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Becs Gentry: I don't want the pressure of being fast and I don't want the pressure of running long. We'll come back to the irony of that. But I want to enjoy it. I just really want to enjoy it again.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, everybody, and welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners presented by Peloton. I'm your host, Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Roadrunners, and I am thrilled to be rejoined and reunited with my co-host from Peloton, Becs Gentry.

Hey, Becs, how are you?

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Becs Gentry: Hi. I'm good. Thank you. How are you?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I'm good.

Why does it feel like it's been so long? Is it just me?

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Becs Gentry: It's been so long.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I feel like it's been months since I spoke to you.

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Becs Gentry: It has. It's been months. We've taken a bit more time to have the shows produced in a wonderful way and give our guests and our episodes breathing time and it's just been such a fabulous change. Then I've been away, you've been away. There's been different races and different pieces of life. There we go.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. And that's all-

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Becs Gentry: We're here. We're back.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, it's great to-

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Becs Gentry: Yes.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... see you if virtually, and I'm looking forward to this episode because we're going to catch up on all

things Becs and where you are now in your running journey a year and a half after your unbelievable Great World Race. But I have to tell you, before we get into that, I had so much fun on Saturday with your colleague, Camila Ramón-

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. Camila.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... who co-hosted the podcast with us at the conclusion, the after party of the RBC Brooklyn Half. She was awesome.

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Becs Gentry: She ran. She ran. She did the Becs. She ran to work and she crushed it, as did Mariana. Yeah, she's amazing. She's fantastic.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. You better watch your back. She could definitely give you a run for your money as co-host of this podcast.

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Becs Gentry: Well, if I have to hand it over to another Peloton instructor, so be it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Good to know we've got another Peloton. Great option. Many, I'm sure. So many of you guys are so good on camera and everything you do. It was a lot of fun.

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Becs Gentry: Good.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We'll talk a little bit more about the RBC Brooklyn Half. But if you really want the full on recap of that incredible record setting event that we had on Saturday, you can check out that episode that we recorded live from the after party. We'll talk a little bit more about that later.

But, Becs, let's spend some time talking about you and everything that's going on. And the last time we had a one-on-one conversation, it was right after the Great World Race and you were still in disbelief. I think everybody was in disbelief that you had just done that. And then since then, you've had some ups and downs with some injuries and things like that, but it seems like you're doing well now. Where is the world of Becs Gentry right now when it comes to

running?

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Becs Gentry: Taking a turn. Taking a big turn.

Well, let's go back. Let's go back 18 months or whatever. I can't believe it's quite been that little time. It feels like it was so much longer ago.

Completion of the Great World Race took so long to settle in. I think when we did the podcast episode about it, I was definitely still on the post event high. I think a lot of the conversation we had was... As you say, it was like disbelief. It was. To this day, I still can't get my head around the fact that I ran a marathon in Antarctica. That's just weird. When I say that, I'm like, "That wasn't me. I haven't been to Antarctica. That's a different human." But I think we all have that imposter syndrome style memory association for many things in our lives.

And then I carried on running and I feel like I can talk about this openly with you guys because in my role at Peloton, I'm a running coach and I have been a running coach and instructor and personal fitness coach to people for a very long time. I knew it wasn't correct that I was carrying on running. I knew deep down, I was like, "This isn't right." After something of that magnitude, I need to give my body the respect it deserves. I took time off literally the couple of days after the race.

And my coach warned me that because of the long build and the nature of the race, that if my body wanted to run, it would be expected that I wouldn't necessarily... Your body can't just stop and switch off for the most part. And I wasn't injured after the race, so there wasn't essentially a reason to curtail running totally. And he was right. I took a couple of days off of running and I went from Miami while we finished the race down to Florida to see my aunt and I ended up running a few 5Ks, just a few during that week of just shaking the legs out. Nothing speed based, just moving.

But I didn't stop. I didn't give myself a week of going to rehab and getting my body worked on with a physical therapist, doing acupuncture, swimming perhaps instead of running, or biking, or anything other than running. And that carried on. And then I put in the calendar Grandma's Marathon. I was like, "I'm going to go for it. I'm going to go and do another road race. It's going to be middle of the year." And the climb, the build started to come again and I did a few races. I did the Nike women's half.

Keira D'amato and I ran side by side for the whole race. It was absolutely incredible. Keira doesn't run slow, even though that was her slow run day. It was incredibly fast half marathon. And all of a sudden, I hit a wall and I

just woke up one day and went, " I don't want to run. I don't want to run. I didn't want to go to work." I did not want to run because I didn't enjoy it. It was becoming a pain in the ass and I resented it. I tried going for a run without my watch, without my phone, without any technology just to run. And I did not want to do it.

And that hurt my soul so much because running is a huge part of who I am. It doesn't identify me but it kind of does in a strange way. But the most important thing is it's given me so much joy and to all of a sudden not have that joy was heartbreaking.

