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Selena Samuela: If someone was like, "Go through another twin pregnancy or run a marathon every single day, let's say a year." I would run the marathon every single day for a year. I swear to you, I would choose that.

00:00:14

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, the CEO of New York Road Runners, Rob Simmelkjaer, and Becs Gentry from Peloton with me as always. What's up, Becs?

00:00:29

Becs Gentry: Hi. How are we doing?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We're doing great.

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Becs Gentry: We're doing great. I'm full-on mom mode right now so that we might have a little guest appearance any second.

00:00:38

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, yeah.

00:00:38

Becs Gentry: Yeah, we're doing it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We are taping the day after Memorial Day and you're with the family at your home out of the city and it's got a little family time going on. I love it.

00:00:48

Becs Gentry: A little family time. Yeah. Popped into the studio this morning. The sun was shining and got my run done. So, we're here.

00:00:57

Rob Simmelkjaer: It was nice to see the sunshine on Tuesday after a bit of a rainy weekend, but you know what? We find a way to get it done. Hopefully everybody enjoyed that holiday. But Bec, we're wrapping up the month of May here before you know it.

00:01:09

Becs Gentry: Busy month.

00:01:10

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it flew by. I mean, of course we had busy month with the running and the RBC Brooklyn Half and lots of great things happening on the running front, but it's also Mental Health Awareness Month and we've done so much at Road Runners focusing on that over the last few years. We know, Becs, that for our runners, running is a vital part for so many of them to their mental health.

00:01:34

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:01:34

Rob Simmelkjaer: I always say, when I go to a race and I ask 10 people why they run, the number one answer is always free therapy. And so, we know that's a big part of it and we are having conversations this month about mental health. It's also Mother's Day, of course, that we had a couple of weeks ago. And so, for a lot of our runners, those things, running, mental health and motherhood for our moms out there, they're all tangled up in each other. For this episode, then we're going to talk with a mom who's been through all that and been navigating the intersection of those three things.

00:02:08

Becs Gentry: I'm so honored to have this guest on to bring all of those things together because as you say, she truly is somebody who is shouting out for the moms out there advocating for mental health through physical health. And that wonderful woman is Peloton's Selena Samuela, who is a recent mom of three. I cannot believe I'm saying that about my friend, having had our first children around the same time. Now, she has two more beautiful twin girls and we are going to chat to her about navigating that physical and emotional side of pregnancy whilst running was taken away from her during that pregnancy and how she stayed being so Selena.

00:02:52

Rob Simmelkjaer: I think it's really a great conversation. So that is coming up just after this.

00:02:58

Becs Gentry: Peloton has got something for whatever running mood you're in. Try instructor-led runs and walks that are built to fit into your routine with classes that help you stay consistent, build speed and be in the moment. Track your metrics, see your progress, and train smarter. We've got it all to help you reach your goals and stay on track. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner of New York Road Runners. Our guest today is not only a Peloton instructor, but she is an absolute legend in my eyes, a

massive inspiration and a very good friend of mine. I'd go so far as to say calling her my sister. It's Selena Samuela, everyone.

Now this past year, Selena has become a mother for the second time. Two beautiful identical twin girls, Stella and Frankie, who have spent their first three weeks in the NICU. And because of complications in her pregnancy, her doctor told her she had to stop running. So, for somebody whose job and her own personal happiness depends on running being part of her fitness routine, that is not a small thing. But now, 24 weeks after giving birth, Selena is back teaching live with us at Peloton, rebuilding her running piece by piece. And she's thinking a lot about this year and the difference between acceptance and complacency. We're here to go through her whole story and I'm so honored to welcome Selena Samuela. Hi.

00:04:23

Selena Samuela: Hi, everyone. Wow, what an intro, Becs. Thank you so much. It's such an honor to be here to be chatting with you and Rob.

00:04:31

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you.

00:04:32

Becs Gentry: We are honored to have you.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Great to meet you, Selena. Absolutely. So, let's start by going back to that moment that you first discovered you were having twins. That's a big moment.

