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Deborah McFadden: In an orphanage, it is survival of the fittest. And the director told me, she said, " We prayed every day for her to die because we knew there was no life that was possible for her."

00:00:11
Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:00:11
Deborah McFadden: Because they didn't have a vision of it. And I don't want to say it's just Russia. That was the way we were in America, too, back in the '50s. There was no chance. But Tatyana had a spark for life and wanting to be involved. And I've told all my kids, I said, " You can be whatever you want to be. We'll figure it out."

00:00:35
Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, everybody, and welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Roadrunners, presented by Peloton. I'm your host, Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Roadrunners, joined this week by my co- host, Peloton instructor, Becs Gentry. And it was a lovely, lovely 4th of July break. Everybody in New York Roadrunners enjoyed a little downtime after a very busy month of June. We have so many events in June. People all think that November must be the busiest month at New York Roadrunners. And of course, it's very, very busy for the first few days of November, but the entire month of June is so packed for us with all the events we have, from the MasterCard Mini 10K to the Citizens Queens 10K. To finishing the month with a real bang, we had the Front Runners New York LGBT Pride Run, and then the very next day, the Achilles Run as well. And so it was a packed weekend, and it was nice to get a little downtime from that. I started doing a little bit more running over the 4th. Enjoyed some outdoor time, some family time. So it was just nice to get a little bit of a break. How about you, Becs?

00:01:42
Becs Gentry: Well, Rob, this past lovely long weekend was glorious. It was sunny, it was warm, and it was full of activities for me. We did not venture to the beach. I saw you had early 4th of July fireworks in Connecticut.

00:01:59
Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

00:02:00
Becs Gentry: We are Brooklyn based and we actually got to see

the fireworks from our roof on Friday, which was unreal. We got a free front row seat to the 4th of July fireworks here in the city, which is unreal. But that set me up for an amazing day on Saturday. We were super busy at Peloton, which was epic. So many people in the city on vacation. But then I competed in the inaugural Bandit Grand Prix race this weekend, which was, dare I say it to you, Rob, but one of the most incredible running events that I have been to in a very long time.

I wasn't the only New York Roadrunners person there. I will say we had the amazing Ted, he was there as well. We hung out. But it was so different and so epic. It was heats of 5K races, five 1K loops in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and then there was a superfinal at the end, which was a 3K race. It was in the heat of the afternoon all the way through to the evening. It was sunset, and it was so cool. Just really, really cool.

There was a lot of running culture. There were people from all brands, all walks of life, and we had so much fun. I am proud to say I came joint first in my heat with three other females. We crossed the line together. It was epic. I seemed to do that a lot. And then I think I was eighth overall in the 3K final, but just every photo I have, massive smiles. So that was a big 4th of July weekend highlight.

00:03:38
Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, Becs, while our team was on vacation, we announced a really exciting new partnership with the New York City Department of Transportation. New York Roadrunners is joining forces with DOT for the expanded We Outside Summer Streets initiative. If you haven't heard about We Outside Summer Streets, it is all about opening up even more of our city streets to people instead of to cars so that New Yorkers can enjoy running, walking, biking, and community events right in the heart of the city.

So as part of that, We Outside Summer Streets program, NYRR is launching something brand new. It's called the NYRR Start Line series. It is a free, beginner- friendly, fun run series. The idea here is to make running and walking more accessible and inviting people to try it out, especially folks who maybe are new to the sport or looking to just get a fun way to start moving their bodies The first two races are happening in Queens and Brooklyn on July 26th and August 23rd, respectively. So that's going to be a really fun way to get out, get into the city streets, no traffic, no cars. Just go out and run and connect with the running community, get outside with family, with friends, and it doesn't matter.

This is not a race. Your pace doesn't matter. Your

experience doesn't matter. And did I mention it's free? This is free. So it's a great way to start running. If you want more information or to sign up, you can check out the NYRR Start line series at nyrr. org. These races are not sold out like most of our races, so you got a chance to go out and sign up today. Hope to see you in Queens on July 26th.

00:05:17
Becs Gentry: Coming up on today's show is Deborah McFadden, an ADA hero with an incredible personal story, who not only played a critical role in drafting and helping pass the Americans with Disabilities Act, but then went on to raise three children, two of whom became Paralympic champions. After Deborah, we'll be meeting New York Roadrunners member Christine Ramos, our new runner and mother of two who is taking on the Berlin Marathon this fall. And then finally, for today's Meb Minute with HSS, PT Mohammad Saad will be here to talk to us all about cross- training for runners. So stay tuned.
Try the Peloton app for free and access classes for every type of runner. Whether you're training for your first race or you're a seasoned pro. From outdoor runs and intervals to strength yoga and stretching, you'll find the perfect fit for every part of your routine. Whether it's a long run day or you just need a quick five- minute reset, the Peloton app meets you where you are and helps you become a stronger, faster runner because it's designed for someone like you. Try the app free for 30 days and download it now from the App Store or Google Play. Terms apply. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner for New York Roadrunners.

00:06:40
Rob Simmelkjaer: Our guest today is a true pioneer in disability rights and also a proud mom of two champions. Deborah McFadden was integral to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and she's also the mother of Tatyana and Hannah McFadden, two girls that she adopted from orphanages in Russia and Albania who grew up to become elite Paralympic athletes. Tatyana and Hannah have won multiple Paralympic medals and dominated major marathons, and their family even inspired new laws for inclusive sports in schools. From shaping national policy to cheering at finish lines, Deborah's story intertwines policy, parenting, and sport in an amazing way.
Deborah, we've had a chance to have Tatyana here on the show. So it is a real honor and a pleasure to have you here on Set the Pace. Welcome.

00:07:32
Deborah McFadden: Glad to be here.

00:07:33
Rob Simmelkjaer: Absolutely. So, gosh, it's hard to know where to start. Your story is so incredible, but-

00:07:39
Becs Gentry: It's unreal, your story, Deborah.

00:07:41
Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it really is. But let's start with you, Deborah, and your own story. You are 23 years old, you're a graduate student when you were struck with a rare illness, Guillain- Barre syndrome, which actually affected one of the individuals who we highlight on the short film we've got now called Final Finishers. And it's a terrible disease, an issue that people have that leaves people paralyzed, and it left you paralyzed at the time from the neck down. Can you talk about what happened, and not only what happened to you then, but what you were told in terms of your ability to potentially ever walk again?