And so around that time I started the initiation of the 67Strong4Kids with Jennifer Garner and we did the fundraising for Save the Children and it was moving a mile a day. It didn't have to be a run. It could be a walk, it could be a bike ride. It was just moving your body for a mile a day. And I kid you not, Rob, that was the absolute max I wanted to do most days of those 67 days. And some days for 12 of my waking hours, I shunned it. I was like, " It's fine. No one's going to know I'm not going to do it." " Oh, I'll do it. I'm going to know I didn't do it because it's for a cause. This isn't just you and running. This is for a cause." And I'd be out at 9:00 just running up and down my street to get the mile done. That's how much I did not want to run.

It took a lot of self-talk. It took a lot of time for me to rebuild this love. And I think pulling out of Grandma's and having this very honest conversation of, yes, I had an event that weekend that ended up challenging it, but I think me in love with running would have absolutely put the marathon first and figured out life around it. And me in that spot took the chance to not run the marathon, to not have to carry on training for it a few weeks in advance. And I was very honest and open and said, " I've fallen out of love with running. I'm not upset that I'm not doing this race. I don't care. I'm thrilled, to be quite honest. I'm absolutely thrilled. I'm not going to Grandma's." No disrespect to the wonderful race that is Grandma's Marathon. I will run it one day.

After that, after the combination of 67Strong and for the rest of 2025, I essentially stepped back from making myself run outside of work. I have to run for my job and I needed to get back that running joy at Peloton because for some of my classes even I was on autopilot. I wasn't inspired. I wasn't creative, which is not a good thing when it's your job.

It took a while. It took a while to actually want to go outside, to lace up my trainers, and go for anything more than a three-mile run. That was about my max. A four-mile run felt nah, not interested in that. No. Three miles

because it's about a mile and a half to take my daughter to school and back to my house. So in summer, I like to run her down there and back and that was my cap out.

And to get through that, this sounds so dramatic, a lot of people have a lot of things going on in their life, but for me it was very, very awkward because I'm supposed to be this person who embodies running, but I'm seeing everyone and their mother is running more miles than me. And it's not because I'm injured, it's because I just don't want to.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I know how you feel, by the way, with not running with people looking at your Strava because you work in the running industry and wondering, "Why isn't this person running more?" For me, it's injury, although I've been easing my way back the same thing.

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Becs Gentry: You're coming back.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Three miles here and there.

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Becs Gentry: Which is just fine.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, I get it. It's when you've got the eyes on you and people expect a certain thing of you. For you, they expect lots of miles and very fast miles, so I get it.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

And then I guess it was serendipitous that I had been in talks with HOKA for a minute. I had gone through trialing their shoes because I hadn't run much in them and we were talking about a sponsorship, an athlete ambassador role, and I needed to know what these shoes were about. I needed to understand what these shoes would do for me essentially. And that compelled me to get out and run because I was trying their shoes. I was trying other shoes as well just to see what all the difference was in the world of running shoes.

And then the conversation continued. I did fall in love with a pair of their road shoes. Austin and I actually sat down and he was like, "What is it about running for you? What do you want from it? Because right now what I think you're trying to get isn't working." I was like, "It's not. I don't want the pressure of being fast and I don't want the pressure of running long." We'll come back to the irony of

that. But I want to enjoy it. I just really want to enjoy it again. And it was taking so long to enjoy it.

And then I sat down with my team and HOKA and said, "I'm thrilled to partner with you guys, but I want to turn. I want to take a turn and that I want to step away from road. I want to go and do what makes me happy in my heart." And that is being an adventurer and getting to run on these trails and not have thousands of people around me. I have so much anxiety and claustrophobia of big races. I get very nervous in the start corrals, just... I hate being in crowds. I don't go to concerts. I don't go to things like that. I get very, very bad anxiety from it. And the-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You did not know that about you. Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

That's why I don't tend to do a lot of the races unless I can literally be at the front because I get so worked up because I can't get out. There's too many people and I can't get out. And so that side of running is where I began. I ran 50Ks before I ran 5Ks when I started running and immediately, my heart was starting to blossom again with this, "Ooh, ooh. Okay. Ooh, this is going to be fun. Ooh, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? How far are we going to run? What's on the cards?"

I guess that's the abridged version of how I am at this point in my running career, which is saying goodbye to road racing as my dominant choice of race and embracing way more of those trail races.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Amazing. I love this change for you. I think this is fascinating. There's so much that you've said that I'm sure different people listening can relate to different parts of it.

Running is hard. That's one of the things that attracts all of us to it is that it's hard. If it were easy, well, we wouldn't be here talking about it every week because who talks about something that's easy all the time? You just do it.

I think what's hard about it is what makes it great, but when you do it as much as you've done it and you did it as part of your job as well, it's so easy to see how you could have gone on this kind of a journey.

What is it... You talked about the lack of crowds. What else is it for you that makes trail running different? It sounds like maybe when you're out there in nature, running on the trails, does it feel almost like it's not running?

Like you're having an adventure where you happen to be moving quickly through the trails?