00:04:51

Selena Samuela: Yeah, that was a big moment. Yeah, I was not expecting that. I thought I had everything under control. I shared about this publicly, but I had been through a few losses. And so, my husband and I chose to go the IVF route essentially to avoid some of the complications that popped up that we found out were the reason why those losses happened. And so, when you go through that, you think you're like, "Oh, I've got it under control. I know exactly what's happening. We did the testing and we know we have one embryo that's being implanted." And you think, boom, I know everything. And I went on vacation. I went to Italy, so I had a later date for that instead of an eight-week appointment. It was a nine-week appointment.

And I go in and my doctor's like, "Oh, great. Look, little arm buds, little leg buds, heartbeat, baby looks good." And I see a little, I don't know, lump at the bottom of the

screen and automatically my head goes to the worst place. I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh, fibroids, maybe cancer. What is that?" And I ask her, I'm like, "Can you just take a look at whatever is going on down there at the bottom of the screen, the ultrasound?" And she moves the little magic stick that goes on (inaudible). I don't know what they're called. And sure enough, there was another baby with the little arm buds and little leg buds squirming around in there and she's like, "Oh." I think she was shocked as well because she put one embryo in herself and she was just like, "There are two babies there." And she's like, "You're going to have identical twins. That was an embryo that split. Congratulations."

00:06:38

Becs Gentry: My goodness. I can't even imagine. How did that feel hearing, going from the catastrophizing moment to joy, fear. What was that feeling?

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Selena Samuela: No, you're so right, Becs. You hit it right on the head. It was a rollercoaster of emotions because I was catastrophizing, correct. And then you hear it's another baby and you're like, "Okay, so the worst isn't happening, but now wait, wait a second. I was not prepared to have three kids. This is crazy." But I think it also was validating because I was having so many experiences that were so vastly different from my first pregnancy and I was like, "Am I going crazy or am I going crazy?" So, I think it was validating when she was like, "Yeah, there are two babies." And I'm like, "Okay, so this makes a lot of sense."

This makes sense why I'm so much more exhausted. Why going up a flight of stairs feels like I was completely breathless, even more so than the first time I was also raging. I was so mean, my poor husband. I was so mean. My poor mom too. I was on a trip with her in Italy visiting my family and I was just not the coolest person to be around during that trip. And so, it was validating. I was like, "Oh, okay. This is why. This is why."

00:08:04

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Oh, my gosh. There are hormones and then they're essentially doubled and the fatigue, I can't... Having only had a solo pregnancy, I can't imagine what that is like. It was wild. It was wild. Talk to me more about that. As somebody who has grown and birthed a child, what is that first trimester into your second trimester? What is that like with twins?

00:08:31

Selena Samuela: This is going to sound like I'm exaggerating a little bit, but I swear to God I am not. It's not just double. So, when you think, so there's two, you would think it's double the effect. It feels like a lot more than double the effect. And if someone was like, "Go through another twin pregnancy or run a marathon every single day for the duration of whatever a pregnancy would be..." Or even let's say a year for every... I would run the marathon every single day for a year.

00:09:00

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:09:01

Selena Samuela: I swear to you, I would choose that.

00:09:02

Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Selena Samuela: I would choose that.

00:09:05

Becs Gentry: Mentally and physically, I guess.

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Selena Samuela: Yes, because there is... So also with my twins, I had mono-di twins, meaning there was one placenta and we'll talk a little bit about the complications that I had in this pregnancy specifically, but there was one placenta and both babies were feeding off of that one placenta. Most twins are di-di, meaning they each have their own placenta because most twins are not identical twins. Most twins are fraternal twins. And then even amongst identical twins, there's a small percentage that could still be di-di, but the majority of them are mono-di like my twins. So, there's a higher risk with that sort of twin pregnancy. So just the anxiety alone was just, it was more than my first and just having to go to... You go to appointments every other week, you do ultrasounds and then it starts every week after a certain period as well.