00:08:27
Deborah McFadden: Sure, sure. Yeah. Back when I had it, it was before they really knew what Guillain- Barre was. I was actually working at Gallaudet College, which is a school for the deaf, which is all done in sign language. And people kept saying, " You're mumbling. What are you saying?" And I was slowly going paralyzed without knowing it, and went to bed around 5:00. And at 10: 00, when I woke up, I couldn't move. And unfortunately, at a school for the deaf, you can't yell or scream because no one can hear. But eventually, the next day, somebody found me and I ended up in the hospital. And again, they didn't know what it was back then. Now they're doing plasmapheresis, which helps with the recovery. But I remember they called my folks and said, " You better get here. If she doesn't die, she'll never walk again."
It's an ascending disease, and they can't stop it. So when I left there and I had finished one year of school. It was in May. And I used to be a competitive fencer. I was involved in lots of activities and things, and I went from going 100 miles an hour to no miles an hour. And I remember saying to my parents, I need to go back to school. I can't do anything. You have to feed me and dress me. And I'd rather die living than die dying, so to speak. I went back to school, it was difficult. It was before all the laws were there, and my classes were on the second floor. And I remember my classmates carrying me up the stairs and I thought, if she dropped me, I don't have a whole lot more to lose.
I ended up deciding that while I was doing this, maybe I

would get my special ed certificate to teach. Not that I wanted to teach, but I had a hard time breathing and was just trying to figure out life. And when I was taking classes, I was a straight- A student in school. The university wrote me a letter saying, " Because you're handicapped, we won't graduate you." And I said, " You got to graduate me." And they said, " No, we won't because no one will hire you." I said, " Yeah, getting a degree does not mean you're eligible for employment." It means you've passed your classes with a C and maybe some D's or F's in there. And it was a terrible time. They didn't want me to walk across the stage. They wouldn't get an accessible ramp up there. So a different time. And it was interesting because during that time, I said, we should be pushing people into their career goal that they want, and we should be pushing them to their highest income tax bracket. In fact, I remember back then, one of the services wanted to make me a telephone operator. This is where they'd come out with a baseball hat where you put it on your head and you could dial the phone. That's not what I want to be. So I ended up going to the career development center at the university saying, " Let's do career development for students with disabilities and try to get us into good jobs instead of in the lower jobs." It just was a different time.

00:11:49
Becs Gentry: That's so hard to wrap my head around, when you say you are a straight- A student, and regardless of your grades and, as you said, your dedication to study, the fact that you had these great grades, they still wouldn't graduate you. So with that in your mind, I love your passion and the fire that was obviously still in you at that point, to educate yourself even more about what was happening, the minutiae of what was happening, and then how to make it different and how to push this discrimination. And I mean, talk to us a little bit more about the first- hand bias and how that really influenced you to fight more and more for disability rights as the years went on.

00:12:42
Deborah McFadden: That's a great question, because people knew me before I was paralyzed, and then all of a sudden, I'm in a wheelchair. I drooled, I had to be fed, I had to be helped being dressed, and people treated me like I was an idiot. They would speak louder to me. There's nothing wrong with my hearing. And even when, say, friends, they would say, " We're going out to the movies." And I'll say, "Oh, oh, I'll join." " No, no, it's not necessary." They would have to help me into the car.
So people that I thought were my friends, maybe weren't.

Remember, I'm a college student. We'd go out for a beer and I'd say, " Yes, I'd like a beer with a straw, please." And they would say, " Is she allowed to drink?" It was always talking around me and not with me. And people, they looked down on me all because I was different. And I thought, you knew me before. The only thing that's changed is my body's not working the way you once knew me.

00:13:51
Rob Simmelkjaer: How, Deborah, did you first of all recover? I mean, we're talking to you. You obviously really did prove wrong the predictions your doctors said, I think, that you were not likely to walk again. How much physical recovery were you able to get from the point you were then to the point you are now? And how did that happen?

00:14:13
Deborah McFadden: Actually, the doctor said they weren't sure if I was going to live because it's an ascending disease, and probably another inch, it would've cut my breathing off. But that was back in the time where they started neuromuscular stimulation. And so I'd have to go in the hospital three to four hours a day to stimulate the nerves. I was in a electric chair, a power chair for four years and crutches on eight. So it took me 12 years to learn to walk again and to learn how to do things differently. Still, sometimes at the New York Marathon, sometimes I have my crushes with me. It's still sometimes hard for me to stand, although I walk well.
But again, it taught me the people do judge a book by its cover. You take a look at somebody and you see that they have a disability, and you automatically think less than, can't do. Why would we hire you in this good job? Why would we have you come to an elegant event? Because you certainly wouldn't dress nicely. And it was all those preconceptions that people have. And I remember getting annoyed. I said, " I call all of you tabs." " What's a tab?" I go, " Temporarily abled body." You never know when you will join this group. As a matter of fact, the largest population in the world are people with. We can come in any country, any socioeconomic status, anything, and that's who we are.

00:15:56
Becs Gentry: I love that tabs. That's great. I'm going to be quoting you for years on that one.

00:16:03
Rob Simmelkjaer: It really is true when you think about it. I mean, right when you're all-

00:16:03
Becs Gentry: It can happen in a heartbeat.

00:16:06
Rob Simmelkjaer: When you're a healthy able- bodied person, we all know that's a temporary status, right? Life is a temporary status. So many or most of us pass through some period of being challenged physically before we pass away. So it's just part of life.

00:16:25
Becs Gentry: Absolutely. We can hear that you... I mean, from having, as you said, your friends who knew you before, you knew yourself before. You had 12 years of this journey and a whole new experience, the good, the bad, and the ugly. I'm sure that went through your mind and your heart in those 12 years. But quite famously, your activism, it caught the attention of President George H. W. Bush, and you were actually appointed the U. S. Commissioner of Disabilities in 1989. And just talk through how you felt when you got the call from the White House and that journey of recognition and change.

00:17:14
Deborah McFadden: Well, again, remember, this is back during a time when we didn't have the laws and the protections that we have now, and having the right to an education, housing, transportation, the right to go into a restaurant, ramps, things that we all take for granted now. We didn't have it back then. And I was outspoken in the need for access and the quality and maybe in many ways. I look back to my journey and I was blessed to have been able- bodied prior to this, and then people seeing the change, and fortunately having a family that was extraordinarily supportive of me. And so I was active in 503, 504. Allegedly, maybe I might have chained myself to the White House fence, a number of my colleagues and power chairs. And the police didn't know what to do. But fighting for the rights that we should have. And I did get a call after... He was president- elect at that point, and the White House called and said, " President- elect Bush would like to speak with you on," whatever day, " Tuesday, at 11:00." And I said, "He does? Hmm." So at the appointed hour, I get a call from the White House saying, hold for President- elect George Bush, and you would stand up, if you could. The president's calling me. And I said, " Hello, sir." And he said, " McFadden," he said, " I'd like to have you come work for me." And I had never thought about this. And I said, " You do?" And I said, " Sir, why?" Honest to goodness, he said, " Because you're a pain in the ass, and I'd rather have you on my side than fighting

against me."

00:19:19
Becs Gentry: Fantastic.

