

# ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA100 - Stuart Cole

The one that got away, a lesson learned

2016 was to see me successfully complete my 9th straight 100km UTA (previously The North Face). I have never been a fast runner however always enjoyed the challenge of churning out the hard finish. The training had been okay however something felt a little off. As I toed the start line I had my wonderful and never tiring support crew of my wife and kids with me. Through all my years of running they have always been there for me and have been a big part of my success

As the day started I headed out running well and feeling good. The day was warm however seemed okay and I went through CP1 & 2 to my schedule. It was then that I started to learn a lesson in running and it was one that I can only describe as a "rookie" error. I started to cramp severely on the way up to Iron Pot to the point that I could not stand and had to sit down facing back down the hill.

Eventually the pain went and I moved forward however continued to cramp for the rest of the race. At CP4 I met my crew and explained that I had not been to the toilet all day, obviously I had let myself dehydrate and so began the slow decline until the 89km mark where my race finished in the medics car. I only had 11kms to go however knew that at my pace I was going to be in trouble.

When arguing with myself about whether to pull out I went through who I would let down and how I would feel looking back however for only the second time in nearly 20 years I had to call it a day. There comes a time that your health needs to take the precedence over the joy of finishing an event. While it is hard to do I look back at it as a good decision.

While the disappointment still sits with me, I take great pleasure in having spent some of the day with another runner who was actually attempting her first 100km event. She was suffering cramping as well and was going to pull out. I spent a lot of time speaking with her and trying to encourage her to keep going. Turns out she battled through and finished in just under 24 hours which put a big smile on my face once the pain subsided.

My advice is to dig deep, love the experience and enjoy the success. There will be tough days and if you happen to miss out just remember life goes on and you can run another day.