And depending on what happens with your pregnancy, it could happen earlier that you're... So, in some ways it's nice because you know that you're getting a check-in with your babies and it's good to hear the good news when there's good news. And then in another way, it's just exhausting because you're constantly running the potential in your head. What could go wrong? Is it going to be this week? Are they going to have twin-to-twin syndrome this week? Is it going to be next week? And so, each week is a breath of fresh

air when you get the good news, but it's also anxiety leading up to the appointment, which I just did not have that experience with a singleton and with my first pregnancy with no complications.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. So, tell us about the complications, when you learned about them and what that would mean for you and the pregnancy.

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Selena Samuela: Yeah. So, I had placenta previa, which is pretty common, but just for me as a runner, that's sucked. It sucked because placenta previa makes it so that you're asked to essentially take any kind of high impact stuff out of your day-to-day. There's just a higher risk of bleeding. And then because of that, anything can happen. Pregnancy loss, I could get sick, babies could get... So, you can't run anymore when you have placenta previa. And especially with twins, there's so many other things going on. I also had gestational diabetes, which was crazy. I couldn't believe it. I eat healthy. I exercise. I just never thought of myself as being a candidate for something like that, but it's totally random and very common amongst twin pregnancies. But the placenta previa was the big one that hit me because I had to stop running and that was tough because running for me, it's not just my job, but it's just such a big part of my wellness routine, my mental health.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Had you run through your first pregnancy, Selena? And what was it like when the doctor told you for this second time around that you were not going to be able to run?

00:12:31

Selena Samuela: Yeah, I ran through most of my first pregnancy. I did stop also my first pregnancy and that was due to some round ligament stuff. And just overall, I just didn't know, it was the first time I was pregnant. I was a little bit worried, but that was less like, "Hey, you need to stop running because this is dangerous." And more of a like, "Oh, I'm just making this choice."

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Becs Gentry: Yeah. As somebody who runs, you're on Peloton, you've been on Peloton for eight years almost to the day and it is your life to be running on the platform, walking on the platform. You're one of our lead strength coaches on the platform as well. So how did that feel for you to be

like, I have just found my groove back with running after your first with your son and you're just rolling. You're having all of these new things thrown at you from one embryo being placed inside of you by the doctor to having twins to being like, okay, well, now you can't do one of the things that you really love to do. Where was your head going? How did you process all of this stuff?

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Selena Samuela: I was looking for solutions because I think having been through a pregnancy before, I knew that... And also, just at this point too, I'm in my late 30s, I've been through a little bit of life stuff. I don't see the point in wallowing in what I can't do and rather focusing on what I can do. So, I knew that I couldn't run anymore. It definitely was a bummer and it's scary to hear that, but I still had other options. I could lean into the walking piece. I could lean into the strength piece for a little bit and the walking piece was really the thing that was the most helpful for me.

And I talk about this a lot on the Peloton platform, but I'm just such a huge advocate for walk plus runs in general. So, in my mind, I would do walk plus runs with easy walk to power walk. And so, I would tell myself that the power walk was a run and sometimes it really felt that way also cardiovascularly because I was carrying two babies and a lot was going on with my hormones and I got heavy.

00:15:03

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Oh, my gosh.

00:15:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: I have experienced the run, as you call it, run plus walk thing a bit more myself recently just coming back from injury and I really had never done it in such an intentional way before, but I think it's incredible. I think it's incredible for so many different types of people, whether they're new runners, runners coming back from injury, runners who are in a situation like yours in that time when you couldn't really run much. It's so much better than not being able to do anything.

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Selena Samuela: It's so much better than doing nothing, absolutely. And it really is such a great tool. Postpartum, I really leaned on the walk plus runs. It was a slow incline from the walk, power walk to walk jogs, walk runs and they work. They work.

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Becs Gentry: You finished work a little early because you really were just at a point of... I mean, talk us through that.

00:15:59

Selena Samuela: Yeah.

00:15:59

Becs Gentry: When did you feel to yourself like, this is quite frankly, uncomfortable to move?