00:19:19
Deborah McFadden: So I was offered the position as a commissioner of the United States for disabilities. I was the highest ranking female with a disability in the government at the time. George Kemp, I mean, John Kemp was the highest ranking male with a disability. He was commissioner of the EEOC. And nowadays, you wouldn't know that. If you said who's the highest ranking person with a disability, you wouldn't know.

But this position was great. I reported to a cabinet level secretary, Secretary Sullivan in HHS, and President Bush said, " Look," he said, " these are my parameters." And the parameters were very large parameters. He said, " You can do whatever you want within those parameters." And it was a great time because the position commanded not only enormous signature authority. I think it was $ 5 billion signature authority. And you learn very quickly to write two grants just under that. But the authority to what laws do we want? Where do we want to go? And I figured in this position, we need to think large scale, not the minor details. If we could have a law, and we, in the disability community, have been fighting for a long time about this equality. And what does that mean? And this was during the time we were fighting for the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which, again, remember when I said people with disabilities belong to both parties, Democrats, Republican, all groups.

And what we were trying to say is, this is not a partisan issue. It's an issue of equality and access for all people. And yet there's always fights. It took a lot of time and pulling together the community, because we wanted the community to be everyone. And that means people who are blind, people who are deaf, people who are in wheelchairs, people who have cognitive issues. And every group had their own biases, if you were their own things we were looking for. And I remember Senator Harkin came into a room, we were all in there. It was late at night and he said, " I'm closing the door." And he said, " You all work your agreements out before you leave this room, because when we come out, we need to speak in one voice." And it was a hard exercise. A successful one, but a hard exercise.

00:22:02
Rob Simmelkjaer: Incredibly successful.

00:22:03
Becs Gentry: (inaudible) -

00:22:03
Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, an incredible experience, a huge success. I mean, before we start talking about your journey with your daughters, I mean, the Americans with Disabilities Act changed the nation in so many ways. All the things that we now take for granted in terms of the requirement for public facilities and accommodations to be accessible, ramps and elevators in places and all other forms of required accessibility for people with disabilities.

Now, people of my daughter's generation, that's baked into the cake for them. That's what they expect to see anywhere they go, whether it's in an educational setting or a work setting or a sports setting, as we have here at New York Roadrunners with our accessibility work that we do from just having a pro wheelchair division to all kinds of other things we do for athletes.

Can you talk about just that process of getting that bill passed, and what that meant to achieve something that really has been so seminal in American life in every phase and every aspect of it?

00:23:19
Deborah McFadden: Sure. There were people saying, why should we make stores accessible? I never see anybody in a wheelchair in stores. And of course, there was always people in wheelchairs back then. You can't see people in wheelchairs if you can't get there. And if you've noticed, I think of ramps. I'm sorry, the curb cuts.

When curb cuts were in, people really balked about them. I see people pushing baby strollers down them. I see people on skateboards. They use it. Things that are convenient for all of us. In stores, people with disabilities are consumers. In fact, I would venture to say we probably are one of the largest consumers. We have access to consumable money that we want to spend. So it changed that in housing, but people hadn't thought about it. And it was, if you will, a paradigm shift, a shift in this thinking for people that were not here to take care of the... And may I use the bad language? But the crippled, lame and infirm. That's what we were called. It was the cripples, the lame, the infirm. And the word handicap actually comes from cap and hand begging. That's where it comes from.

And so from a long time ago, the handicapped, the poor, the crippled, lame and infirm to that paradigm shift of saying, no, no, no, no, people with disabilities are not only an integral part of society, but they're consumers. They're executives. There's this... And it's taken a time on

that. And it was hard. It was a hard fight, and we gave up on some things. We had to compromise. But I'd venture to say that as... In fact, I talked to a major builder and he said, McFadden, you're driving me crazy. I got to do all these things for all of you, you people. I said, like what? Well, the elevator now, it has buttons that says floor 3, floor 2. There's ramps that go up.
Well, in fact, and this was a time when the computer repair guys would bring the rolling cart in to change things. It was convenient for everybody. Because he kept saying to me, " I don't want to change my design." And as a matter of fact, he came back to me later and he said, " The design just got us thinking differently, more creatively." And our buildings are beautiful buildings, and they serve many people now. And we don't like to call it handicap access. It really is universal design. It's a design that makes it easier for all of us.
And I think of the microwave. Microwaves are convenient for all of us. We learned some of these things to make it convenient. Whether we need a different grip on a jar, it may make it different for all of us. So things have changed. But I see people now in a time when I was seen as crippled, lame and infirm, out of sight, don't see us, to now we go around New York and people see my daughter and they don't say, oh, here's a handicapped person. They'll say, " Are you running the marathon?"

00:26:53
Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:26:53
Deborah McFadden: That's a difference. That's a dream that we couldn't have imagined years ago when I became disabled. We were again fighting for the rights just to education and housing. And now we're inclusive in everything. You look at advertisers. Advertisers have found they are not including people with disabilities in ads because they want to be nice. What they have found is, it makes good business sense.

00:27:24
Becs Gentry: Yeah, everything. I have a two- and- a- half- year- old daughter. And even now, it's amazing to see that in her books and in the shows she's watching, there are children with disabilities in the books, in the TV shows. And it's not singled out. They're life. It's life. It's great. And it's just so inclusive everywhere.

00:27:50
Deborah McFadden: And your daughter will grow up. She will grow up saying, " Oh, I saw people with disabilities. Of

course, I would hire them."

00:27:59
Becs Gentry: Yeah, yeah.

00:28:00
Deborah McFadden: They're all part of my community, versus before, when I was growing up, it was " Don't stare. Don't look at that person." Why? What's it to be ashamed of? And I find that with my girls in school, they're in with all the other kids who think it's just normal.

00:28:19
Becs Gentry: Yeah, yeah, it is. It is. All right, you brought them up. You brought them up, your amazing girls. So let's talk about them. Let's go back to 1994, to St. Petersburg, Russia, where you visited an orphanage and you met a little girl with a huge bow in her hair, her name: Tatyana. She was six years old at the time, I believe, and she had spina bifida, but she was crawling around in a wheelchair. What came over you, Deborah? What came over you in that moment and made you just look at her and just say, that's my daughter, and come hell or high water, she's coming back to the U.S. with me? And that's it. This is her life.

00:29:08
Deborah McFadden: Well, actually, it was in 1993. Back then, it was-

00:29:10
Becs Gentry: '93.

