

"NEW FOUND LIFE" - UTA100 FOR PIP 2017

Its May 20 2017 approx 3.30am and Im lying wide awake listening to the rain pounding the rooftop of where Im staying. I havent slept in a couple of days and have feelings of stress, nausea and anxiety thinking this is probably what most people are feeling before they hit the start line to what will be a life changing adventure.

I'm questioning myself whether this is the gods way of hinting maybe I shouldn't be doing this! My lead up to this race was less than ideal. Just shy of a month ago I unexpectedly had to have a PET scan as the doctors were worried I had another tumour growing and so everything had to be put on hold, once I got through the stress of all of that I could then turn my focus back to the race, I unfortunately then suffered a pretty bad knee injury, however despite all the issues I was facing my physio knowing me and where I am heading knew the importance for me to finish this one and so strategically strapped and taped my leg as best they could with the promise from me that I would accept the long expected rehabilitation required!

So I make it to the start line in a bit of a haze but ready to rumble, I have by my side my faithful coach Sarah Anne (Run Pip 1) ready to guide me through to the first half, the crowd and atmosphere is pumping. Athletes everywhere nervously jumping around anticipating there group start. Off we go, first time I had run in 3 weeks due to knee injury and it feels really nice to be moving again. Since this is the first time on the 100k course I really have no idea what Im in for, and with the course changes put into place have no idea what the back end will entail, nor do I have any idea how my body will react to what it's about to be put through.

The plan for the day is to stick to my nutrition plan and to keep my heart rate low and steady and to hopefully make it to the end seizure free. My two runners and I came up with the agreement that if I have more than 2 seizures in between a checkpoint I would have to pull out, I know that I physically wouldn't be able to finish if this were the case anyway because of the fatigue that sets in after one. I had on board with the race doctors extra medication to be administered if anything serious was to happen and I had already increased my medication so felt I had covered all bases possible to get this done.

There was alot of stop starts at the beginning due to a hold up on Landslide and then again at the Ladders, this was time to settle my heart rate and eat. I was having gut issues 3 days before and this was still playing on me during the first 30 odd kms, by the time we reached CP3 we ditched my plan as it just wasn't working, I was feeling extremely unwell and knew if I couldn't get anything in and keep it down I wasn't going to make it.

Emotions hit hard during the first 10k when I was acknowledged by a runner, he shared how I had inspired him and he had followed my story, its when you hear these stories from complete strangers you realise how different you are and how challenging it really is for me to try and achieve something like this. Again later during a climb I was approached by another stranger telling me her mother had watched my story and how amazing she thought it was that I would take on something like this. Although I had a bit of a meltdown and shared my frustration with my coach with what I

have to deal with, I at the same time realised that I had made a connection somehow, and had successfully managed to create some awareness - my goal was reached right there and then!

So we moved on and settled into the day dealing with my stomach issues as best we could. Unfortunately on one of the long hard climbs I had a small seizure, not big by any means but enough to put me on the ground temporarily, runners passed and pretty much each and every one stopped to see if we were ok or needed any help, typical awesome trail running community, always looking out for each other no matter what! I got myself together and continued on, only one so far just have to make it to CP4 without another and I'm good to go! Of course this changed my mental strength and chewed it up a bit, however I just played it extra careful as much as I could but have to admit I was terrified of hitting Nellies, I knew this was going to be a tough climb and would I be able to manage myself to get to the top without any issues.

Well I did, I made it to the top and into CP4 without one problem at all, we made the swap over to my next runner (Run Pip 2), my long time friend Lauren. At this point I had a surprise visitor waiting for me, another long time running buddy Kate, emotions were running high as I came in to be greeted by my husband and crew. I felt great mentally and physically now, just was struggling with nausea and this was starting to overwhelm me. I knew if anything came up in a checkpoint I wasn't going anywhere, so was out as quick as I could and back into it.

We continued on with stops and starts keeping food in and hydrating climbing up and down what seemed to be relentless stairs, and made it into Fairmont Resort where again my crew popped up to see how I was travelling, all good straight through and on into the dark we went. By the time I made it into CP5 I was really starting to feel the fatigued setting in, the out and back there was a nice little surprise and the guys at the turn around were happy to see us smiling and looking "fresh" haha this became a joke as we went on through the night!

CP5 was tough, I know I wasn't looking great and it was hard to keep the happy face on, still struggling to get a decent amount of food in and this was really starting to worry me as I had a long way home, the only bonus at this point I had managed to stay seizure free and kept myself detached from the waist down so couldn't feel any pain below the waist.

The mist had started to roll in and became quite heavy, the runners between us were few and far between and the silence fell upon us, we stuck to our plan and broke the last 15k down into sections that we were familiar with, it was such a shame we couldn't see anything the view would have been amazing. The highlights at this point was reaching any vollies along the way still waiting in the cold and dark for us to pass. Can't express enough how amazing the volunteers were all day, they are gold!

Our first section to knock off was to get to the bottom of the Leura cascade, omg those stairs just never ended, those steps are all so uneven and became so annoying, everytime I could feel myself getting angry was a sign I was running very very low on fuel, I would reluctantly get another lollie or part of a biscuit or bar in and keep going, so finally we hit the bottom to be greeted by a mate David, this was so so nice to see him, music on and a positive mind makes you feel refreshed and ready to tackle the next section we had set ourselves!

Section 2 to us was the bottom of the Furber Stairs, by this point any long climb on stairs I knew I had to climb was giving me huge anxiety, fear I'd fall apart on them, I was pushing my limits and was so close to finishing the thought of the Furbers and not making it to the top was sending my mind into overdrive. I was receiving messages from my other coach, words of encouragement, telling me how proud she was and to keep going, savour the last few kms you are nearly home, this is just what I needed at that point, knowing someone out there was driving me home! We arrived at the bottom, the crew at the bottom were all asleep in their sleeping bags, this was it the last and final climb home, I took a moment and all I could think about at this point was a hot shower and to be able to lie down, my body ached and I knew I had reached a point I never thought I'd ever reach. We set off and took a breather here and there, we reached a point and looked out at the "3 Chicks" silhouetted in the dark, how spectacular they appeared surrounded by the black of the night, the air was freezing and there was a breeze, I was cold and ready for this to come to an end. We reached the top, it felt lonely and isolated coming up to that point with no one around, the crowds are long gone and there is an enormously different atmosphere when you are coming home at the back end of a big event like this, quite a different experience no music and crowd cheers to pull you along, just you and your determination to see this to the end. We hit the ramp and it all finally was coming to an end, I had my coach waiting for me as we rounded the corner, the 3 of us ran down the finish chute with my crew and the wonderful and welcomed voice of Alina calling us in, I had done it, I crossed the line, full of emotion and pain, I have now found a new sense of freedom knowing that I got through all of that which was thrown at me seizure free, still standing and alive. My recovery will be slow and painful, but I never gave up, I never give up, I will always fight for what I want to do within my limitations, but I now feel my limitations are becoming less and less each new goal I reach - I truly lived in the moment for a long and very hard 23 hours! It turns out a week on I was carrying some kind of virus, body is only just getting over it long after the DOMS have gone, just small shit in the big scheme of things in my life ;)

