

ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA100 - Cathy Duffy

Why run UTA100km? Countless kilometres are run in preparation for a goal, which seems a fingertip reach away. Stretching towards this goal takes commitment but above all passion. Describing the intensity of the UTA100 experience takes my words away from the kilometres run, but towards the less tangible.

Running without pressure this year left my mind and emotions to playfully engage in banter throughout the 14 hours 38 minutes and 22 seconds. Thoughts of strong women in running left me with a confidence and my head held high, that even though a minority in the race numbers, women who run are a force not to be taken lightly!!! Echoing the word “relax” in my mind and breathing in the excitement of the race start, where hopes and dreams are abundant, I reached checkpoint one in position 554.

Moving from “relax” to “steady” my mind drifted as I headed along Narrowneck, only to be brought back into sharp focus as my vision registered the breathtaking views. Yelling at times “livin the dream” I couldn’t help but share my excitement. Single track always sharpens the focus and the mind stood to attention as I concentrated on flowing over the trail. I arrived into Dunphy’s feeling good and left in position 455.

Heading up ironpot my heart not only races due to the effort of the climb but the excitement of running along the ridge, seeing other runners and hearing the sounds of the didgerdoo. Your heart struggles for a moment as you want to pause and soak it all in, but alas your legs continue on their journey.

Arriving into checkpoint three, true to form I hear my family before I see them. My heart cries with joy each time I hear their cheers, words of comfort and see them go into action. It is amazing how invigorating four minutes can be with the right people. I left, feeling like brand new, in position 372.

The heart does not always sour and the mind does not always treat you gently. Climbing towards the infamous nellies glen stairs required a shortened focus as I concentrated on small goals whilst a whisper in my ear reminded me my family were, once again, close.

Entering the aquatic centre I am aware of my body giving me signals that it may not be happy with me. Argh nausea! Whilst a drink of ginger beer easily treats this ailment what I gain from the four minutes with my family at this time will remain highlighted as the most powerful during this experience. Feeling vulnerable, words of encouragement and the necessary support are lovingly provided. They know what I need physically, but seeing my daughter’s happy face, beaming with pride made me feel so loved. My son, now a man, who I protected for so long, came up to me and gave me a lingering hug. I felt so safe and clung to him not wanting to let go as I desperately tried to contain the emotions welling up within. My children both gave me something in that moment, a drive to continue and make them proud. I left this special place in position 326.

Running “smooth” through the endless stairs I embraced these kilometres as I was surrounded by such beauty, but to be honest breathed a sigh of relief as the stairs, for the moment, drew to an end and once again I met my family at the final check point. I left in position 255.

After the family love bubble erupted in my heart once again, I ran. I ran like I never thought I could after 78kms. I ran like a desperate woman wanting to get to the end to once again feel the love of her family and the warmth of their embrace. Crossing that finish line and falling into those sacred arms is what I hold dear. UTA100km – an emotional experience!