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. Exactly. And there's no pressure. There's no pressure.

The variables of road racing are few and far between. Even though as humans we love to create however many it's... Where is it going to be a slightly undulating hilly road race or the weather? Really, they're the only things that are going to come at you other than like you drop your fuel, you don't take the right fuel, you have a stomach bug. Okay. Things like that, but that can happen on any given day.

For trail, you've got this... You know going into it that it is going to be so challenging in different areas. Most trail races do have a road section because a lot of them start and finish in very cute towns. So you're likely to be starting on tarmac for a lot of the bigger trail and ultra races. And I just love the fact that when you get off, you make a turn, off that tarmac, and then you're just suddenly going up, up, up, or off, off, off into the desert, into the mountains. And it's like your brain just disappears into, "Huh, I'm just moving."

For me, I'm not a professional trail runner. There is a lot of professional trail runners who do go for speed and they are a lung on legs, these people, they're unreal of how they conquer these mountains and deserts. And for me, it really does alleviate that extra pressure that I've come to understand that is on my shoulders when I do road racing.

That's self-created because of where I got to in my career and I'm very, very grateful for that. But I'm also very understanding of my own body and my own mind. I'm very precious of my own body and my own mind because of my job, because of all the extra pressures I'm constantly under. I'm like, "Why choose to keep pushing myself in an area that's causing me extra anxiety when I can keep running, but I can take the notch down of the anxiety and the enjoyment up and I can keep running?"

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. So this newfound love of trail running landed you at the starting line of the Napa Valley Trail Marathon.

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Becs Gentry: Yes.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You're back to the marathon distance but now

on the trails. What did it feel like for you... I actually have two questions for you. First of all, how do you train for a trail marathon? Are you finding trails to do long runs or are you around trails enough to do long runs? Or are you just training on the roads and on the treadmill? That's my first question. So answer that first.

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Becs Gentry: Yes.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yep.

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Becs Gentry: For me, personally, again, we've just all in the trail world and a lot of people outside of it have just recently been witnessed to a huge race called Cocodona 250, which is out Flagstaff, Arizona and records were broken this year. It was absolutely unreal to see Rachel Entrekin, and if you don't know her, look her up, she has boomed unto the trail in ultra running world, who won it outright in 56 hours.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's right.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: To be clear.

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Becs Gentry: Do the math.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: She was the first human across the finish line, male or female. Absolutely.

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Becs Gentry: Yes. The next person happened to be male and he was 90 minutes after her.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Becs Gentry: Put it that way.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's insane.

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Becs Gentry: She stopped for 15 minutes, I think it was, in 56 hours and nine minutes to cover that distance. And the elevation was 39,000 feet overall, I think. It is bonkers.

Someone like that to be at the top of her game... She lives in Arizona. She is out there training on the trails all the time. She can run those in her sleep. She could run them with her eyes closed. That is her job. That is her full-time job. She is a young athlete, a young professional athlete who does that.

I live in New York. Well, predominantly live in the city.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We've got the Bridle Path in Central Park.

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Becs Gentry: We've got the Bridle Path.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I'm not sure how much that's really helping you train for a trail marathon.

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Becs Gentry: Weirdly, I did a lot of loops of Central Park because of the hills. It is really, really good for that. But honestly, it is a lot of treadmill. It's a lot of hiking with a weighted vest. Yes, come at me if you don't believe it. I don't run in a weighted vest. I don't like that feeling personally. I do feel like that stresses my shoulders out a bit too much to have that moving here all the time. Yeah, the jumping. But I love a hike. I'll pop on my weighted vest and I will put Virgin River on Netflix and I will plow through episodes and I'm just hiking on that tread.

It's a very similar process to training for 777. I didn't run a marathon every day for seven days to train for running a marathon every day for seven days. What I did do was train on very, very tired legs all the time to get my body used to that feeling. And that is similarly what I'm doing now is I will go and do my whatever workout I need to do, whether it's a strength workout, whether it's just a speed workout or a running workout and I will finish it off with either floors on a stair machine or 30, 60, 90-minute hike on the tread. So my legs are tired going into a hike and they just are like, "Okay, this is where we just have to become our strongest version of ourselves." So no to the trail running training.

But funny you asked that the reason why I chose Napa was

multifaceted really, but the basis of it was because I wanted to practice running on the trails ahead of Canyons 50K. So it was date reason, I had time off from work already carved out. So I was looking for a race on that exact day somewhere in the U. S. I saw Napa Valley and I was like, " Well, that sounds nice. I like wine. I like running."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Seems like an easy talk to me.

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Becs Gentry: This is a really nice weekend.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. And it was the weekend before my 40th birthday and so I thought to myself, "Treat yourself. Go and get a nice hotel, go and spend a weekend and have some spa services and some you time and really make yourself love what you're properly starting to do again."

And so yeah, I signed up for a small race Endura sports, very small organization and they do all these ultra and trail races around, I think, the U. S. maybe and internationally. I don't know. But anyway, it was tiny. There was 300 people across the 10K half and full marathon distances-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's awesome.

