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James, the Marathon Runner

One of the most dedicated people that I know is my brother James. For the last few years, he’s been training to run a marathon. It’s been really inspiring to watch him train and prepare for the race. It’s taken tons of dedication and effort from him to get where he is now, and it’s been impressive to watch.

James is a young man in his late 20’s. he has red hair and glasses. He calls himself a “heavy runner”, despite being a pretty slim guy. He’s fairly tall, about 6’1. He can usually be found getting ready to run, or out running.

He started running back in middle school, when he joined the cross-country team. Back then the team would only run a mile or two, but it was a good start for him to realize he enjoyed the feeling he got from finishing a run. He would keep running for the next few years, getting a little bit better over time. He didn’t really get into running long distances until his mission, where he had a companion who was really into running. They would go on long runs in the mornings before going out to teach, and it was a good way for him to get to know his companion.

After he got back from his mission, he started doing longer races, like 5ks, and 10ks. At the time we were living in a house that James, our little brother, and I had rented out while we were going to college in Provo, Utah. I remember seeing all the equipment he would use as he was preparing for a race. He would always be buying the newest racing shoes, and he was always looking for ones that would give him an edge. He would always say things like “These have a carbon plate in in the sole and it makes you go faster” or “These shoes are so fast that they’re illegal to use in official races”. They would always be super brightly colored, like bight pink or yellow. He had a mesh vest that he would use to hold flasks of water and sports drink so that he could refuel while running. He had all these goos that he would eat mid race, that were full of sugar and caffeine so that he could get some energy without having to stop running. He would also drink a bunch of brightly colored pre workout drinks and other running fuels. All of it would have so much caffeine and other supplements that it would make him have to go to the bathroom for around 20 minutes every time he went running. After that he would put on his running shoes, stretch, and run out the door. Sometimes he would have someone drive him up into Provo Canyon, and then run back to our house from there.

He would come back from the run, panting and covered in sweat. He would then start his post-race routine, which involved stretching, using the bathroom for another 20 minutes, and then eating at least 2000 calories of food to replace all the energy he spent running. When someone asked him how far he had run, he would always something crazy like “Just 15 miles today.” When asked how he could possibly run that far, he would usually respond with the same quote: “Running is easy. The first step is to start running, and there is no step two.” He would always put his shoes outside to air out, and then prepare all his stuff for the next day’s run. Typically, he would take a rest day in between runs, so that he could avoid getting injured.

He didn’t always love his training runs though. Sometimes there would be days that he would just be exhausted and sore constantly. He would sometimes have to quit a training run early for various reasons. He would overheat, or cramp up, or sometimes just not be in shape enough to finish. He would occasionally have to have someone drive 15 or more miles to pick him up, which would annoy him to no end. He would occasionally get discouraged about his distance, but he would always get back to it and keep training.

Eventually he became pretty confident in his running ability, and he finally felt ready to tackle a marathon. He had to sign up to run the race months in advance, and then the real training began. Most weeks for the next few months, he ran over 30 miles a week. He would go running even when there was snow on the ground, or it was 90 degrees outside. He continued training until he could run 20 miles, and then it was finally time for the race. He was still 6 miles short of the race distance, but he was confident he could make it all the way on the day of the race.

When the weekend of the race arrived, he got my whole family to come down to St. George, Utah so that we could cheer him on across the finish line. On the morning of the race, he woke up at 4 in the morning and he and the other racers piled onto a rented yellow school bus, and they rode up into the mountains, 26 miles away from the finish line. They all got into position and then the signal went off, and they started running. As they ran in the cool, mountain air, everyone was excited and optimistic about the outcome of the race, but after about 10 miles, the atmosphere had changed significantly. The tiredness was setting in, and the lower they got, the hotter the temperature was getting. It was supposed to be a sweltering 95 degrees in St George that day, and it was really starting to affect the runners. They got little cups of water and sports drink every few miles, but even with that, people started to collapse from heat stroke and dehydration. James kept running through, determined to finish the race. As the race continued, he saw several people cramp up and trip, and some of them even had to have paramedics take them to the hospital for broken legs. He just kept on running though. At about 20 miles in, he started to really feel the tiredness, and the stress of running that far. He continued to press on though, even though his muscles were starting to cramp up. Eventually, he began to hear the cheering of the crowd over the sound of his bright yellow running shoes hitting the pavement, and knew he was almost there. The exertion of the race was making his mind fuzzy and his eyes blurry, but he ran across the finish line and almost collapsed. He had finally finished, and the shock that came from finally being able to stop running hit him like a truck. The first thing he said after finishing was “I am never running that far again!” Our family then piled into the car to drive to Las Vegas to celebrate him finishing, and after sitting down for the 2 hour drive, his legs could barley move. We eventually had to just rent him a wheelchair and push him around the casinos on our way to and from dinner.

James recently finished his second marathon, and he plans on doing a third one next fall. He keeps trying to improve his time and continues to train every week for the next race.

James is one of the most dedicated, hardest working people I know. Being able to train that hard and do something like running a marathon is incredibly impressive to me. Even though it’s hard, he sticks with it and accomplishes incredible things.