

ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA100 vs My IT Band – Melissa Robertson

I didn't have the best lead up to UTA. After over-racing in April my knee pulled up tight after an easy 20k run 2 weeks out from UTA suggesting ITBS. So rest it was. The day before the race I headed for the mountains and hoped for the best.

Getting to Katoomba I went through check-in, checked out the race expo, wandered around a bit, the whole time I could feel my knee pulling. Not pain, just tight pulling. I felt like an impostor, how could I be an "Elite" runner when I'm not even sure if my knee is going to be up to it? The night before the race was terrible, I was stressing about my knee and got barely any sleep. The next morning I watched a Youtube video, strapped my knee as best I could and headed for the start line. My stomach was in knots and I was on the verge of puking from nerves. My knee was not right. I didn't want to disappoint people, or waste my entry. Maybe It'll be right once I start running Maybe. I was trying to be optimistic, but my mind couldn't focus on the race, it was all on my knee.

Then we were off. The first section on the road was fine, no pain, I was moving great. I felt the first niggles as I hit Furber Stairs. Reaching the bottom of the stairs everything continued as expected. I was moving at the pace I wanted to move and feeling comfortable as I came through CP1 right on time. Maybe it was all going to be fine, maybe I could pull this off. I started to feel more optimistic. I was racing!

Then I hit a downhill at around the 20km mark and it felt like a fist clamping around my knee, it started locking up and I felt real pain "It's fine... Maybe it'll pass". I was still running ok on the ups and flats. Then at 25km my knee locked up completely on a downhill. What should I do? Withdraw at CP2? I struck a compromise with myself and decided I'd visit First Aid and see if they could re-strap it. I came into CP2 behind schedule and the first thing I did was head to First Aid. I knew my position was already long gone so I tried not to stress as more and more runners passed me while I sat there getting strapped up.

The strapping worked great to the top of Ironpot Ridge. But then I struggled on the technical ground and coming back off Ironpot was a nightmare. It's very steep and with a non-working knee I could barely even walk down, let alone run. The next lot of downhill was just as bad, long and gradual. It hurt! Then on the flat I found It was hurting and my other leg muscles were trying to compensate and also starting to hurt. The whole time I was trying to think of what I could still do. "I could still slowly run flats and uphill if I gritted my teeth" - Maybe I could get past CP3 and hike up Nellies Glen to CP4, it's mostly uphill anyway, aim for a 14hour finish. Then my ability to run flats dried up completely as the knee locked up and the pain became too much. I had to accept that my race was over.

So I stopped running. I had about 5kms to CP3 and I limped it along. Hitting CP3 I passed the bag check and immediately withdrew from the race. There was nothing more to do. I was very disappointed, but I'd had 21kms of running, then walking to think about this. I had to be 100% sure that I couldn't go on otherwise I knew I'd regret my decision. I was sure. Today was not my day.