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Selena Samuela: Yeah. So, I wasn't abnormally large as far as twin pregnancies are concerned, but for a singleton, it was insane. I was measuring full term at 26 weeks, maybe even before that, honestly. And meaning my type of full term, the way I was with Torin. So, I looked ready to pop and I still had almost... I still had so many weeks ahead of me, although my girls came early, so not as many at that point. So yeah, it became physically impossible to just teach the classes and also honestly commute. I struggled. I would make sure my day was planned out so that I wouldn't have to go up and down the stairs in my house.

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Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Selena Samuela: That's like how I would... And I would have my husband help me carry things downstairs and be like, "I don't want to have to go back up those stairs until we go to bed."

00:17:06

Becs Gentry: Wow. You don't even think about that. You don't even contemplate the fact that, yeah, you've made the journey downstairs, that's it, not moving.

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Selena Samuela: Right. Well, because I was having a lot of Braxton-Hicks contractions very early on and they were sometimes getting scary because they would be spaced apart almost rhythmically. And so, I was like, "Oh gosh, I just really didn't want to go into labor early." I mean, nobody does. The longer you can keep those babies in, the better. And so yeah, I just did my best. And so that was another reason why. I mean, actually at my baby shower, I ended up with Braxton with contractions that started scaring me, seeming like they were labor contractions.

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Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Selena Samuela: And that was in October and I stopped working in October.

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Becs Gentry: Talk us through those last technical couple of months of pregnancy.

00:18:03

Selena Samuela: Well, I made it to 35 weeks, which is great because that's for monody twins average 34 to 36 weeks is the average time that usually people go into labor with my type of twins. So, I was very happy that we knew at that point that 35 weeks is a good gestational age, very likely that there'll be a NICU, but also very likely that they won't have too many complications. And aside from just lungs being not quite ready, they were fine. So, we're lucky. They did spend three weeks in the NICU just waiting for their little lungs to be ready to do it on their own. But yeah, 35 weeks I went into the city, I went because I was on a billboard in Madison Square Garden. And so, I was like, I want to get to see this billboard before I go into labor and it's so hard to move. And I had to go into the city for my doctor's appointments.

I purposefully chose to have my doctors and give birth at Mount Sinai Hospital because they have an epic NICU and I knew that the likelihood of my girls coming early and needing NICU was pretty high. So that's what I was doing that day. And I was like, "All right, after this doctor's appointment, I'll go and check out this billboard, get some photos and I'll show my girls one day." And then I started having those contractions again and they just started getting shorter and shorter. And I had already taken the car almost all the way back to where I live, which is about 45 minutes, but it was the middle of the day, so it was traffic. So, it took me an hour to get to maybe two exits before my exit and we had to turn around.

I was on the phone with my doctors and they're like, "Selena, those really sound like labor contractions." And I knew that they were too because they were way... I knew that they were, but I was just really hoping that it wasn't yet the time. And they were like, "You should probably turn around because if you go home, there's a chance you won't make it to our hospital and you'd have to go to a different hospital." And I didn't want that. So, I turned around, was stuck in traffic. I was in labor in a car for two plus hours, but we made it and then I had my babies, I don't know, it was the afternoon, so I had them within 12 hours

of that.

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Becs Gentry: So, talk us through it. What happened? How was that whole situation of birthing?

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Selena Samuela: I was really lucky. I didn't end up needing a C-section. We just went for it. I had amazing OBs who were so supportive and they were like, "Hey, look, you matched the criteria for a vaginal birth and if you want to go for it, we'd be happy to facilitate it." And I was like, "Yeah, let's go for it." So, we did and it was super quick. The girls came out so fast. It was like three pushes. Stella came out. Eight minutes later, Frankie came out breech, which was something else. And something that they don't tell you, by the way, with twins, is that you can't push as hard as you do with the first one or the second one, and also, you're going to shoot that baby right across the OR.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh my God.

00:21:37

Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Selena Samuela: Yeah. So, you have to be really delicate with those pushes and really easy.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, my gosh.

