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Patina Miller: In my career, if I work really hard, I can get the things that I want. That's how I've lived my life. If I train hard, if I work on my voice, if I train my body up enough, I can get on stage and I can be there eight shows a week. At some point I will do better and at some point I will get the role and someone will say yes.

So I brought all of those things to running like, you know what? I'm going to train right, I'm going to try and get my nutrition right. I'm going to do all these things and that's going to take me to the place that I need to go.

00:00:34

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, everybody, and welcome to another episode of Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners, presented by Peloton. I am your host and the CEO of New York Road Runners, Rob Simmelkjaer. And joined again from across that little thing called the Atlantic Ocean by my friend and Peloton instructor, Becs Gentry, who's back in her homeland of the United Kingdom, joining us from London. Hello, Becs. How is London treating you?

00:01:01

Becs Gentry: Good afternoon. It's fantastic. It's gray and slightly chilly, a little bit drizzly, not meaning to take anything away from what feels like the face of the sun apparently in New York, but London is divine.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Gray and drizzly sounds amazing from a running point of view, not from a beach-going point of view so much or a pool-going point of view. And we don't want to give that up because it is summer and we love those things. But from a running point of view, 50s and drizzly sounds really nice.

00:01:33

Becs Gentry: So very, very good. Yep, I'm excited to be here, reclaiming the miles on my stomping grounds that were eight years ago and longer. It's been pretty cool. Though I will say I thought New York roads were very uneven and pothole-y. And I'm so mistaken. They are, but we don't often run on the roads unless it's a race. The sidewalks are a lot better than the pavements here in New York because they're so old here that they're all higgledy-piggledy everywhere and you're just like... The amount of times I've nearly gone and rolled my ankle because it's just old that I'm like, "Huh, I'm going to start to appreciate New York a little bit more right now."

00:02:16

Rob Simmelkjaer: Higgledy- piggledy, that is clearly a British term. Only a Brit would say that, but I get it. That's why I've tried to run on the cobblestones of places like Paris before and my ankles, which are prone to turning, not a thing. Not a thing for me.

00:02:32

Becs Gentry: It's rough. It's rough.

00:02:32

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it, I love it. Glad you're enjoying yourself in your homeland. Well, back here in New York, Becks, we had an incredible weekend this past weekend, not one but two amazing events. We launched our first ever Start Line Series in Queens on Saturday. This was, to remind everybody, a free two- and- a- half- mile run. It was untimed, unscored, open to all paces, and we produced in a partnership the New York City Department of Transportation and their Summer Streets program.

And it was so great. We had so many runners come out. About 600 folks came out and started this free race. So many of them were first- time runners. They ran down Vernon Boulevard and it was just awesome to see this, to see so many young people and new runners out there. So it was great. We were thrilled at how this went as a first- time event and we're going to be doing this again August 23rd in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. So anybody out there, you're new to running, you just want to go have a fun run, car- free tour of Crown Heights, go to New York Road Runner's website, nyrr.org, and we will drop a link in the show notes as well. Sign up. I will be there for that one and I cannot wait to see that event happen again because it was really a successful first- time event for us. And there's spaces available, they're not sold out, so sign up, show up and we hope to see everybody out there,

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Becs Gentry: Rob, tell me, is it all day or morning? What's the schedule?

00:04:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: The race happens first thing in the morning so that we can get the folks down and have their run and then we give the streets back to everybody else who's going to be strolling for the day. So on these hot summer days, morning is the way to go anyway, as we both know.

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Becs Gentry: So true. Oh my gosh, get down there everybody.

00:04:20

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. Yeah, so very happy about that. And then the next day, Becs, was our New York Road Runners Team Championships Five-Miler, always a big day in Central Park for all the club runners out there. And again it was-

00:04:32

Becs Gentry: Looked pretty cool.

00:04:33

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, these are some of the most hardcore dedicated runners in our New York City running community and they had a great day. The individual results, I'll name out, I'll call a few names. Felicia Pasadyn, she's been an incredible runner, kind of a new discovery in the New York Running Circuit. She won the women's side with a time of 26:43. She's from the new club of 212 Athletic. You might remember Felicia also won the Brooklyn Half. The non-binary winner was Jacob Caswell at 28:30 from Front Runners New York. And on the men's side it was Ryan Kutch from Central Park Track Club, Tracksmith with a time of 23:43. Congrats to those individual winners. And on the team side, the women's team was Central Park Track Club. Non-binary, Front Runners New York. And the men's winning team was Brooklyn Track Club. So hope everybody had a great day at the team championships. Sorry I missed it, it's such a fun day. I'll be there next year for sure because I love that event and hope everybody had a great, great day.

All right, Becs. We are here taping in the last week of July. And as I talked about last week, I am running the Bank of America Chicago Marathon. By the way, I did not mention, as I should have done last week, that I am running again to support Team for Kids. You'll hear later in the show our guest today, Patina Miller, talking about her role as a mentor for our Run for the Future program. That's one of the many amazing community and youth programs we have at New York Road Runners that benefit from the funds raised for Team for Kids.

So of course, as the CEO of New York Road Runners, I'm running to benefit Team for Kids and would love your support. I need your support, we need your support. The link to my personal Team for Kids fundraising page is in the show notes, so please check it out and I would really love and appreciate everybody's support.

And then speaking of support, Becks, there's the support I'm going to need to try to not only finish this marathon but also try to accomplish my goal of running a Boston qualifying time of three hours and 30 minutes. And right now, I'm just kind of still working to build that base. I

ran 14 miles over the weekend as my long run, so that was good. That's actually probably a little ahead of schedule, right?