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Becs Gentry: ... running this.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You crossed the line in that one in three hours, 22 minutes, 58 seconds, the overall winner of the race, male or female, I believe. No surprise there.

Now, okay, so you did that. You have run 2:32 on the roads in marathon trials. What was harder for you doing three and a half on the trails or two and a half on the roads?

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Becs Gentry: I still think two and a half on the roads was mentally more... There was way more digging deep.

And the monotony. The monotony of doing it on the road is relentless. It's just... Nothing changes. You just got to

keep that pace and you've got to hold on for a dear life until you get to the finish line.

Whereas on the trails, it's undulating times. One minute, you are hiking up to the top of a point, you're taking a breath and jogging it out on a plateau, and then you're absolutely bombing it down. The downhills, those paces are going back up and then you do that on repeat over and over again as your legs get more and more tired.

But I think mentally the monotony is more difficult than with trails where yes, it's tough mentally, but for me taking it down to a walk or a hike, I'm like, "Okay, this is my reset. I'm still moving and that's all that matters. I'm still moving forward. Just let me reset my brain and try again."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. It went pretty well, it seems to me. Okay.

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Becs Gentry: It did.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Take us to the Canyons. This is a 50K ultra in the trails. Remind me where this is.

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Becs Gentry: Auburn, California.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Okay, got it.

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Becs Gentry: So Northern California.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And this was your goal race. You had picked this out as a goal from before Napa Valley, right?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. I needed to complete this race in order to qualify for my race at the end of summer. There was no time constraints other than finishing it. I had 10 hours to finish it, but there was no qualification time other than that.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Just finish.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, just finish.

Napa was the warmup for it, was the get the legs back ready, figure it out. And then I had four weeks in between Napa and Canyons to get myself prepared.

I've never traveled so much in my life in those four weeks. I think I took 18 flights in four weeks or five weeks, I think it was in the end of just all over the world, not just within the U. S. I was Europe, East Coast, West Coast, up, down, side, side, everywhere. So my body was exhausted from that.

I managed to squeeze in some epic running in the Canary Islands where my parents lived because I had to go out there to look after them. It was volcanic running. So it was just me. Tallulah and Austin stayed here in the U. S. so I was single and free. So I definitely did go out for three hour runs and put the pack on and then had fun, which was great and unexpected mini training camp for myself while I was out there.

And then Canyons came around and honestly... I don't know. I think after Napa, I was prepared and excited of like, "Okay, I'm going to go into a big race. There's going to be some big athletes there." There were some big athletes lining up. I knew Molly was going to be there.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Molly Seidel-

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Becs Gentry: Molly Seidel-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... who has transitioned from the road to the trails as well. Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. She's taking her to 2: 26 or 2: 23, something really fast, off the roads and onto the trails very recently too. And she is dominating in the 50K and soon to be the hundred as well.

But I felt ready. I felt excited to do it. I felt interested to see as well whether the world that I left of trail running 10, 15 years ago, it was the same now. And that trail running world was in the U. K. and Europe and I'd never really gotten into the trail running world in the U. S. So I was so interested to see what it was like if it was going to still feel like a kind of granola hug in a weird way. A crunchy granola hug.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And did it?

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Becs Gentry: And it did.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It did.

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Becs Gentry: It did. It did. There was the '90s rock playing at the... What's it called? The village, which is just a teeny, tiny parking space basically, which was turned into where you go and pick up your bib. And it's just...

There's no show. There's no bravado. Even there was the likes of Hans Troyer there, who was one of the most incredible up and coming young male trail runners. And then... There's nothing. They're just running. They're literally just all running all the time. And I loved it. I loved it.

It was Austin's first experience of ultra world and trail running and he was just like, "Wow, this is so different to world marathon majors or even New York Road Runners." It's so very different to the races that we see regularly in big cities. His eyes were just... All the time.

And because these race weekends and trails, there are multiple races and they all are happening simultaneously depending on the distance that you choose. So once the first race starts around the start finished village, it's just a buzz all the time of like, "Okay, the 25K people come in and then the 50K people come in, then the 50 mile, then the 100K, then the 100 mile." And it's just a weekend of celebration and smelly, filthy, agonizing bodies walking through the area.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. Yeah. Wow.

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Becs Gentry: I was really excited to get there for sure.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: So you finished as the 13th female in this race, a time of 4: 46 over 32 miles. I guess it was your first real ultra, right? And so when you got to finish-

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Becs Gentry: For now. I've done many, many in the past.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes, yes. In this new world of Becs.

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Becs Gentry: In this new world.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: How did it feel different for you to reach the finish line of that race versus all these marathons you've run, whether we're talking about Olympic trials or majors or even the 777, what was the feeling like getting to that finish line?