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Selena Samuela: So, it was like a very delicate, gentle... And then the OB really does most of the work with a breech baby because they have to maneuver and pull them out. But yeah, eight minutes later, Frankie came and they were great. They actually at first, they were like, "Nope, they don't need to go to NICU," because they were screaming and doing all the things that baby should do. And they were five pounds each, which is a pretty decent size for a baby. But they put them on me and then shortly after I was noticing that they were doing that kind of breathing. And I was like, "I don't think they're doing well, guys." And they're like, "Oh, nope. Yep, we got to get them up to the NICU." So, then they brought them up to the NICU and got them some support and CPAP for a little bit. And then they really weren't on CPAP for very long after that it was just getting them to a point where they could comfortably eat

without having what they call events in the NICU where either the heart rate drops or their oxygen level drops. And so, they are very careful at that NICU. They make sure that everything is absolutely perfect before you leave. So, by the time about three weeks passed and they were definitely very ready to come home and I felt comfortable at that point for them to come home, but it is hard leaving the hospital without your babies. It's probably one of the hardest things I've ever done.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, I can imagine having had two and been fortunate enough to leave with both of ours, I could see how that would be difficult to do. And so, you got through it, you've got two identical twin girls, which is incredible, Stella and Frankie. What's it been like being the mom of identical twins? And I hear people like to ask you all kinds of things and questions about your identical twins, including maybe some things they shouldn't ask.

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Selena Samuela: Yeah. There are some really ridiculous questions out there. They say there's no dumb questions.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: There are dumb questions. Yes, 100%.

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Selena Samuela: There are some dumb questions. Like, "Are they natural?" What do you mean are they... "No, sorry, they're AI. They're actually not natural. They're AI. They're hologram."

00:24:02

Becs Gentry: What?

00:24:02

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's because people are confused about...

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Becs Gentry: What are they getting at by asking-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: The process of doing IVF.

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Selena Samuela: Yes.

00:24:09

Rob Simmelkjaer: And they think that all... Because a lot of

people have fraternal twins when they have more than one embryo implanted.

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Selena Samuela: Yes.

00:24:17

Rob Simmelkjaer: And so, they're confused. They don't understand that.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, so they think he planned it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You can't engineer identical twins.

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Selena Samuela: Yes.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And that's why it's a question that makes no sense if you know what the process is like.

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Selena Samuela: It makes no sense, but it's also that word natural. I think even for those folks who did have a planned twin pregnancy, which by the way, nowadays is very rare. So, it used to be the norm because they didn't have technology to test embryos the way that we do today. So, if you go through IVF, you can choose to test your embryos and choose the healthiest embryos. And back in the day, they didn't have that. So, it was like guessing and a lot of embryos aren't viable. And so, they would put multiple embryos in there hoping that one would be viable.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Exactly.

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Selena Samuela: And usually, the ones that aren't viable would just dissolve or I don't know what happens in there, but disappear, not survive, whatever. So that's why they would do it. But sometimes, they would put three embryos in and they just so happened to be three healthy embryos that all made it. And so that's why you saw so many twins in the past.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And triplets sometimes even. Yeah.

00:25:22

Selena Samuela: And triplets, exactly. But now the technology has gotten good. They're like, we don't want to... The risk of twin pregnancy is just not worth that because the pregnancies are high risk. They're very hard on mothers. And then also it's riskier for the babies as well. So, most doctors will not do multiple embryo implantations anymore. I think it's very hard to find people who at least in New York and Connecticut and where I've been, that's just not the protocol at all anymore. So, there's that part of it and I think you're right, but still the word natural sounds ridiculous.

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Becs Gentry: It does.

00:26:01

Selena Samuela: Because what do you mean? Is my child not a human?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, yeah.

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Selena Samuela: What do you mean natural?

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Becs Gentry: What do you mean natural? Yeah, that's weird.

