

ULTRA-TRAIL

AUSTRALIA

UTA50 - Nikki Morley

Give it all you've got! And do it with a smile.

On Saturday, I learned that I really love to run & I love to dance.

I also learned that it is possible to do a really long run & still have fun. When the going gets tough, dig deep, think happy thoughts, smile & boom...you are home! (Well maybe not that quick).

This year I felt good & ready. Last year's attempt was a disaster. Ran out too fast. Fell at 14ks. Twisted my knee. Kedumba was a great ol' laugh descending on one leg!. 2016 felt different. This was my 12th race in 12 months. I had done a 1/2 Ironman 2 weeks prior, so I was a little fatigued yet fit (not trail fit) ...but I was very excited. I was hyper-excited. I love the Blue Mountains. I love TNF/UTA. Completed my first 100k in 2011. Swore I would never do it again - came back for more in 2012 & 2013!

Had a 'kick-starter gel, did a little dance, posed for some pics, hugged my buddies... & off we went, chasing after SG1. My buddy Al stuck with me, helping me maintain a steady pace (I tend to panic on single trail & run too fast for fear of holding people up). I was on a caffeine high & rearing to go. Al & I played a bus game to keep me on track. He would pass me, then I would pass him. This continued for the next 6 hours.

I should mention, I can't run a trail race without stacking. At 6ft, Nellie & her Flippin' Glen spat me out! I stood on a not-so-stable rock & rolled my ankle. Finished with a kankle. Now, as I approached the Fairmont, BOOM, I hit the deck! I-Ate-Dirt! As quick as I went down, I was back up! I ran cautiously for a few k's, heading into the QVH/PACE CP/Party Central. I've been seeing a lot of PACE crew (Will, Stu & Olly) recently, so I was excited to see them. I couldn't help but jump for joy. It may not have been the finish line, but it felt like it. The boys quickly reminded me that I had 22kms to go still! I quickly filled up & reluctantly left!

The bus passing game continued all the way down Kedumba Valley, over Jamison Creek & all the way back up, stopping at the Aid Station to refill. The crew had music pumping...so I just busted out some more dance moves. Al just shook his head. The volunteers too!

The last stretch home was tough. It was hot. All I could envisage was the finish line & a nice cold beer. Al & I stuck together. We didn't have to say much. Just enough words to distract. We were within 4ks of the finish, Al asked me to pass him. I reluctantly did. Gave him my water & trotted on to the base of the Furber Stairs where there were supporters ringing their cowbells. I got the surge I needed to hit the stairs. The lactate was burning, but I found momentum & knew that if I powered through I would eventually make it. I kept my mantra going, "I love Hills, I love my Quads...I love Hills, I love my Quads"...over & over again. I had to remain positive & grateful that my short legs had gotten me to this point.

I summited & realised that I was sitting on 6hrs31. I struggled a bit but soon fell into a run. I came around the corner & saw my friends & their kids. I was so pumped. So I tried a 'sprint' & jumped over the finish line- a classic 'Air Morley'. It was all over. 6hrs32. 15th female. I was happy. Really happy. But I was sad too. It was over...for another year! Well done to everyone who got to the start line. There are a few of you who did not achieve what you set out to achieve on Saturday, but look deep down & see that entering & training for an Ultra is as much of an achievement as completing an Ultra.

Thank you to Tom, Alina & the entire UTA crew and volunteers! You guys are amazing. Over and Out for 2016. See you all in 2017!

Nikki

Ps I'm not a great dancer, but can't have been all that bad. I won a couple of pairs of socks. Great Success!