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Becs Gentry: I think you're going to be fantastic. Sub 3: 30, we're looking at what? A sub just around a 7: 25 pace, I think is what we're looking at maybe.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Slower actually. I think if I get it done on the mile side it's more like a just under eight minute pace. Yeah, which is-

00:07:15

Becs Gentry: Just under eight minute pace, yeah.

00:07:16

Rob Simmelkjaer: Which is where I've been. That's really where I've been as a runner for a while. As I was joking with you last week, I haven't gotten a lot faster as a runner over the years, but I've also not gotten slower. My times have stayed kind of the same.

00:07:32

Becs Gentry: I like that and that means that the only way is up when it comes to this next race. So I've sort of juggled it around for Rob. He's going to be peaking at about a 22-mile-long run around a month away from the race. And we're going to do drop-down. So I do love to do that for my runners, is I don't like it to be always a consistent build all the way up to that longest run and then the drop-down to the race because especially, I'm going to say this out loud, don't hate me, but for older runners, we want to get up, I include myself in this category now, we want to get up to those larger mileage weeks before the race, have a drop-down to let the body recover, and to highlight anything that we may need to work on and then we'll have the chance to work on before we peak back up for the race.

So that's how Rob's training is going to look. It's going to have a little drop-down relatively soon because he's already out that 14 mile mark. We'll probably go up to 20, drop you back down, and then you'll work your way back up to 22 before the race. And he is going to be doing some speed work, my friends, because if you've been on the East Coast, you know this summer has been brutally hot and humid and sticky and everybody I speak to, Austin is training for Berlin and he's struggling with speed work. He's just really... Long runs of speed work are suffering.

So it's about getting on your tread, ideally a Peloton tread. I'm going to get you into my classes and we're going to do some speed work, just some... It doesn't have to be complicated. It does not have to be overly fast, okay? Simple workouts doesn't mean it's an easy workout, a simple workout, repetitions, getting your cardiovascular capacity increased and strong in air conditioning is good. So for my treadmill haters out there, I'm sorry, but you may have to suck it up this summer because there's goals and there's stubbornness. So all I have to say on that matter.

00:09:33

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it makes sense, the treadmill angle, Becks. And I actually went out this morning and got on a treadmill just to try to do a few mile repeats at a good pace and I don't know, there's something going on with my speed ability right now that just is off.

And it's weird actually between a workout and a race. And I'm sure people out there can relate to this. I struggled this morning to do a couple of mile repeats, like one mile and then a break and one mile and a break, at a time that is a time I ran a four-mile race in June at, I think it was about 6:40- something per mile. So I rattled off four straight miles in Central Park at the pace that I cannot now reproduce on a treadmill for one mile. So something is going on and I think it's probably a mix of weather exhaustion and just some mental fatigue that I may be having as well because it is not happening for me right now.

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Becs Gentry: No, and you're right, it's fatigue. It's also, we talk about comparison being the thief of joy when we compare ourselves to other people, but we do have to bear in mind that comparison to our other self, our older self, our past self is included in that statement. So yes, you could do it, you can do it again, but right now there's a lot of other factors, external, internal, that are affecting you. Also, one mile on the tread is a while for repeats, so I think (inaudible) -

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Too much maybe. Yeah.

00:11:01

Becs Gentry: Yeah, (inaudible) too long. I like to think if we're a distance-based, distance-driven runner, when we come to the tread, we delete that and we go to the other variable, which is time. And we sit into something else because we're too used to distance outside. We know how it should, I'm air quoting for those of you who aren't watching

us, should be feeling. So we switch it to time and we'll start doing some four-minute repeats on the tread. So it puts into its own category instead of mileage, which is so, so familiar outside, but-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I like it.

00:11:32

Becs Gentry: ... you've got this, we've got this. Chicago's going to be yours. Boston's going to be yours. I've got (inaudible) -

00:11:37

Rob Simmelkjaer: Becs, thank you. I'm going to need this pep talk. Hope everybody else gets something out of this as well. Hopefully all of you running New York out there can listen to all of this. And I'll be obviously a few weeks ahead of all of you, so hopefully you can work some of that into your TCS New York City Marathon training as well.

All right, Becs, we've got an incredible guest on today's podcast, a star of the silver screen as well as the stages of Broadway and a TCS New York City Marathon two-time finisher. She's been a Tony and Grammy Award winner. Patina Miller will join us today on Set the Pace and I cannot wait to talk to this incredible woman. She sang the national anthem for the 2023 TCS New York City Marathon and then just walked right downstairs to the starting line and ran the thing.

00:12:30

Becs Gentry: (inaudible) .

00:12:29

Rob Simmelkjaer: And I haven't seen her since she did that, so we will catch up and I can't wait to have a conversation with one of the great stars that we have in our New York City running community.

Then a little bit later on, for today's member moment, Meb's going to interview Leanna Scaglione, the 2025 National Ambassador for the Children's Tumor Foundation, who's training to take on the 2025 Berlin Marathon. And Becs, we might be in the middle of a heat wave, but tens of thousands of runners have their eyes on the fall because we're only 13 weeks away from the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. That's 13 weeks, we're inside of 100 days.

00:13:10

Becs Gentry: (inaudible) 100 days. I saw that New York Road Runners social post the other day and nearly fell off my

chair. How? It's come around so fast.

