caught up with them. A friend called out that I was in 20th place, and I concentrated on maintaining the pace which saw me move up to around 10th by our return to scenic world. Hearing the crowd I realised that directly behind me were Hanny Alston and Wes Gibson – I was either running really well or id gone out way too hard, I guess time would tell.

I continued to push quite firmly due to Hanny being right on my heels. It was about 10 steps to the bottom of the Giant Staircase when my foot slipped and my arm was reefed behind me causing excruciating pain. I tried to assess not sure whether I had possibly ruptured my bicep or dislocated my shoulder. The shoulder looked normal so it was obviously back in place but this didn't provide much comfort as every stride was causing me pain and I was now battling doubts in my mind as to whether I could carry the injury for another 40kms or if my race was already over. At this stage I was forced to ease back and allow at first Hanny past and then what felt like a constant stream of runners over the ensuing trail and stair section. I was very much back to changing my race plan and just trying to get through to the end.

Coming in to QVH checkpoint in what I now know was 30th place I was surprised to see Vlad Shatrov, and after a quick refuel I left the checkpoint with Vlad 300m ahead. I passed Vlad about 2kms later (career highlight - I'm sure it will never happen again!) however once at the bottom of the valley it was my normal death march up to the sewerage works where I pray for the finish line to come. Vlad ran back past me strongly and soon after the 2nd and 3rd placed females also who were so impressive on the climb.

Reaching the sewerage works I knew I would finish and attempted to enjoy what I feel is the most spectacular part of the course. UTA has what I feel is the best finishing chute of any event and I have never been able to replicate that feeling. With chills running up my spine I came across the line in 5hrs43 in what was to be 34th place, a relief to finish but well off the time that I had been hoping for.

In the coming days I continued to be disappointed at not getting closer to my goal time. I was dirty on myself for not trying harder, or training harder, or whatever it was that I needed to do. That's when the thought struck 'So what was Success?'

Ultimately I feel I am extremely fortunate to do what I love, trail running in spectacular scenery with my young family there to support me. I had several friends running and I was really proud to see every one finish whether in 6 hours or 11. Everyone has their own battle and my battle on the day was dealing with injury and pushing through to the finish line, something I achieved with the added bonus of taking away memories of running with or in front of some exceptional runners which I hold in such high regard. These things are in hindsight something I should be proud of and truly grateful for.

Ultimately success was the experience, not the result – and I cant wait until next year.