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Becs Gentry: It was a journey. It was a real journey. It was... Again, I go back to the lack of pressure that I feel before. Probably because I'd been doing it for a long time, but I was very methodical about my days before running road marathons and very specific about what was going to happen and need to go to bed at this time and very, very regimented in it. And I think that also stole the fun for me. That's not what floats my boat. And I know a lot of people love routine and regimen, but I just do not. I thrive in spontaneity and just having a bit of a soft edge to life. And it was just random.

The night before the race, Austin wants to go see this restaurant, we're sitting at a bar in a restaurant and now I'm not having a drink, but still I'm not sitting down and eating pasta or pizza. I'm like, "Oh, we're just going to try a bunch of these foods. This looks fun." And we went to bed. It was an early start the next morning, obviously, but it was very chill and it literally wasn't until we got to the start line and...

Another thing I love and because it's a small race, the race started at 7:00 A.M. I got to the start line at 6:40 and that's fantastic.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That is amazing.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, I had the stuff I needed on my back in my pack and I was finishing it where we were starting. I knew Austin was going to be there and if I needed a hoodie, if not, my hotel was an eight-minute walk, great. It's much more comforting to me. I'm not somebody who likes to hang around after a big race and get cold and I just want to get home or get away. And that's also sometimes very stressful. It's a long journey. So that was fun.

But it wasn't until I got down into Central Auburn that I got nervous because I saw Molly Seidel, I saw all of the pro women at the front waiting to go. And because of my partnership with HOKA, it's a HOKA sponsored race, they were

like, "Becs, you're in with the pro women to start." And I'm like, "Oh, no." An immediately... I was like, "No. This is... No. I'm not a pro in this. This is my second race. I don't know what I'm doing." But I just went there. I just put on my Peloton face and was like, "Okay, sure. Yay."

And it was lovely because Molly and I knew each other and she immediately just big hug and I looked her, I was like, "Dude, what are we doing here?" She's like, "I don't know. We're both from the road." And looking around, there was a lot of young, young, and I'm talking like 23, 24-year-old women who have come from college running and are just doing 50Ks because they're so strong and so flexible in their running journeys right now.

Rob, the men went, we crept forward, and I'm just like, "Oh, God, what is this going to be like? We're 32 miles ahead of us. How is this going to go?" And I just said to myself, "Just run your own race. Run your own race." And so we're lining up. I'm on the front line. Literally, it's like, I can't remember the girl who was here, me, Molly Seidel, and then the other two girls who podiumed with their head. I'm looking at the photos that were taken like, "What was I doing there?"

They went out the gate in 6:50 pace. Not what I've been training at, not what I expected. I stubbornly, the Aries in me held on for a mile or so with them. But we were at the bottom of Auburn and it was like this, climbing, to get to the trails and I just hung. I hung for as long as I could until we hit the first downhill, and I will admit I'm not good at the downhill.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Downhills on trails are scary. I have done a couple things.

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Becs Gentry: Trying.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I've done a Spartan race and running some trails and it's scary because you're not just landing on pavement. Every step could be a disaster. Every... You could hit a root.

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely.

00:32:06

Rob Simmelkjaer: You could hit a pothole, whatever it might be. You land in the wrong place and you've got a problem.

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Becs Gentry: You've got a big problem and then you're stranded in pain.

That was my first humbling moment and that's when I said to my... I just had to have a big internal conversation of, "Becs, you promised you were going to do this to run your race, not compete." And I just had to be like, "You've got to not look at the watch, A, for the distance and B for the pace." Because I was seeing eight, nine minute, I was just seeing it creep up from the 6:50s that I knew and loved from road racing to paces I'm not used to running it. And I was getting-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: With my kinds of paces. Yeah. Things that start with eights.

00:32:54

Becs Gentry: Yeah. But it's different on where you're at and it was just in my brain not what I'm used to seeing in race. Even though I've been training that, I've been hiking on the tread at three miles an hour. That is very, very much bigger numbers than I'm used to seeing pace wise.

But in a race scenario, having gone out the gate like that, I just got that stubborn like, "Oh, God, I just want to keep up with them." And off they went. They're just one by one. I was like, "Okay."

But after that, I started to just have fun. I sucked it up. I took the wind out of my sails that first two miles. It really did. I was angry with myself that I didn't just get around the corner from the start and the cameras and be like, "Okay, see you," but you live and learn, because we then had seven miles of just straight uphill climbing, which was very tough.

But the minute I start cracking jokes, I realize I'm in a good place and I did. I was coming up on a guy and I could hear... I was breathing so heavily because I was just trying to get... I was like, "Huuu, haaaa." And I just shouted to him. I was like, "It's not Darth Vader. It's just me. My name's Becs." And he's like, "What?" And he just starts laughing so hard. He was like, "Thank you. That gave me the distraction I needed from this."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's awesome.

00:34:10

Becs Gentry: I'm like, "You got this."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's really fun. Gosh, there's so much I want to ask.

My question, so you felt good at the end of the day with your finished-

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Becs Gentry: I feel good.

00:34:22

Rob Simmelkjaer: ... did you feel good about it?