00:29:10
Deborah McFadden: Yeah, '93. Yes. When President Bush and President Gorbachev opened up the countries. And I had the opportunity to travel over there and give a lot of humanitarian aid to the country. And at that time, we could give humanitarian aid to whomever we wanted. And so I thought, well, I'll give it to people who can't speak up for themselves. Probably the elderly, people with disabilities, orphans, and end up getting away a lot of aid. And so as I was going around to orphanages at the time, I had no thought of adopting, but I saw a lot of cute, wonderful children.
And Tatyana was crawling around the floor of an orphanage. She did not have a wheelchair. Her legs had atrophied behind her. And I remember visiting the orphanage and Tatty's bright eyes. And I went back to my room that night, and I couldn't get her off my mind. And the next day, I said to my staff, " We're going back there." And they said, "

Commissioner, we've already been there." I said, well, "I'm going to go back." And unbeknownst to me, and this was the time of Polaroid cameras, and we had taken a Polaroid camera shot and the director had put it up on the cabinet and Tatyana went around telling everybody, " That's my mom. That's my mom."

And so I was going back at one point and I had called the director saying, I'm coming back. Do you need anything? And she said, " Deborah." You can say Debbie or Deborah. It's "Deborah, we have a bolshoi problem, a big problem." I said, " What?" And they said, " Well, the people found out Tatyana, and they were going to move her to a place for kids with disabilities." And in your worst nightmare, you cannot picture what that place is like. So well, keep her there. I'm coming. I'm leaving the next day. And I ended up walking out of the country with Tatyana saying it was for medical work. I feel safe saying this now. For many years, I didn't say that, but I walk out of the country.

And so anyway, as Tatyana said, " That's my mom. That's my mom. Goodbye, I'm leaving." And we had to do a lot of surgeries. Tatyana was very anemic, malnourished. Again, her legs had atrophied, and it took a number of surgeries. As a matter of fact, Johns Hopkins Hospital told me when they evaluated, they said, " She probably will not live long." She's got too many issues. And I remember thinking back, how do you get somebody stronger? And I said, well, it's sports, of course. So I get her involved in swimming. You don't need legs to swim.

And I said to all the other parents, I go, " Who does a good job teaching swimming?" And the parents said, well, this person, this person. And I had a terrible time. They take one look at Tatyana and say, " Oh, we can't teach her. We can't teach her." And I said to this one woman who was a teacher giving lessons. And I called her up and said, " I understand you teach young kids how to swim." " Yes." I said, " I suppose they all learn differently." She goes, " Yes." And said, " I suppose some use their legs more and some use their hands more." She goes, " Most kids just don't use their legs." I said, " Oh, that would be my daughter." And I showed up and I can't remember what a lesson we had, but I had enough money for five lessons. And I had the cash in my hand, $ 100 bills, and she's shaking her head, I don't think so. And I said, " Two lessons. I'll pay you the whole thing. Please do it." And she said, okay.

And Tatyana, she always said, " Yasema," which, in Russian, means " I can do it. I can do it myself." And she's sitting on the side of the pool and the swim instructor said, " Come on in," thinking she would cry. And Tatyana jumps in, sinks to the bottom of the pool, comes up. We were all thinking she's going to cry. And she was, " Yasema." Like, let's do

it again. So I get Tatyana involved in swimming, and then we went to gymnastics and they didn't want to have her there. And I said, " Well, what do you do?" Well, there's a balance beam. And Tatyana flipped upside down on her hands and walked across the balance beam and jumped on the trampoline on her knees and ended up climbing the rope hand over hand.

So as I did this, I eventually found the Bennett Blazers, which is a parasports group that did wheelchair basketball and downhill skiing and all sorts of sports, which is a way to get somebody healthy and fit, that you don't need to have your legs work or your arms work or your eyes work. And she became stronger and stronger through this program. And she fell in love with track, and she says that she had the need for speed.

00:34:11
Rob Simmelkjaer: Sounds like she had this kind of spark from a young age, that ability to try and try again. The phrase you said in Russian, " I can do it." It just sounds like that was something that was pretty inherent in her from a young age. Is that fair to say?

00:34:31
Deborah McFadden: Yeah. I mean, in an orphanage, it is survival of the fittest. And the director told me, she said, " We prayed every day for her to die, because we knew there was no life that was possible for her."

00:34:43
Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:34:43
Deborah McFadden: They didn't have a vision of it. And I don't want to say it's just Russia. That was the way we were in America, too, back in the '50s. There was no chance. But Tatyana had a spark for life and wanting to be involved. And I've told all my kids, I said, " You can be whatever you want to be. We'll figure it out." In fact, I remember going in to the school system for both Hannah and Tatyana, and I said to the teachers, at the time you say the little kids, what do you want to be when you grow up? If they said, I want to be a fireman, I do not want you to say you can't do it because you're paralyzed, you don't have a leg. Because what it means as a young kid is, I want to be somebody important. I want to do something to help people. So I do not want you to squash their dream or their flame because all of us as kids, we had a dream of I want to be the greatest baseball player.

Well, not everyone's going to be Cal Ripken, but what

they're saying is, I want to try this. And we don't say to our kids. And you don't, Becs. You can't do that. You say you can, you can, you can. And I think the advantage, I would say the advantage for me is, one, I adopted my kids and didn't have any preconceived notions of, "Well, I played the piano, you're going to." It's my job to help you be the best. And also having a disability, I know what it's like to have people tell me, you can't, you can't, you can't. And so my goal is to always say, you can, you can, you can. And if there's a problem, I am going to intervene so that you have the opportunities to grow and develop as all children should be able to.

00:36:39
Becs Gentry: Yeah, absolutely. Couldn't agree more with that. And it sounds like from day one for both Tatyana and for your daughter, Hannah, that you instilled in them the freedom to be as confident as absolutely possible for them and from both of their phenomenal achievements. Do you think that by you giving them this opportunity, that sport and getting stronger in sport helped them in the terms of therapy, confidence, learning?

00:37:19
Deborah McFadden: Absolutely. In fact, I remember in the elementary school and I said, " We won't be doing physical therapy in school." " What do you mean you're not doing physical therapy?" I said, " They're getting their physical therapy in sports." And this is not to say that physical therapy isn't important because it is. But I said, " I want them to participate in every aspect in school," with all the other kids. I don't want them pulled out for this because they're doing sports.

And just as a side note, I remember saying to Hannah with her prosthetic leg, I said, " Hannah"... Because for our first one, we got puppy dogs on it and we got pink sparkles. And at some point I said, " Hannah, you can get skin colored for your leg." And she said, " What? People are supposed to think it's real? No, no." We want to teach our kids to be proud of who they are. But again, I do think sports is an equalizer because nowadays, kids get involved in soccer at the age of two. So the parents will say, no, we went to the soccer tournament. We went to lacrosse tournament. Well, you have a child with a disability, and all the other moms are talking about this. And then I was able to say, oh yes, my girls were in a basketball tournament. Yes, they were in a track tournament. Yes, they were.

