

ERM

ENDURANCE RACING MAGAZINE

JULY/AUGUST 2015

THE WOMEN'S ISSUE

COMPETING IN YOUR TEENS,
20's, 30's, 40's, and 50's

In this issue:

HYDRATION TIPS
RUNNING IN THE HEAT
RUNNING FOR A CAUSE
NEW RACE ADS AND
ADVERTORIALS

IN FIRST PERSON:

Payge McMahon

By Payge McMahon

I was a competitive softball player at age 16 when I broke my back and herniated most of my lumbar in a painful and horrific accident. I was put in a body cast for a month, and then a metal back brace. In time, I learned how to walk again; but my future scholarship opportunities had been replaced with chronic pain.

I went on to college, then grad school, and did the corporate thing. Life was good...until my mother got cancer and died. I was devastated, and grieved for a long time. A few years later, when I was 31, I found her unfinished bucket list in a hidden drawer of her nightstand. She had wanted to see the Seven Wonders of the World, climb Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Fuji and travel to Alaska – and at that moment, I decided to finish her bucket list. I wanted to travel the world and spread her ashes in all the places she never got to go.

“I found [my mom’s] unfinished bucket list...to see the Seven Wonders of the World, climb Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Fuji and travel to Alaska—I decided to finish her bucket list and spread her ashes in all the places she never got to go.”

So, overnight, my destiny changed. I made a plan, researched, created a budget, trained, took up yoga to help strengthen my back and sold everything I owned to finance the trip.



There were some obstacles, however. I couldn’t just show up at Machu Piccu in Peru and hike one of the Seven Wonders of the World. One of the biggest lessons my mother ever taught me, was I had to “earn it to own it,” so to prepare I backpacked the Inca Trail. I was 32 at the time, and the Andes were the first mountains I’d ever climbed (as well as the first time I ever camped in a tent). When I went to Angkor Wat in Cambodia, another of the Seven Wonders, I cycled across Southeast Asia to earn that experience...and I don’t even like cycling!

Ultimately, my mom’s bucket list led me back to being an athlete and to endurance sports and running. In 2012, at the age of 38, I did the inaugural Grand 2 Grant Ultra – a 273km self-supported, ultra stage race that starts at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, goes around Zion National Park and finishes at the Grand Staircase, one of the world’s most iconic geological formations.

In March 2015, I ran the AdventureCORPS® Badwater® Cape Fear, a 51.4-mile ultra on Bald Head Island, N.C. A month before the race, I found out I had a severely ruptured L5/S1 disc. My neurosurgeon couldn’t believe I was even walking with it, let alone training for a 50-miler; he wanted to do surgery right away. I asked him if I could make my back worse by

What I lack in speed, I make up for with endurance. I know I'm going to be out there nearly twice as long as the winner, and that's okay.

My mental attitude is to smile and enjoy the journey.

running the race; he said it really couldn't get much worse...so I shrugged, had him shoot me up with an epidural, and scheduled the surgery for after the race. My goal was to finish Badwater Cape Fear in under 11 hours...I finished in 12:26, and 70th out of 77 runners. It was a fun race, and I did the best I could at the time.

To train for these races, I have a friend drop me off 20-30 miles from home and I run back. I also weight train, and I swear by yoga. I've been teaching yoga since 2008, and travel the world doing workshops tailored for athletes and for those living with chronic pain.

I love challenges! I've climbed mountains and backpacked all over the world. I'm a pretty fast backpacker, and ultra running is a fun way to take it to the next level. What I lack in speed, I make up for with endurance. I know I'm going to be out there nearly twice as long as the winner, and that's okay. My mental attitude is to smile and enjoy the journey.

To learn more about Payge McMahon, visit her website: www.turnthepage.com

To train, I have a friend drop me off 20-30 miles from home and I run back. I also weight train and I swear by yoga.