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Becs Gentry: I did.

Look, I know I'm not good on downhills because I haven't trained them. As you say, I live in New York. I haven't been training on the trails. Two weeks before the race, I went to run the part of the Appalachian Trail. I rolled my ankle many times on there as anyone would. It's one of the most technical trails on the East Coast. And it wasn't a bad roll. It's just little tweaks that you get on the trail. And I just wasn't fully confident in my stability, but also I wasn't fully confident in my ability full stop.

So there were many times I had to step to the side because I could hear people coming down. And I just watched them in awe, Rob. I'd be like, "How? How are they not just falling?"

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Rob Simmelkjaer: They're like cats.

00:35:11

Becs Gentry: They were flying.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. They're like cats.

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Becs Gentry: Floating.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: They're scampering down these hills and every step somehow works for them. Yeah, I've seen it.

00:35:18

Becs Gentry: Works for them. And then I take two steps and I'm like, "Whoa. Whoa. Whoa." Bambi on ice trying to get down it. So that was frustrating.

But conversely, I'm really, really good on uphill. I'm really strong. I'm really stubborn and I will take my place back on the uphill. Unfortunately, the downhill were just

getting very, very technical because they'd had a lot of rain, so it wasn't just... There was the valley where the rain had come shooting down, so rocks and this steep valley so it got technical.

But it was a lot of time by myself. I spent a lot of those 32 miles all by myself. I got to see Austin twice. Once I knew and I was really, really excited about seeing him. It took me back to our first ever, when I ran New York City Marathon, and I knew I'd fallen in love with him when I was waiting to see him on my mile somewhere between eight and nine that day. I kept thinking of that and how excited I was in 2019 to run towards him. And when I was struggling, 15 miles was about where I was going to see him.

And same. He was later than he'd said he'd be and I was like, "God, he does this every time." But it was just so like, "Okay, there's my person, you can keep going," and high-fives and hugs and had a Diet Coke and off we went and then he surprised me a bit later on, which made me cry because I wasn't in a good spot at that point, but still it worked and I definitely...

Yeah. I think I should have really done the kilometers two miles translation earlier because I got to 30 miles and like, "Where's the finish line? Why are we not done?" And we had another two miles. So that was my only big downfall.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Becs, tell me about the finish. This is the longest single race you'd ever run in your life at 50 kilometers. So this was something new for you. What did it feel like to reach that finish line?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. The longest I've run in 10 or so years and a big decade change was daunting to go into it knowing, "Oh, it's been a long time since I've run this distance."

Yeah, as I said, the race unfolded pretty undramatically. There was definitely moments of frustration. There was moments of learning, of being like, "Okay, remember to tell coach how I felt here. Remember to tell him this really sucked and I wished I could do this better. How can he help me?" So that's what I was taking from Canyons all along the way.

But again, having so much fun of being out there, Northern California, Auburn was so beautiful, Rob. It was my first time there and that nature is just... We climbed so high. We're on the top of these mountains. We're looking down into these stunning valleys. Part of the course is part of the Western States course, which was incredibly inspiring to run on that, to just know the gravity of madness that people are going through when they're running Western States and

they're at that point on the course. It's quite late on, so their bodies are broken down, their mind is even more broken down.

And then it was kind of a loop course and you pick up... You come back to where you started. There was only very, very small sections that you repeated. And as I said, it was technical, it was challenging, so much up and down, just constantly climbing and descending over and over again.

And then as I mentioned, I hadn't done the translation of kilometers to miles correctly. We got through the last aid station, I think, at 24 miles, maybe 25 miles and I said to a guy, I was like, "Ooh, last one nearly there." And he looked at me, he was like, "Yeah, sure." Went off and I was like, "All right, what is he talking about?" I'm thinking that we finished at 30 miles, not 32. So I'm celebrating like, "Woo- hoo, six more miles to go."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's rough.

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Becs Gentry: That was really rough because in those last two miles was one of the steepest climbs, not the longest, but one of the steepest climbs to finish us off and that sucked.

But I found another runner and we were both quite spent by that point and we got to a point where he was human four by fouring as well, using his hands and his legs to get up the hill. I went to jog and then I pulled back and jog and that's how I like to do it. And then he looked at me, he was like, "All right, okay. You go, I go." I was like, "All right, we've got this together." And we just helped each other motivate.

And then we got on the road where on the way, the girls, the women and we'd been doing 6:50 pace and I'm just laughing. So I was like, "How? I'm doing 10-minute mile pace right now." But it was uphill still and it was back on the tarmac, but I knew I was at the end. And again, knowing Austin was going to be there.

And just knowing I'd done it and coming into that finish line was absolutely unreal. I was really expecting my legs to be unreal levels of pain and I don't say this to give myself props, but I was fine. I say this, if anything, I underestimated what I could have done. I think I held back quite a lot for the in the moment pain that I was experiencing. The immediate muscle soreness, I was scared and I was like, "No, no, I can't get that sore because I've got to keep running." So that taught me of like, "No, no, no, you're good at flushing out. You have a good lactate threshold. You can go harder in the moment," because I did

not experience much soreness after the race, which was very good knowing what I have ahead.