It's normalizing it. Not trying to say that they're going to play the exact same way, but sports is meant for everybody. Sports is not to single out for those are the

most elite. You can be involved. And I do think this is what saved my daughter's lives, is to getting them involved because Tatyana certainly became stronger and stronger, and it helped her navigate a world that is not meant to be accessible. She's strong. She does go up and down escalators in her wheelchair. She can jump curbs. She can do these things. But it helped my kids survive and live life.

00:39:24
Rob Simmelkjaer: Deborah, your activism in this area was not finished with the ADA. When Tatyana was in high school, her school would not initially let her race on the track team. Which I think of that, and I'm like, did they know who they were dealing with you? I mean, they must not have known who you were to think that they were going to somehow be able to deny your daughter from racing on a high school track team. Tell us what happened when they would not allow Tatyana to be on the track team.

00:39:59
Deborah McFadden: So Tatyana, in eighth grade, they had asked, what is your dream? And Tatyana said, " I want to participate in the Olympics." In other words, Paralympics. And she tried out. Well, Tatyana made the team, the U. S. team, in between eighth grade and ninth grade. And as the Olympic committee, she's very young. She probably won't win medal, but just to be a good experience. Lo and behold, Tatyana won a silver and bronze medal. She came home as a second and third fastest in the world. In the world. And she went to high school and she came home from her first day of high school and she said, " Mom, it's going to be great." I said, " Really? Why?" She goes, "Well, because the principal stood up and said, there's a lot of clubs and we should join clubs." I said, " Well, what are you going to join?" She was like, " Duh, track."
Well, for those who don't know, track is not a tryout sport. It's not like you try out for football and you may make the JV or varsity team. If you go to track, you're given a uniform and you can run around the track. You may not advance to regionals or states, but every single person who goes out for track is given a uniform and is allowed to be on the team. When Tatyana went, and the coach said, not only verbally, but in writing, " You can't be on our team, can't be on our track. There's clubs for you. Can't do it." So when Tatyana told me this, I thought she must have misunderstood because nobody is, and can I say the word, stupid enough to say that. I thought, no. So she came back and said, " No." And I said, " Well, let me go talk to him." And I said, " Look, we're asking for two things. Give her a uniform and let her run around the track." I didn't even

ask her to compete, but I said, " These are her friends. If she liked chess, she would've joined the chess club." Then he's shaking and said, " No." I said, " Two things. Give her a uniform and let her run around the track." " Nope." I said, " But before you say no, I just want you to know I'm the former United States Commissioner of Disabilities. One of the original 12 authors of the ADA, had 400 attorneys that worked for me. If I sue you, it will be nuclear war. So just give her a uniform." And the school said, " Go ahead and sue us." So we filed a suit in our county.

00:42:15
Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:42:16
Deborah McFadden: Yeah, it was unbelievable. We filed a suit in our county, and we filed for no damages. And so Judge Andre Davis, and this is one of his claim to the fame, the suit. So he asked the school and the school hired two very expensive attorneys. Remember, we were not suing for damages, but he said... He looked at them and he turned to Tatyana and said, " Are you suing for damages?" And she didn't know that her lawyer should speak, but she goes, " No, Your Honor." And he said, " Let me start with you." Well, he starts with them and they said, " It's not fair that she's doing this." He goes, " Not fair? Tatyana, do you mind running with your arms?" No. He goes, " Well, that's not running." And the judge said... She stands on the line and you go on mark, set, go. And she goes to the finish. " Yeah," he goes, " that's running."

So we won in Howard County. Oh, and then the school's attorney said, " That's not fair." And he said, " Not only is it fair, but you are going to let her compete and you'll give her points." Well, interesting enough, as soon as he said, " You'll give her points in racing," then the other coaches all went, " Ah," points and they want to run to other students with disabilities. Sad defeat. Then we went to the state of Maryland and the State of Maryland said, " If your team goes outside the county, we will disqualify them." And so we sued the State of Maryland and then Tatyana said, let's write a law.

So we got people like Billie Jean King and other people to sign on to this. And Tatyana went around. And in one year, the first law in America passed the Sports and Fitness Equity Act, AKA, Tatyana's Law, that said, if you have a disability, the schools need to provide opportunities. And then Tatyana said, let's make it for everybody in America. So I got Hannah and Tatyana to speak to President Obama, and it is now federal. And you have the right. And again, one of my arguments was, if you say people with disabilities

don't belong, then these kids will be employers someday and they'll say, I don't have to give equal treatment. I don't have to hire them.
It's not just about winning and losing, but our kids are learning the right to fair play and competition and friends. And then, of course, what went from that is the universities are now giving scholarships to recruit people with disabilities on sports.

00:44:50
Becs Gentry: That's just amazing. I mean, it's just the fact that Tatyana was spreading it and doing it. She wanted to be the one keeping the ball rolling from taking it from a school to state to then a federal law providing equity for everybody is just so beautiful. And again, testament to how you have given that passion to your children as well. It is truly, truly beautiful.
So let's talk about their success then. From there on, they were both very, very dominant in their sports and their success. And fast forwarding, a long way to 2012, to the London Paralympics, both of your daughters were on the U. S. Paralympic track team, which is the first time in U. S. history that two siblings competed together for the Paralympic game. So what was it like as a mom standing there and seeing them in their team U. S. A. uniforms together?

00:46:00
Deborah McFadden: I remember being in the stands and I started to choke up and cry, and someone said, " Oh, for what they're competing in?" And I said, " No, for what it could have been." They both came from orphanages and from countries that didn't value people with disabilities. And to see her living life and being on a world stage to compete, it's unbelievable. And it really is not the winning or losing, which, of course, it is, these medals, but in the game of life, both of my daughters won. They won in the game of life in that they're living life, and they're both role models to others of that you can do it. Both of my daughters have volunteered at Wounded Warriors camps, and I do remember I was walking behind two big, tough soldiers who had lost their legs and Hannah's hopping there, taking her leg off doing some sport. These two guys went, " Hey, if she can do it, I guess we better do it."
And they're showing others that you can do anything and to be proud of who you are. And again, that's, as parents, what we're supposed to teach our children, especially in this time and age of it's all about body image. You are exactly who you're supposed to be, and be proud of it. Missing a leg or not being able to move from the waist down is not who you are. And I've hoped as a mom that I've instilled

in my children not just the competition of winning the medal, but to be good people, to give back to the community, and that the world should be a better place because you've touched other lives.

00:48:14
Becs Gentry: Absolutely.