00:13:18

Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, it's a milestone we all mark at New York Road Runners because now we've got to start putting our game faces on and getting ready for that big day. Well, we know the runners out there are doing the same and so today we're launching a special TCS New York City Marathon Meb Minute series where Meb Keflezighi will count down the miles to the finish line in Central Park. We're going to start today at the start, for Meb's advice at the beginning of the race, miles one and two of the TCS New York City Marathon. Many of you know the highest point in the marathon is mile one on the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge. So stay tuned for Meb a little bit later in the show, as he'll start getting you ready for the 26.2 mile TCS New York City Marathon.

00:14:02

Becs Gentry: 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 Road Runners.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You might know her as the powerhouse lead from musicals like Sister Act and Pippin, as well as Into the Woods, or maybe you remember her best as Commander Paylor in the Hunger Games, Daisy Grant in Madam Secretary, or as Raquel Thomas in Raising Kanan. But today's guest, Patina Miller, isn't just a Tony Award and Grammy Award-winning actor, she is also a runner and a pretty good one at that. She has finished the TCS New York City Marathon a couple of times and just ran the 2025 TCS London Marathon in pursuit of her Six Star Medal in the Abbott World Marathon Majors. Patina's other roles include mother and this summer she added the role mentor as well, serving as a mentor for the 2025 cohort of our Run for the Future program at New York Road Runners. Patina Miller, this is an honor and a pleasure to have you on Set the Pace. Welcome.

00:15:40

Patina Miller: Oh my God, it is an honor to be here. Thank you so much for having me.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Patina, you and I first met, we are chatting before we hit record on the podcast, at the starting line of the 2023 TCS New York City Marathon where you came to sing the national anthem and did so spectacularly, of course, as you would. And then I think you must be the only person ever to do this, I can't prove it, but to then, after singing the anthem, go down and run the TCS New York City Marathon and do it pretty well also with a time of just around four hours.

And that, I guess, kind of sums up the magic that is Patina Miller. It's incredible that you are able to pull that off. So how? How did you do it that day? How'd you sing and then run? I guess maybe the running was harder than the singing, but you tell me.

00:16:35

Patina Miller: Looking back, there were some things I'd do a little different. I would probably not run straight away. I just didn't know that the vibes are just so strong that after getting off of the podium and singing the anthem and thanking God that I knew all the words because when you're so nervous, you're like, "Please don't let me flub." Everybody knows the anthem. Am I going to flub a line? I'm worried about my pacing, I'm worrying about, I hope it's not too hot. All these things are going on in my head and then to sing, get through it and then be ushered to get in there, it was a lot. But I'm so happy it set me up to have a great first part of my race, which I was really, really happy about.

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Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh. Well, I think that is a warmup like no one else has ever-

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Patina Miller: (inaudible) .

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Becs Gentry: As a running coach for a very long time, I have never even thought about the benefits of doing a diaphragmatic warmup only really to get you to get your lungs, to get your breathing ready. But clearly, as you said, it set you up for the first half, you said there.

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Patina Miller: Yes.

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Becs Gentry: (inaudible) on the other half. Fill us in.

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Patina Miller: Well, I think all the vibes. I think everybody always talks about the energy and don't get swept up in the energy, but I was like, "You know what? I just was on stage and I was singing the anthem and everybody's here." I'm watching these elite runners get ready and just being so up close to all of that. And then seeing everybody, all different colors, shapes, sizes out there, so excited to run. I was excited too. I was so excited to come back in 2023. I had not the best race my first race in 2022, so I was just so excited by the vibes of people and everyone just putting it all out there at like 7:00 AM in the morning. And I got swept up in it. And then halfway through, reality did set in. It did.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, that Pulaski Bridge can really wake you up.

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Patina Miller: What? Reality set in, it was like, "Oh, I have to work. Oh, I have strategy." Bring it back to the strategy, what are we going to do? I really had to lock in.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, I got to just point out some of your times because your improvement from '22 to '23 was remarkable in the marathon. Now, we all know 2022 was a really hard year to run. The weather was difficult. We all know that. You ran it in 4:41:30. And you shaved 41 minutes off your time in 2023, so maybe the second half was a struggle for you. You did have one of those dreaded just over an hour mark times. We know those are frustrating. Four hours and 36 minutes.

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Patina Miller: What? So frustrating.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Sorry, four hours and 36 seconds, I should say, 4:00:36. We know those are challenging times, but did you feel good about that race? And I guess it felt good enough to keep running, so that's good.

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Patina Miller: Every time. So it's so funny. Since I started my running journey, the process of training is always hard and there are moments during the training process, not... I'm filming a TV show, that's really hard. And I'm a mother

coming home doing all these things. And the training process was really great for me because it gave me time to myself where I wasn't a character. Still mom, but in a different way.

But to then finally get to the race that you've prepared for and to lock in, you've trained, to get to the point of like you know what? In my career, if I work really hard, I can get the things that I want. That's how I've lived my life. If I train hard, if I work on my voice, if I train my body up enough, I can get on stage and I can be there eight shows a week. If I practice my lines, if I really study with my acting coach, then at some point I will do better and at some point I will get role and someone will say yes.

So I brought all of those things to running like you know what? I'm going to train right, I'm going to try and get my nutrition right. I'm going to do all these things and that's going to take me to the place that I need to go. Especially, since the year before, Crash and Burn had all these things. So I got really excited for all of the tools that I had in my tool belt.

But to get so close to my little sub-four dream, it was crushing. But then I said, "You know what? You shaved off all that time off of your marathon and you worked so hard and you were so smart." And to get out there and do it again and say yes again, to be frightened and scared again, but so excited. When I went across that finish line, I was just so proud of myself. I was.