And then as I said, it's a festival weekend. You have multi-race distances coming in. So we stuck around to see other people finish the different distances, whether it was the 100 kilometers, 62 miles, or the 100-mile race of which my very good friend Jeremiah, he completed that, the Canyons 100 mile race. And so it was very inspiring to see all the different stories, all the different abilities, and all the different smiles and pride coming through.

00:42:06

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

Running is all about communities. We talk all the time about the different communities that we have in New York, whether it's the clubs or group training or... All kinds of communities that exist around running. Do you feel like you're finding your community in this space, this trail running space?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:42:28

Rob Simmelkjaer: You're new to it in this chapter, but does it feel like you found your people?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, I feel like I'm happy it wasn't very different from what I left behind because I did have a very romantic memory of the trail world. So I'm happy that romance is still there and blossoming. And it's lovely. It's really, really just welcoming. Not to say road racing is not road racing, the communities are equally as welcoming and wonderful.

But it's nice to do something different. It's nice to do something on the smaller scale. It probably sounds really strange to people listening of like, "This Peloton instructor who's on one of the biggest fitness platforms in the world doesn't like doing these big events," but that's who I am. I'm a small town girl. I actually really like being away from the big city. I like being away from the hustle and bustle. And so this is where I'm at right now. I'm meeting myself where I'm at right now and it's a very, very nice spot.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Not that you didn't like the running you were doing on the roads or the-

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Becs Gentry: No.

00:43:37
Rob Simmelkjaer: ... Olympic experiences you had. We just all have different seasons and chapters of our lives, right?

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:43:44
Rob Simmelkjaer: It's not a matter of an absolute I like, I don't like.

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Becs Gentry: No.

00:43:47
Rob Simmelkjaer: It's I like, I don't like now.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. And it's not even I don't like. It's just not when I'm focusing all of my energy on anymore. Don't get me wrong, I'm fully down if I could have run the RBC Brooklyn Half at the weekend, I would've done. I would've been there because I love that race and there are going to be multiple New York Road Runners events that I'm like, "I want to run it," because I love it and I love that world, but I'm not training my butt off to be at the forefront of those right now. That's not where my energy's going. But other trail races, yes, that's where I'm going to be on that incline, baby.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Have you been able to work this into the Peloton classes at all?

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Becs Gentry: Yes.

00:44:29
Rob Simmelkjaer: How have you managed to do that? It would seem hard to do, but maybe with some of the settings on the treadmill, what have you done to integrate this trail running-

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, good question.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... into your classes?

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Becs Gentry: We might get some hate mail from this.
No, it's... The crew-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Really crazy hills on the incline?

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Becs Gentry: Really crazy hills, essentially.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Like 20 degrees?

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Becs Gentry: No. Our Peloton Tread+ goes up to 15% and our other tread goes up to 12.5%. So there are maximum inclines on our hardware. And that if you're on a different piece of hardware, I can't tell you what it goes up to.

But yes, I have my Becs' Beast crew and they are down for it. And I always, always let everybody know at the start of my training cycle ahead of it, I'm like, "You know when I'm training, you're training because it's just how it's going to be. I'm going to get more jazzed by programming because I'm so excited by what I'm training that I want to share things with you guys and it's going to creep into my classes and it's going to be really fun." So at the head of this year, I said, "I'm training for trail races. They're mountainous. They are going to require me to be running on incline a lot. Not all of my classes, but when we do it, we're going to do it right."

Yeah. Hill training is a form of speed work. So if you're looking to get faster, even on the flat road, you are going to benefit from doing hill training, full stop. It makes you a more efficient runner. It actually can improve your form. It can improve your stride. All things that a flat roadrunner needs and should want to get better at. A lot of people hate it because it's uncomfortable and we're humans and we don't like to put ourselves in uncomfortable positions. It's just where you want to take your journey. But my Peloton classes have been hilly, that's for sure.

00:46:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: What's the feedback from people been? Are people liking this? Are you getting people on the tread with you at Peloton who are like, "You know what? I think I want to try this trail thing and put some of this hill work to use?"

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. We actually have a really big trail audience out there for Peloton because of our vast reach, especially in the United States.

Our membership is sprawled all over the country, so there are an awful lot of people who are training with us through the app, who are out in the likes of Arizona, Utah, those very, very traditional hilly trail running worlds and they're running outside, they're taking classes and it's just a natural thing for them to be on there. And then there's our city dwellers who have their treads in gyms or apartments who are all of a sudden finding themselves super strong. They're combining it with hikes, they're combining it with their speed work on the flat road and seeing benefits and thinking, "Oh, she's not wrong. This isn't just a ploy to get people to take more hills classes. It is actually working. And I'm seeing quantifiable results from utilizing the incline on the treadmill."