00:48:15
Rob Simmelkjaer: Deborah, you say your girls have won at the game of life, and that's true, but I think really they just hit the lottery when it comes to their mother. I mean, that's one of the things that we can't always control is who our parents are. And they ended up being adopted by someone who not only changed their lives, but changed the world and the lives of countless people. So that I'm sure they would both acknowledge they really did hit the lottery when it comes to you.
You are still doing incredible things, not as if there hasn't been enough that you've done in this space. These days, you run an organization called Abilities Count that helps families navigate disability benefits, which I can imagine is an unbelievably difficult, complex, kind of labyrinth of benefits and insurance and government regulations and things like that. What are the kinds of challenges that families with kids with disabilities are facing today, and how do you help them?

00:49:24
Deborah McFadden: It's a complex system. Since I helped write some of the regulations, or know these well from personal experience or through myself or my kids, but people with disabilities, there's two specific programs I work on, Social Security Supplemental, social security benefits or SSI, SSDI, as well as vocational rehabilitation, which helps these kids go to college. And they're complex systems. You need to know how to speak the right languages, as I call it SSI ease or Voc Rehab ease. You have to know how to speak it and how to navigate the system. And for parents with kids with a disability, life is tough. They're trying to figure out how do I get transportation still? How do I get the medical supports?
And so I help around the United States help families navigate this system so that they get the benefits to help our kids achieve the best life possible. I help people with all different types of disabilities, although my foray into this was with a lot of the students who were going from high school to college playing on college sports teams, whether it was a wheelchair basketball or wheelchair track team or swimming. But I quit counting after I got $ 44

million. So I've been able to help a lot of these kids. But again, I just happen to know these things.
But again, life is changing, and I just do want to give a comment about marathons. I can tell you that if all the communities that we entered into, communities of sports community, the community that the most accepting and most progressive was and is the running community. There has not been one time in a marathon that Tatyana hasn't been treated as an equal to other elite athletes, as a part of it. Those athletes see her as an elite athlete.
And since we're talking New York Roadrunners, they've been a leader. You all have been a leader in the field to show others that it's possible. We're still fighting around the country where I'll have parents call saying, " My child wants to run in the city marathon, and they won't let them in." But we need examples of it works. And Tatyana is proud to be a part of the marathon community part, to be a six- star medalist for the world majors, and part, proud to bring the younger people into the community. It's wonderful.

00:52:27
Becs Gentry: She is wonderful. Hannah is wonderful. You are wonderful. And just thank you for all of the work that you've all done throughout your lives so far. We're incredibly lucky to have people like you all fighting for equality and change, and long may it last and more may it come. As a mother myself, I'm very lucky to be in this situation to have a daughter who, as you said, is going to see the world in a very different way to how you did, how Rob did, and how I did when we grew up. So thank you and thank you for your time with us today.

00:53:09
Deborah McFadden: Well, I thank you.

00:53:09
Becs Gentry: We can't wait to see you at more running events.

00:53:11
Deborah McFadden: Well, I am always here training and like this, and I would be remiss to not mention the fact that Tatyana has been nominated for an ESPY award. And it would be great if any of the listeners could go out and vote. It's good through July 16th. And here's what's important, the ESPYs, the high platform for recognizing sport greatness, and they have a category. The ESPYs has had a category of the most distinguished person with a disability, an athlete with a disability, and it's great. And of course, I'd love people to vote for Tatyana, but they're all deserving.
But just to show that it's not just the NFL player who

gets 500, 000 votes, but it's the athletes with disabilities that also, we don't want to say there were just 500 people voting. Because that's what helps raise us into the next level and to continue with the laws that we put in there to make sure things are in place for people with disabilities so that we are never pushed to the side again, but we are there in all aspects of life.

00:54:27
Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, Deborah, a lot of people go through life. When they're young, they say that they want to grow up and make the world a better place, and I think many people do in different small ways. But you, in big ways, have made the world better both for your daughters and just for people everywhere. So it's just an honor to speak to you. Congratulations on everything that you have done, and keep going. That's all I can say. Keep going.

00:54:57
Deborah McFadden: That's the plan. Thank you so much.

00:55:01
Rob Simmelkjaer: Deborah McFadden, thank you very much. New York Roadrunners is a non- profit organization with a vision to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running. The support of members and donors like you helps us achieve our mission to transform the health and wellbeing of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at nyrr. org/ donate.

00:55:42
Becs Gentry: A born and raised New Yorker with deep Queens roots is today's member, Christine Ramos. Chris juggles being a mom, a partner, a full- time professional, and a full- time student or what she calls her beautiful chaos. But in the midst of all that beautiful chaos, Chris has found running to be critical to her mental health. Her journey into racing started not with a finish line, but with a simple decision to spend more time with the person she loves. Now, running has become her own personal challenge.

00:56:14
Meb Keflezighi: Thanks, Becs. Chris, welcome to Set the Pace podcast. How are you doing today?

00:56:20
Christine Ramos: I'm good, Meb. It's such an honor to meet such a legend like you. Thank you so much for having me.

00:56:25
Meb Keflezighi: Our pleasure. Thanks for being on the show. Well, you have got a lot going on. Work, grad school, parenting. What does running give you that helps you manage all of that?

00:56:36
Christine Ramos: So running is the one thing that's just mine. On any given day, I have a million tabs in my head between school deadlines, to- do lists, and everything. It just never really stops. But when I get to run, I get to close all the tabs, even just for a little bit for the miles that I put into it. And it just gives me the clarity that I need, mental reset to show up for everyone and everyone else when I'm done.

00:57:03
Meb Keflezighi: Awesome. What you referred as a beautiful chaos. You mentioned your first race was Abbott Dash and you love running past the Grand Central and Radio City. Can you describe what was going through your mind during that run?

00:57:20
Christine Ramos: Oh, my gosh. Again, I'm born and raised in New York. So that race was really surreal for me. I've seen that area a thousand times, but it was definitely cool seeing it from a different perspective. I enjoyed every single minute of it, and I definitely tried to get a good picture running across Great Hill City. I'm looking forward to running again this year.

00:57:41
Meb Keflezighi: Well, tell for those people that are listening. Everybody's vision, everybody's goal at one point to visit in New York, but you grew up there, you saw what was the road like experience from a different perspective?

00:57:52
Christine Ramos: It was cool. I mean, I wasn't even looking into my pace or anything. It was just enjoying the sights. It was really cool.

00:58:00
Meb Keflezighi: Pretty awesome. Enjoying the moment. You are a member of the NYC Dragon Run Club. Tell us all about the community.

00:58:09
Christine Ramos: So let's go Dragons. The NYC Dragons is led

by our founder and team captain, Hector Santana, who is such a cool guy. He's a light to everyone, and he's really created an empowering and supportive community in the most positive space. And we have the most unstoppable runners of all levels, experience and speed, who really just put in the work. Our team really supports each other through rain or shine, and it's just incredible being a Dragon, celebrating each other, and I'm just really lucky to be a part of something so special.