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Becs Gentry: Good. So you should be, and that comes from somebody who is a something, something (inaudible) one person are a lot of the most recent races I have run. I seem to have that, well, I can't get faster than that one second over.

But anyway, let's take it back to 2022. As we said, that was your first New York Road Runners race was the 2022 TCS New York City Marathon. It was a brutally humid day, it was just ugh. Everybody struggled that day, for sure. So you weren't alone in feeling that disbelief at the, I don't know, 24 mile marker. I remember seeing a lot of faces of like, you know what, no, I don't want to do the last two. (inaudible) did.

But let's talk about what else you were doing at that time because your life outside of training to run a marathon, which is gigantic, was you were in the middle of your run of Into the Woods, eight shows a week. Mom. Not just working a bit more, you're performing sometime on Broadway. It's nuts. So how? How, Patina, did you fit everything in? What was your schedule?

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Patina Miller: Well, first off, I relied on my community at home, my husband, my beautiful teenage nieces who would sort of serve as babysitters for me. I had amazing coaches, I trained with really cool people and my friends.

And I would not back out. Once I got into the Woods, I had already signed up for the marathon and I was like, "You know what, no, I'm going to keep... I'm not going to back out. I know it's going to be hard. It's eight shows a week. I don't know where I'm going to find the time to train, but I'm going to do it."

And I loved the experience of being in Into the Woods and I always say being on Broadway, it's like being an athlete. It's like a marathon because you're doing it over and over and over again every night. So I knew that I was set up for success if I paced myself in the journey of before I go to the theater, what am I doing in the mornings? How can I fit my runs in? Do I fit them on a two show day? Do I run in between shows? And I did that. I did that a lot. I remember my cast members being like, "What are you doing? This is crazy."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: So you would run between a matinee and the show at night?

00:24:00

Patina Miller: Yes.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Patina Miller: Yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's amazing.

00:24:01

Patina Miller: You know what? It was actually really great because a lot of times when you're doing a show where you have to be all over the stage and it's so high intense, it's like two hours and 30 minutes of a lot of emotion. To kind of have to do it over again, if you stop, that's where the trouble starts. Your voice starts to get tired, your body starts to get tired. So for me, picking up and running in between shows was kind of like a nice little energy burst that would carry me to the next show. After the last show, different story.

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Becs Gentry: (inaudible) .

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Patina Miller: Terrible idea. I remember thinking that was a terrible idea.

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Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's so interesting to hear this and I remember hearing Patina's stories about Taylor Swift and you probably heard about this, during her tour-

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Patina Miller: (inaudible) .

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And when she was preparing and training for that tour, the Eras Tour, she was on the treadmill. And she was running on the treadmill and singing the songs while on the treadmill to build that, I guess the lung capacity and the endurance. So I imagine you can relate to that. It sounds to me like running really does complement what you're doing as a live performer.

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Patina Miller: Oh my god, yes. There's a lot of memorization that happens. There's a lot of thinking about your character and really just having those moments to really lock in and think about your character, think about the lyrics. Sondheim is not easy. So for me, running and the repetition of just the beat of running, you know what I mean? And having to do the Witch's Rat, which is very fast and it's like beans, beans, nothing but beans. All of these different syncopations of that I kind of used with the running as well. So when I'm out there, I wasn't just training for the mileage, but I was also, my memorization and figuring out my blocking and it became very visual for me to just zone out and think about the work.

And even for my character that I played on TV, because midway through that run and training I started my third thing, which was filming for Raising Kanan during that time. So I had to use running as a way to do it all.

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Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Patina Miller: If that makes any sense.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It does. It does. It's fascinating. I just have to ask this one question though. Do you run with music when all this is going on in your life? Or it sounds like maybe you run to silence, but the music of your shows is going through your head. What's happening there?

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Patina Miller: So during Into the Woods, I definitely would run in silence, for sure. I always started the run because I just needed the motivation. I did not want to be singing Into the woods when I started the run, just to get into it. But halfway through, I would turn the music off or turn it down and I just start reciting my lines or reciting lyrics from the show because we didn't have a lot of time. The transfer from City Center, if you were a newbie to Broadway, was like two and a half weeks. So we had to learn, a lot of the new people had to learn the entire show.

Thankfully, I had known the show from when I did it in 2019. But there were a lot of things I had to memorize and get ready for our production on Broadway. So I had limited time to really lock in and focus, and running definitely helped.

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Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh. So alongside all of these elements of your life, just throwing challenges at you, you're physical in so many different ways. Both of your marathons you've run though for a cause, which I'm guessing gives you that extra impetus to keep going when the days are tough. And you decided to support the charity Komera. And it works with young women in Rwanda and it's a beautiful, beautiful cause. So just tell our listeners, why is this charity specifically important to you to make your races feel like it's a bigger purpose?

00:28:10

Patina Miller: So when I was searching for what I... I told my trainer at the time, I was like, "Well, you know what? If I'm signing up," because she's like, "What's your birthday? It'd be so great to run a marathon." And I was like, "Would it?" I was like, "But I need to run for a cause, I need to run for something and I want to be very specific about what I want to run for."

And women and children, that's always something that's really important to me. I've been so blessed and fortunate in my

journey to have really great mentors in my life that changed the trajectory of my life. So when I was deciding on what charities to support, I wanted to really find one that really spoke to me.