I just think it's tough. It is really tough. It's about understanding that... It's the true understanding, should I say, of forward is a pace. You just have to keep moving forward. You don't look at your pace. I taught a 45-minute hills run this morning and you cannot look at your pace if it is going to bother you. You just have to look at the clock. If you need to look at a clock, look at the ticking of the clock, of the duration of the class passing by and the incline. They're the only numbers you need to see. As long as you are just keeping tracking up that hill, I don't care whether you're walking, jogging, or running. We're getting up it. And that is my ethos.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: (inaudible) .

I can't help it. We always ask this question when we're talking about running in these events. What's next, Becs? What do you think-

00:48:22

Becs Gentry: What is next?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... is next for you?

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Becs Gentry: She's going to keep going higher.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Is there something you're... You don't have to, right? But maybe you do. You're Becs Gentry. So I have a feeling there's something you probably have on your mind.

What do you think is next for you in this world?

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Becs Gentry: I have a very big race at the end of August, which I'm still keeping close to my chest because that's just how I roll. I like to keep the pressure in a very tight-knit nucleus of people so it's not too heavy on my shoulders.

Running is Russian roulette. You know that, Rob, so well. You can go out for what seems like an easy, very simple run and you can damage yourself and injury can come out of seemingly nowhere and you're sidelined. So I think that's why I keep a lot of this racing specifics to myself because if that does happen, there's only a few people that I'm going to feel like I've let down other than myself.

I've said very openly, it's a race in Europe at the end of August, people can probably decipher it if they want to, but it's going to be a lot of training. Luckily, as I said, I have the Appalachian Trail on my doorstep. It's very technical, but I can practice the climbing uphill, and I have a fantastic piece of hardware and my bounce on tread that I'm spending an awful lot of time with my head grazing my basement ceiling right now because it's going so high.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Lastly, Becs, what's your advice to someone listening to this who maybe they're a regular roadrunner, maybe they're running roadrunners races all the time who's curious about this space? What's a good way to try this out?

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Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh.

Really and truly, find a location that you want to run in. That would be my first bet because you're going to enjoy it more. If you're thinking like, "Okay, I'd really like to go to the Pocono and run a trail race up in the Pocono Mountains," or "I want to go to Northern California and run a race in Northern California."

And then from there, go and have a look at what races there are coming up on the dates that suit you. Most trail races have those multi-duration, multi-distance options. A lot of them start at 25K, which is such a weird distance when you come from road racing because you're like, "Well, there's not a half-marathon. It's not a full marathon. It's just really weird." 25K, but that's how it is. It's 25K, it's 50K, 100K, and 100 miles. They're generally the distances that they'll offer.

I think the 25K is generally a really lovely starting point to the trail world, because you get just enough time out there to get the lactic acid building in those legs and

those lungs and then you are done. You're like, " Okay, well, that was great. I don't need to take a full meal with me in my pack." You probably won't need to take poles. You probably won't be required to carry a liter of water, for example, which adds weight to you. It's a little bit more of a soft launch into that world if you've never done it before. But yeah, check it out.

And then a lot of these places, if you drink or don't drink, they have fantastic scenery. There's a lot of vineyards or brewhouses in these trail running areas. So there's a lot to see and a lot of them are these old... In the U. S., I think there's a lot of mining towns and things like that because of where they are proximity in nature to what nature used to provide for us in our day-to-day life. So there's a lot to see and experience. So make it something for you that's not just about the running.

00:51:55

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. I love it.

Becs, congrats. I'm so psyched to hear you're doing this and loving this, and you've found a new way to love running in a totally different way. But you know what? Again, you say it all the time. Forward is a pace and you found a new way forward.

00:52:14

Becs Gentry: Yes. Thank you.

00:52:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: This was so much fun. I got to know you a little better with this once. I learned things about you I did not know. I'm sure listeners did as well. And so excited for you.

So excited for everybody who finished the RBC Brooklyn Half this past weekend. Maybe some of them will hear this and go find a half in the woods somewhere. I think that sounds like a lot of fun, but I think I might do it myself. I want to go check that out, but it's been awesome.

00:52:41

Becs Gentry: Absolutely.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you for sharing all of this and that's it for this episode of Set the Pace. Again, congrats to everybody who ran Brooklyn. We'll see everybody out there in a race coming up soon. We're going into our busy season now, Becs.

00:52:54

Becs Gentry: Oh, yeah.

00:52:54

Rob Simmelkjaer: June's busy. We think we're marathon and with the halves, but we got a lot going on in Brooklyn. We've got Achilles, we've got Front Runners, and the Pride Run. We've got the Mastercard mini 10K. We've got the Queens, Citizens Queens 10K. So we just got a very busy month-

00:53:11

Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh.

00:53:11

Rob Simmelkjaer: ... of running coming at us and-

00:53:13

Becs Gentry: The best.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, that's a lot.

00:53:14

Becs Gentry: The best.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's a lot.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Thanks for joining us. See you next time. Enjoy the miles.