00:58:45
Meb Keflezighi: That's awesome. NYC Dragons, the camaraderie is race. Awesome and great experience. And also your partner, JP, has run several marathons and now you are training for Berlin together. What has been the hardest and the funniest part of the training side by side?

00:59:03
Christine Ramos: The hardest part. I'm new to long distance running, and JP is like a seasoned marathoner. Sometimes I feel like I'm in survival mode while he's just cruising, but to his credit, he really paces with me and for me. He meets me where I'm at, which I can really appreciate. The funniest part. So we have completely different fuel philosophies. He's super structured with his gels and everything. Meanwhile, I'm more of like, " Google, what can help me power through a run?" So I'm experimenting with different things like applesauce, sour candy, Celsius, flavored electrolytes, and he just shakes his head. I'm still learning, trying to find what works for me.

00:59:50
Meb Keflezighi: It works for you. As you said earlier, beautiful chaos. So you guys are working it out and make it a true come for Berlin, but you recently ran the Achilles Hope & Possibility 4M, and that race meant something extra for you because of your daughter, Emilia. Can you tell us about the connection and how she reacts to your running?

01:00:11
Christine Ramos: So that race was really personal. We have two daughters, Sophia, who's 14, and Emilia, our younger daughter, is nine, and she's on the autism spectrum. And while she doesn't have any physical disabilities, she navigates and experiences the world in her own way. And she communicates well. But like many kids with autism, she faces challenges that aren't always visible. And the Hope & Possibility is all about inclusion and celebrating all abilities. And that really hit home for us.
Running that race really felt like I was honoring her

journey. And Emilia is our biggest little cheerleader. Every time we bring home a medal, she's all about wanting to wear it and everything, and she does it really proudly. And races like the Achilles make space for families like ours. It's not just about finishing, it's about showing what's possible in every form.

01:01:08
Meb Keflezighi: Amazing. Just amazing. You have a lot going on. Work, grad school, parenting, running, and being inclusive to your daughter. That means so much. So thanks for being on the podcast. Wish you all the best.

01:01:19
Christine Ramos: Yeah, thank you.

01:01:21
Becs Gentry: Mohammad Saad, PT/ DPT, is a physical therapist at the hospital for special surgery, focused on the treatment of surgical and non- surgical orthopedic cases. He works with patients of all ages and athletic levels, helping every day individuals recover and athletes return to their sports after injury. Saad is also part of the HSS sports performance team, conducting running mechanics assessments to identify issues and prevent overuse injuries in runners. An avid runner and triathlete himself, he is passionate about helping fellow endurance athletes meet their goals. And he's here today to talk about how to supplement running with cross- training.

01:02:03
Meb Keflezighi: Thanks, Becs. Mohammad, welcome to Set the Pace podcast. How's it going today?

01:02:08
Mohammad Saad: It's going well. Thank you so much for having me. I'm glad to be here.

01:02:11
Meb Keflezighi: No problem. Great to have you here. So let's get into it. Runners love to run, but running every day can cause problems. Why should runners included other activities like biking, swimming, or cross- training to help them avoid injuries?

01:02:27
Mohammad Saad: Yeah, absolutely. Like you and I and a lot of our listeners know, running's great. It's great for your health, great for mental health, physical health, great way to develop a community and be social. But we also realize it's a pretty high impact sport. I don't think a lot of

people realize the toll that it can take on your muscles and joints. One underknown fact is the reaction force from the ground into your body from running can be up to three times your weight. So that's a lot of force in a very repetitive motion.

When you're logging miles every day, you're putting stress generally on the same muscles, the same joints, and the same tissues. So over time, that's going to accumulate and build up. So cross- training. Think biking, elliptical, rowing, swimming, things like that, can kind of give certain muscles and certain tissue a little bit of a break from that impact while still letting you build some of that cardiovascular and aerobic fitness. So it's a really great way to supplement the aerobic component that you get from running while minimizing that impact and that stress to the same tissues over and over.

And then also, as we are aware that running can lead to a lot of over use injuries. So that cross- training can help sometimes correct some of the imbalances that can result from that. So it's really a great way to train a little bit smarter, not just focus on training harder all the time.

01:03:49
Meb Keflezighi: Smarter, not harder. I like it, and I think about, I like to say prehab instead of rehab. Meaning, take other cautious, whatever you can, before you get injured. But when the runners are injured, which is inevitable sometimes, and can't run, what cross- training excess do you suggest so they can stay fit while they recover?

01:04:10
Mohammad Saad: Yeah, absolutely. That's a great question and it really comes down to the simplest answer is it depends. So depending on the type of injury that they have, there's always going to be a different type of training that's maybe more appropriate. So we think of some of the more common injuries like let's take a stress fracture, for example, or a stress reaction, where that injury is a result of excessive pounding, excessive force that maybe the tissues of the body can't handle. In that case, you want to unload the structures that are impacted, so the bones. And this is an example where something that's very low impact or non- impact can come in handy, like swimming or pool running. I think we see a lot of athletes rely on pool running, especially if they're trying to get back to higher mileage running, because it's a great way to replicate the movement of running, for example, in the deeper end of a pool, so you get the same stimulus without having to load the joints, without having that stress to the bones. So pool running's a great one.

If it's something that can tolerate maybe a little bit of impact, things like an elliptical can be a great alternative because it mimics the stride that you would get during running. So when you transition back to running, you still have that muscle memory component. Another example is cycling. Cycling is really nice as a supplement because if people really enjoy long distance running and going out further distances and seeing different parts of the city or the country that they're living in, cycling is really nice. Because you can log higher mileage, but the recovery is not as as hard. So depending on the source of the injury or the type of injury, whether it allows for some weight-bearing, weight training or you want to stay a little bit less weight- bearing, then cycling and running could be great. Elliptical is great, like I said, because it mimics that stride that you get from running. And then one that a lot of people kind of overlook, that I've actually started using quite a bit myself because it incorporates some of the other regions of the body, is rowing. Rowing is really nice because we, a lot of times, think of rowing because it has the arm component as being more of an upper body workout, but it's actually a really, really great general aerobic and cardiovascular training. But it's actually primarily legs. If I remember correctly, I think 60% or 70% of the rowing motion should be generated from the legs. So for runners, being primarily lower extremity activity, rowing is a really, really great supplement to do, especially if you want to incorporate the upper body a bit and still maintain that aerobic training.

01:06:40
Meb Keflezighi: Amazing. Pretty awesome input from Mohammad. I've been there before. I had a pelvic stretch fracture, two ruptured quads. I had tendonitis and Achilles or knee tendonitis, but cross- training, I have not done the rowing part of it, but I've done the pool running and deep in the water and elliptical and cycling. It just endorphin kicks in and it helps you make the transition a little bit more easier and smoother.
But experts also say that runners often have a weak hips or core muscles that can lead to injuries. When you watch someone running from a form during a mechanic assessment, what common problem do you notice and how can doing other exercise help the hip, legs or other areas, or fix them?