And this one spoke to me. It was about advocating for young women in Rwanda and using the gift and the beauty of running to arm these girls with the necessary tools to be their best selves. And a lot of the money we raised, I loved it, it was sending women to college for a year. And this was like \$1,000 could send a girl there for four years of college. So I really felt like I was making a difference in my own small way of raising money and just thinking what it meant to those women.

And all of the people who serve on that charity and the work that they've done, they love it so much. Being able to have the resources to talk about the different issues and then being able to speak to the girls and figure out what they're doing, who graduated, it was a lot of joy and it really kept me going because it did get dark. It always gets dark when you're training and so to run 26.2 miles, it had to be for something important. And I always try to use my platform for things that I believe in, things that... Just try and find ways to make a difference in my own little way. And through my platform, I was able to do that with running. So yeah, running for a cause is always great.

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Becs Gentry: (inaudible) .

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Patina, your origin story is interesting. You grew up in South Carolina, small town. And like a lot of young performers, you realized, it sounds like your mother also realized at a young age that you had some talent and you left home to go, at 15 years old you left home to go attend a performing arts high school. Where was that?

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Patina Miller: That was in Greenville, South Carolina. It was the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. And that is really, it's a young age to leave home. It sounds like you kind of knew from a young age this is what you were meant to do, right? Is that fair? And how has that-

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Patina Miller: Yeah, it's very fair.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: How has that evolved for you now being in New York? It's happened. You're one of those people, you meet people in life who are still figuring out what they want to be at like... Lots of us, right?

00:31:09

Patina Miller: Yeah.

00:31:09

Rob Simmelkjaer: 20- something, 30- something, 40- something, right? Still trying to figure it out.

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Patina Miller: For sure.

00:31:13

Rob Simmelkjaer: And I'm always interested what it's like to be one of those people who knows at such a young age what you want to be and then you just have to work and execute, as you have done.

00:31:26

Patina Miller: Yeah, it was a dream. Early in my life, I knew I always wanted to perform and I didn't know how that was going to happen. So whenever we found this school, it felt just like, oh my God, I have to go. The dream in some ways became a little bit of reality. There was a place that I could go and train and I could be with professionals and they would teach me all the necessary things to go to this next level.

So when I got in, I know what I was doing. The first time I auditioned to get into the school, I remember going to the library and looking at plays and that was the first time I had ever had read a monologue. And I just remember just doing it and my mom encouraged me to do it and to memorize it and to sign up and I was like, "You know what? Yeah, okay, I'm going to do this. I really want to be an actress. Who knows if I'm good enough to get into this school, but I'm just going to do it."

And I did it and I got in and it changed my life. I got to experience a world that I did not know I could have. To go to the school for free, being in South Carolina where the arts unfortunately are not as appreciated as it should. And that's a lot of places, arts programming is always the first to be taken out. The arts is what saved me in a way. And this dream became a bigger reality after being there and learning about different schools and schools that I could go to continue my training to finally maybe make it

on Broadway or maybe do a show.

And to get, I got a full scholarship to Carnegie Mellon. I was one of 12 in my musical theater class. And I said when I got there I was going to work my butt off. I was going to do everything I needed to do to learn the things that I needed and I was going to do it. Nobody could stop me at that point. It's like I'm going to make this happen one way or the other. And I just am so thankful, so thankful through hard work, dedication, a lot of nos, but also some really great opportunities and some yes, some yeses in my life that it transformed and changed my life.

00:33:50

Rob Simmelkjaer: Becks, listening to Patina, there's so many parallels you can draw with running and the trajectory that one has to take to be successful. All those setbacks, all the challenges, all the nos, as you put it. And Becks, we can all relate to that in a way through running, right? And the days maybe our body says no instead of some casting director.

00:34:12

Becs Gentry: (inaudible) all of it, there are. There are so many nos. But Patina, you touched on it earlier when we talked about the plethora of things that I feel like is constantly going on in your life. You're a yes person, you are someone with what appears to be a really, really strong work ethic, somebody who wants to succeed and share your success and your journey with others. But you are a big family person as well and having your lovely nieces around to babysit your daughter when she was younger. But you didn't do your marathon solo, right? I understand that your-

00:34:55

Patina Miller: Did not.

00:34:55

Becs Gentry: ... husband, David, he ran it with you as well?

00:34:57

Patina Miller: He did. He did.

00:34:58

Becs Gentry: How did that go? Because sometimes the husband, wife, partners running can get a little bit...

00:35:09

Patina Miller: Well, yeah, you know. It was back and forth. We had some really... The long runs were really great. Sometimes the long runs are really great, sometimes the long runs were

like, " Okay, you go run there, I'm going to go run here."

But what I love about my husband is he loves to push me. And when I get so caught up and I don't feel like I can do it, he's the one in my ear like, " You got it, just keep going, just keep going." Meanwhile, he's over there suffering too, but he'd never let me know.

So the first year, the hot year that we both had, he just jumped into training at 16 weeks. He was just like, " Oh, I'll run, I'll run with you." And yeah, who does that? I was so jealous first.

And then he runs with me and I start getting cramps and I'm like, " I don't know if I can do it." We would stop every at every water and he would massage my cramp, he would massage my leg and we continued, we continued. And then we'd go another 10 minutes and I'm like, " I can't, I can't do it." He'd get down there, we'd move off to the side, he'd be massaging my legs. So this poor man for 13 miles, we stop, start, he massaged me.

So yeah, we may, could get a little testy, but he is definitely my ride or die in terms when it comes to running. We try to run our races together, we try to push each other, like all things. It's never perfect. There could be a little, " You go over there, you don't run with me today and I don't want it," but at the end of the day we have such a good time running.

00:36:52

Becs Gentry: That is (inaudible) .

00:36:54

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, a partner who will give you a massage when you need one in the middle of a race, like, hey-

00:36:58

Patina Miller: Middle of the race.

00:36:58

Rob Simmelkjaer: You can't beat that.

00:36:58

Patina Miller: Come on now.

00:37:00

Rob Simmelkjaer: That is legit partnership right there.

00:37:04

Becs Gentry: It's so, so cute for your daughter to see as well. Oh, maybe you not see it, but hear about mom and dad.

00:37:09

Patina Miller: Yes. Yes.

00:37:09

Becs Gentry: Mom and dad are like the ultimate team goal right there.

00:37:13

Patina Miller: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Now she runs. She ran her first two miles on Sunday.

00:37:17

Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, nice.

00:37:18

Patina Miller: It was great, she's like (inaudible) and she was like, "I want to do it." So she ran two miles. It was hilarious. She was so proud.

00:37:26

Becs Gentry: (inaudible) congratulations mama. That is so good.

00:37:28

Patina Miller: It was fun. It was really, really fun.

00:37:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: We got to see her in one of our Road Runners Youth Races hopefully very soon.

00:37:34

Patina Miller: Oh, you will. On her birthday, she'll be running for the Percy Sutton. Yeah, she's going to be running.

00:37:39

Rob Simmelkjaer: Amazing. That's fantastic.

00:37:39

Becs Gentry: The Harlem 5K. Yoo-hoo.

00:37:39

Patina Miller: Yeah.

00:37:39

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, that is awesome.

00:37:39

Becs Gentry: Oh, fantastic.

00:37:39

Rob Simmelkjaer: And you-

00:37:39

Becs Gentry: And you've been coaching.

00:37:47

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, exactly.

00:37:49

Patina Miller: Well, trying. She likes to do her own thing. She's a Leo, so she thinks she has it all worked out. She's like, "I got this. I got this."

So she's excited to run for us like you know what, it's not a heavy lift. You're not going to run the 5K. They said for the kids, I think for your birthday it would be really fun, doing to her what my trainer did to me about signing up for a race on my birthday. I was like, "It'd be so fun." She's like, "Yeah, it'd be so fun. I think I'd like to do it."

00:38:23

Rob Simmelkjaer: It'll be great. It'll be great. We love it.

00:38:24

Patina Miller: Yeah, it'd be fun.

00:38:24

Rob Simmelkjaer: And it's not just your daughter that you are inspiring to run. You are, as I mentioned at the top, serving as a mentor for our Run for the Future program, which, for those who don't know, is a program for high school aged girls who really haven't been runners before and they get trained and mentored into running their very first 5K. And what a mentor for them to have, Patina, to have someone like you, a Broadway star show up.

What was that like? You just were with that group a few days ago as we taped this podcast. What was that like for you? And I'm curious, what did you see in their faces as this Broadway star shows up to tell them about running and help lead them on one of their first training runs?

00:39:11

Patina Miller: Well, I was just so excited to be there. I was so excited to have the opportunity to serve in that capacity. And I thought, "If I could just share some words of wisdom, some words of encouragement." I know what it's like to start something that's scary. Something that's so scary you don't think that you'd ever be able to do it.

So I just love the fact that they all decided on their own that they wanted to take on a journey of running a 5K. And that's not an easy thing to do. You know what I mean?

Yeah, we can say running is easy, but to some it's not. And for me, that wasn't my case. It was scary for me when I first started, so I just wanted to get there to just lock eyes with some of them, take it all in, look at it like, "Oh, I was there."

I wish I would've had something like this younger to get started with running even younger. But I was happy to be there that day and they were so excited. Some of them were terrified, some of them were like, their faces were like, "What did I get into? Why did I sign up for this?"

So to see that inside, to see the talk. I just talked to them about signing your why and why are you running? Why you want to do it. Congratulating them on starting and just sharing with them my own personal journey of starting to run and the freedom I feel when I run and the happiness I feel and the moment, the mental health capacity of it. I wanted to share that with them of how running makes me feel and how you can use it when you have frustrating times.

And being a young girl in high school can sometimes not be the easiest thing. A lot of them are starting their college journeys and they'll be thinking about all that. So to have this tool, to have this program with so many wonderful volunteers. There were so many cool people there, just there to just be there and serve as sort of a sounding board for them to help them through for that day.

And to get them out there and we started our run. My girl, who was so fierce, she's like... I was like, "Where do you want to go? In the front or the back?" And I'm thinking she's going to say like, "No, let's (inaudible) in the back." She's like, "Let's go to the front. Let's go to the front." So I'm like, "Okay, girl, it's a 5K. I just ran speed, let's..." I was like, "What are you trying to do?" And she's like, "I think I want to do it in 25 minutes."

00:41:37

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:41:37

Patina Miller: I was like, "Okay, track star." Now, she does run track.

00:41:47

Rob Simmelkjaer: Okay. Okay.

00:41:48

Patina Miller: She does run track and she's never done long distance and she's like, "I think I'm going to do 25 minutes." I was like, "Okay. Sure, it's a practice. Okay." I was like, "You sure? You want to start slow?" I kept saying, "Well, just remember we want to start slow to get faster." Trying to

think about you, Becs, think about all the running coaches like, "Let's start a little slower than we do it when we get out there."