01:07:23
Mohammad Saad: Yeah, absolutely. One of the things that I do hear at HSS is, on occasion, I'll do running mechanics assessments. So I'll take a runner who is either coming back from injury or trying to prevent injury. You mentioned that

prehab is better than rehab. We want to avoid the injuries before they come up. So I do these running mechanics assessments to help runners identify maybe areas of weakness or things that they can modify with regards to their strength training or flexibility that will help either keep them healthy or avoid injury in the future. Some of the more common things that I see when doing these mechanics assessments are a lot of hip drop. So when one leg is making contact with the ground, the opposite hip tends to drop, or what we call knee valgus. So the knee collapsing inwards when they take that next step.

And then excessive trunk rotation. So when the upper body rotates a little bit too much, those are generally despite affecting different parts of the body. You see them in different areas. They're usually all signs of very similar things, either weak glutes or a weak core. And a lot of times, runners, if they do strength train, which I will say runners have a tendency to not prioritize, they tend to strength strain the lower extremities. So think calves, quads, hamstrings, and they tend to neglect kind of the upper parts of that area and including the core when ultimately everything stems from your core. Think of all of your appendages, your arms and your legs, they attach to your core. So that's kind of the foundation for a lot of these movements. So when I'm looking at these things, I always make recommendations on how runners can strengthen their glutes, especially the outsides of their hips.

Running is generally a single playing sport. You run in a straight line until you get to the turn, or your turnaround and then you make a change of direction. So there's not a lot of lateral movement, which means it leaves a lot of opportunity for weakness in those lateral muscles. So I tend to focus a lot on the prehab component of strengthening the core to avoid some of that excessive rotation. So runners maintain really good posture and form later in a race, whether it's the end of 5K when you've been pushing really hard, or the end of a marathon. Beyond that 20- mile mark, you want to maintain that good posture. So the glutes and the core tend to be a big area of priority, and since we've been talking a lot about cross- training, different methods of cross- training can help build that core and different aspects of the glutes.

So when we think about cycling as a supplement to cross-training, cycling is a very quad dominant sport. So for running, being more of a hamstring glute dominant sport, cycling is a really good way to continue to work those quads, especially if you're training for a downhill race, so that you kind of delay the weakness or the soreness in your quads. And then other methods like maybe rowing, which is more of a core, especially the trunk core and hamstring

dominant, that can really help your stride and the power that you generate in your strides. So from looking at running mechanics assessments, I try and identify different areas of weakness and then ultimately try and recommend some exercises that will strengthen to improve those areas of weakness.

01:10:32
Meb Keflezighi: Well said, Mohammad, and I personally used to do six days a week lateral movements because runners, we think we'd go forward, get the mouse in. But cross- training, doing the drills, core strengthening and such are crucial. How has your experience helped you through your physical therapy to help you assess other runners?

01:10:53
Mohammad Saad: Yeah, absolutely. So I think through training and physical therapy, we tend to identify... Physical therapists are generally kind of colloquially referred to as movement experts. So in my study of physical therapy and in practicing physical therapy, I see how people move and I've learned to break down inefficiencies or areas that can be improved in how someone moves, and then apply that to whatever their functional or sports- specific goal is.
So in our context with runners, I tend to see how they move with sports- specific movements like running, so having them run on a treadmill, or I take the running movement and break it down into smaller components. So how do they do a squat? How do they get up from a chair? How do they go up and down stairs? And that way, I can isolate and break down the movements that translate to an effective running stride and kind of build off of those and recommend ways to improve that. One of the things that I actually forgot to mention when we were talking about a strong core and that lateral movement is Pilates can be a really, really great supplement as well, because it really emphasizes a focus on having a strong core and generating power through your core and glutes.

01:12:05
Meb Keflezighi: Amazing. You have shared a lot of knowledge. Can you share a short success story of a runner you work with using cross- training to recovery from an injury?

01:12:17
Mohammad Saad: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I've got plenty of those. I could probably speak to some about myself, but more recently, this one's actually... I'm really proud of this runner. I was working with a marathoner just a few months ago who was training for a spring marathon, and pretty late

in the game, once the mileage ramped up, she actually developed a stress reaction in her tibia, and it was just a few weeks before the goal race. So as you can imagine, as any runner can imagine, you've put in months and months of work to train for this race, and then just a few short weeks before, the unfortunate news comes around that you might not be able to complete that race.

So ultimately, we had to kind of postpone and cancel the plan to do that race, and she was very disappointed, as you can imagine. But we kind of used that motivation and the foundation that she had built from her training and pivoted a lot of that into pool running. We did that probably four or five times a week. We transitioned to a little bit more cycling because it's a very, very low impact, but still maintains that cardiovascular component. And then we also did a lot of upper body strength, which she had been neglecting during her buildup in the marathon.

Ultimately, she stayed really disciplined, so I will commend her for being so disciplined and consistent with the training. She didn't let that obstacle discourage her and then just kind of put training in the backseat. And through cross- training, she was pool running three or four days a week, cycling the other days. She even rode a little bit. She was able to really maintain, and honestly, she might've even improved some of her cardiovascular aerobic fitness. So then after that stress reaction had resolved and she was cleared to start running, we eased her back in.

We followed kind of a structured and a guided return to run progression, and we were actually very, very fortunately able to get her registered for a late spring marathon. And she ultimately ended up beating her goal by two or three minutes. So what initially appeared to be a huge setback and a really disappointing bummer of not being able to run that initial race, when we postponed it about a month and a half later and maintained the fitness through cross- training, she was eventually able to run an even better time.

So ultimately, like I mentioned at the beginning, it's a really good reminder that training smarter. It's not just about training miles and logging those miles as a runner loves to do, but it's really about adapting and being able to change the scenario and staying active in the right ways, and training smarter instead of just pushing and training harder.

01:14:49
Meb Keflezighi: Amazing. Well done. I can relate to that. I think sometimes you might have a setback or disappointments, but when you do the physical therapy, you bounce back right away, or sometimes it might be a year and whatnot, but still your best results might be ahead of you. And I've the

testament of that when the New York City Marathon 2009 after failing, not to make the 2008 Olympic Games. So it's a true testament to you and other group of physical therapists who helped us get back on track, and the results are amazing. So thanks for being on the show.

01:15:21
Mohammad Saad: Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for having me. This was great.

01:15:24
Becs Gentry: That does it for another episode of Set the Pace. Thank you to today's guests, Deborah McFadden, Chris Ramos, and HSS's Mohammad Saad. If you like this episode, please go ahead, subscribe, rate or leave a comment for the show on whatever platform you're listening on. Not only does this help us, but it helps others find out about the show, too. Take care.