And she's breathing, she has this, like I'm looking at her running and she's so chill, not afraid. She's just so confident in herself. She was running with her friend who had a coach as well and she just seemed so sure of herself. She knew she had a time. She listened to me, what I said like, "Let's start a little slower."

And I watched her breathing and this girl, it's hot as crap outside. She's using this technique where she didn't open, she didn't breathe through her mouth. She was just breathing through her nose and I was like, "What?" I was like, "Excuse me, so how do you do that?" I'm supposed to be mentoring her, but she was giving me tips. And we had the best time. She finished the run in like 25 minutes.

00:43:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:43:01

Patina Miller: Right. She said she wanted to and she's just so excited to run. So I saw that a lot in a lot of the girls finishing, it being tough from the start, but watching them come back, because we did kind of little run around. And watching them come back and the confidence that they had in their face, the relief of doing something that was hard, that's why I did it. That right there. And that's the reason that I will show up in any capacity I can for the program and I can't wait to run on August 9th.

00:43:32

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow. We really appreciate you being a part of it. What an amazing experience for these girls to run with you and get to learn from you. It's really a gift, so thank you for mentoring as part of that program.

Okay, before we let you go, I need to know, because runners like to ask each other, "What's next?" So I need to know what's next for you both as a runner, Patina, and also as an actor, what's coming up next?

00:44:00

Patina Miller: So what's coming up next right now is, so our final season finally, not our final season, the final season of Raising Kanan will be airing soon. I just finished up my run in the show this past April, which is amazing.

So I'm doing a lot of different things. I'm working on music right now that I am maybe releasing soon. I'm having some that artist thing of like is it good enough? And I'm working on an animated show called Hazbin Hotel, so that.

So I'm just kind of in the phase of working on a lot of different things. Coming off of a show, I've been on TV for 11 years, I've had this moment to kind of think about what I want to do next and just really think about it. Doing the TV work, I'd love to come back to Broadway in some way, shape, or form, whether that's producing or starring in something else.

But the next thing for me running-wise is I am going to be running the New York City Marathon one more time to try and get my sub-four.

00:45:10

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes. Patina, there are easier places to get your sub-four than New York City. Now, we want you to do it in New York.

00:45:18

Patina Miller: I know.

00:45:18

Rob Simmelkjaer: Trust me, we want it in New York. But you could go to Chicago. I hear you're going for the six stars, so there's Chicago, there's Berlin. It still counts, but it's not the same, of course, as doing it in New York.

00:45:30

Patina Miller: It's not.

00:45:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: So I applaud you and appreciate you for going for it in New York City because if you can do it, there's a saying, I think I heard once or twice, if you can-

00:45:40

Patina Miller: Do it here.

00:45:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: If you can do it there.

00:45:46

Becs Gentry: Perfect.

00:45:46

Patina Miller: Totally. Totally.

00:45:46

Becs Gentry: Perfect.

00:45:46

Patina Miller: Absolutely.

00:45:46

Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh my gosh.

00:45:46

Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh.

00:45:46

Rob Simmelkjaer: So great having-

00:45:46

Becs Gentry: Well, good, good, good luck for all of them. I can't wait to see your daughter shine on her birthday race.

00:45:57

Patina Miller: Thank you.

00:46:00

Becs Gentry: (inaudible) we'll be cheering you on so loud.

00:46:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, we'll see you in Harlem. I'll be there. Can't wait to see you there.

00:46:04

Patina Miller: Yes, you will. Thank you guys so much.

00:46:04

Rob Simmelkjaer: And keep after it. All right. Patina Miller, the one and only. Thank you very much, joining us here on Set the Pace.

00:46:11

Patina Miller: Take care.

00:46:13

Rob Simmelkjaer: New York Road Runners 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 well-being of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at nyrr.org/donate.

Leanna Scaglione began her athletic journey training to be a professional ballerina, but a series of major health challenges led to a diagnosis of neurofibromatosis during her teenage years. After multiple surgeries and learning to walk again, Leanna found a new athletic outlet in running, joining the CTF NF Endurance Team during the pandemic. 49 New York

Road Runners races later, Leanna is the 2025 National Ambassador for the Children's Tumor Foundation and is aiming for her fourth Abbott World Marathon Major Star at the 2025 Berlin Marathon.

00:47:18

Meb Keflezighi: Thanks, Rob. Great to have Leanna to the show, Set the Pace. How are you doing today?

00:47:24

Leanna Scaglione: I'm doing great. Thanks for having me.

00:47:26

Meb Keflezighi: Our pleasure. You start wanting to be a ballerina, but everything changed after the NF diagnosis. What do you remember most about that time?

00:47:35

Leanna Scaglione: That was probably one of the most difficult times in my life. I was one of those kids that had everything planned out when they were nine years old. I had everything planned for training, what ballet school I wanted to go to, college, what company I eventually wanted to audition for. So at 16, when I thought I was just injured, which any athlete can relate to as seeing as devastating, and finding out that it was more than an injury and it was actually a tumor, and then landing in a wheelchair and going from all this dancing to then nothing, I was lost. I didn't know where my life would go after that.

00:48:23

Meb Keflezighi: Amazing. How was your mental status after the surgery? You had to relearn how to walk. And what was the hardest part of the starting over? And what helped you keep going?

00:48:35

Leanna Scaglione: I was angry. I won't lie, I was very angry at that time. I truly felt like I went through the five stages of grief. I felt like I really lost something when I found out I couldn't pursue ballet professionally. So I really was angry, I was stubborn, and that really motivated me to get moving again because I didn't want to admit that things were changing for me. So I was doing everything in my power to hold onto that dream of being a ballerina. And fast-forward years later, I accept the fact that it's not going to happen and put my focus elsewhere.

00:49:22

Meb Keflezighi: Well, good for you not giving up and be able to

just persevere. You joined the NF Endurance Team after seeing another runner in the End NF shirt at the NYC Half Marathon. What was it like to realize you weren't alone on the course?

00:49:38

Leanna Scaglione: That experience, I take that as a sign from the universe because from when I was diagnosed back in 2007, when I was 16, up until 2022, which was my first half-marathon ever in my life, I also found out some pretty unfortunate news in regards to my NF. For all that time, I was what was considered a watch and wait patient, which means we're going to monitor whatever existing tumors you have, but we're not going to really do anything about them. And yes, I went on various drug trials to hopefully shrink them, but there was no urgency behind needing these trials to succeed or having to get surgery done.

And in 2022, I found out that I needed to go on another drug trial and I really needed it to work. So dealing with my NF, it started to change for me and I really had to acknowledge it a lot more and take on the responsibility of what was going to happen next in my life.

And I wasn't connected to the NF community. I was very much dealing with my NF all on my own. And seeing this runner up ahead of me with this shirt on that said, "End NF," on the back, it was a sign from the universe, like I said, saying, "The community's calling out to you. Follow this runner, see where they're going." And lo and behold, they were with Children's Tumor Foundation, they have a team for the New York City Half Marathon as well as the New York City Marathon and so far all of the other marathon majors, except for Boston so far. And it's just in my gut knew that this is where I needed to go and where I needed to belong.

00:51:36

Meb Keflezighi: Wow, incredible that you were in that race and you saw that sign and the universe helped you realize what you can do even more beyond yourself. Since you started running during the pandemics, have you noticed any ways that your approach to running, like how you train, how you deal with setbacks feel different because of the expectation with the illness and recovery?

00:51:58

Leanna Scaglione: It's definitely changed throughout the years with my running. When I first started during the pandemic, it was an escape for me to get outside of the four walls of my living room and just to get some air. And then joining New York Road Runners and participating in the races

in Central Park, it was really exhilarating. I felt like I found a hobby that I could really latch onto and enjoy and have that purpose again like I did with the ballet.

And when the things with my NF started to change and I was on a chemotherapy drug trial for 2022 to 2023 and then surgery for 2024 and now again on another immunotherapy treatment, it changed how I had to train for things. The side effects affected my heart rate, my breathing capabilities. And I just had to reflect on my abilities and be like, "Hey, you're still out here doing it. Yeah, you may not be going as fast as you typically do, but you're on a treatment and you just ran six miles. Give yourself some credit." So it definitely taught myself to listen to my body and just ease up on myself and be proud of the smaller moments and achievements that I was able to have.

00:53:31

Meb Keflezighi: Incredible. Leanna, you overcame so much obstacle. You might not have been the ballerina that you wanted to, but you're a true champion and you have overcome so many obstacles to be an ambassador for Children Tumor Foundation. We are so grateful to have you. But you also are aiming to be the first person with NF too to earn all six World Major Marathon Stars. What will that mean to you?

00:54:00

Leanna Scaglione: So I, taking it as a personal sense of I've defeated my NF. Unfortunately, there is no cure for any type of NF. There's three types, NF1, NF2-related schwannomatosis, which is what I have, and schwannomatosis. There's, like I said, no cure for any of them. Hopefully, science is moving forward in the direction to get a cure and that is what CTF's main focus is, is funding research so we can get there.

But being able to even get the six stars alone would just be an amazing personal achievement just for myself to show to myself that I defeated my NF in a way. But to be the first person to do it, I think would be incredible in a way to show the world what people with NF can do. And those of us who also have NF, to see that your life isn't bound by your diagnosis and you can live beyond it.

00:55:07

Meb Keflezighi: Pretty incredible story. Wish you all the best and thank for sharing your story here with us.

00:55:11

Leanna Scaglione: Thank you for having me. I'm so happy to be able to share with you.

00:55:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, thank you Meb and thank you Leanna for being a member of New York Road Runners. Now, it's time for the final part of our show, today's Meb Minute. And it's Meb's mile-by-mile countdown to the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. Today, Meb is here to kick us off with miles one and two.

00:55:33

Meb Keflezighi: Thanks, Rob. Welcome to my mile-by-mile countdown to the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. Mile one, a steady uphill climb, the start of Staten Island is cold and windy. (inaudible) the national anthem had just been played and it's the iconic views. Resist pushing too hard in this exhilarating crowd and climb. The Verrazzano Bridge is the highest point of the marathon route, but it's also an incredible view. Pace is not important, just climb up the hill nice and steady.

Mile two, a long downhill as you descend into Brooklyn. Great opportunity to shed layers and find a pace that disciplines to be able to be the best you can. Pace is irrelevant at this point because you're going down the hill. You just went uphill, now downhill pace is relevant, but enjoy the camaraderie of people above of the bridge, down the bridge. Just have fun.

00:56:36

Rob Simmelkjaer: And that does it for another episode of Set The Pace. We want to thank our incredible guest today, Patina Miller, along with our New York Road Runners member, Leanna Scaglione. If you liked the episode, make sure you rate it, subscribe, leave a comment, we'd love to hear from you, and of course that will help others find the show as well. Hope everybody has a great week. Beat the heat, enjoy the miles, and we'll see you next week.