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Selena Samuela: I'm in such a sweet spot actually with my twins and the public. I haven't had any bad encounters. I mean, I think one thing that's triggering for a lot of twin moms is when they hear, "Oh, your hands are full." It's like, "Thanks." Obviously, I know that.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Selena Samuela: Not so triggering for me because I'm like, "Yeah, please, I need all the sympathy."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, I need this.

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Selena Samuela: You're right. It's maladating.

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Becs Gentry: We've had some good conversations about, and you've been very open and this is a shout-out to all the twin moms out there, is follow Selena on Instagram because she is really open about her journey so far. And I think one of the most wonderful conversations we've had was when you were telling me about how you learnt to feed them and your process for this was amazing. So, can you talk us through that whole thing you were talking about?

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Selena Samuela: About tandem feeding?

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Becs Gentry: The tandem feeding and where you're having the bottles and-

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Selena Samuela: Oh, yeah.

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Becs Gentry: You were just like a magician.

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Selena Samuela: Yeah. You really do learn how to juggle when you have twins. Okay. I don't know how much of this thing I'm allowed to say in the podcast, but I literally found myself, especially in the early days, just locked in a room with my twins top, off boobs out, just sitting there topless all day with one here, one here, burping one, one on the boob. It's so much. Or we have this thing called a, there's the twinsie pillow and then there's the My Twin Brest Friend and it's this big breastfeeding pillow, but it's massive. And I would just have that and I'd be just topless with this huge Twin Brest Friend pillow just trying to figure it out with my kids because it's like one would be, you'd get one feeding and happy and sleeping and then you're like, "Oh my God, I don't want to wake this baby up."

But then the other baby starts popping off. So, you're like, "Okay." I definitely don't have time to put my shirt back on, let alone... So yeah, it was definitely chaos, but you get better at it. I eventually just stopped trying to tandem breastfeed. I ended up doing more tandem bottle feeding because it was just so chaotic for me and I would just pump and then tandem feed. And so, you put them...

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Becs Gentry: Lay them on the floor and go.

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Selena Samuela: Yeah, you put them in the... Now that's when you use the Twin Z pillow. That's this little pillow that's shaped like a heart and you put one baby on each side and then you double bottle-feed and that worked magically for a long time until they got a little bit older and they started getting fussy and we still have them on the same schedule, but sometimes we feed one and the other. So, I'll have one in a bouncer and I bounce the bouncer because they love being bounced. I'll bounce the bouncer feed and then feed the other. So, the foot is what's bouncing the bouncer. So, I'm like a drummer. I got rhythm. There's a lot of syncopation, a lot of cool stuff going on.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow. Wow.

00:29:35

Selena Samuela: Yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I just learned a lot about breastfeeding I did not know. That was fascinating.

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Becs Gentry: I'm sure a lot of people did.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It sounds really challenging. Sounds like a sport. Honestly, that sounds like you could have a competition. That's so difficult, balancing all that and there's rhythm involved. Anyway, so talk about how, Selena, did you even think about getting back to running, going through all of that?

00:29:58

Selena Samuela: Yes.

00:29:58

Rob Simmelkjaer: What was that process like? Obviously, your job demands some of this. So, what was the process like of getting from there to actually being able to move and run again?

00:30:11

Selena Samuela: Yeah. Okay. This is one of my favorite things to talk about because I think there aren't enough folks really having this conversation out loud. And so, you'll see a lot of, I don't know, influencers or people in the industry, they'll have their babies, and then all of a

sudden, they're working out or running again and you don't see that middle part, the journey and how to get there. And look, no shade because everybody should... If you don't want to talk about that, you shouldn't have to talk about it. But I'm okay with talking about it. So, I've been sharing a lot and the very first thing that I did was breathe. I don't mean just to stay alive breathing, but diaphragmatic breathing, getting connected with my breath, understanding where I was putting pressure when I was breathing.

So how the diaphragm and the core and the pelvic floor, how they all work together and just getting back to a place retraining my breath so that I was breathing appropriately. And that was before doing any kind of movement at all. So, I think one of the things that without going into a whole class on breath, but one of the things that I think happens is your organs move when you're pregnant and naturally and your ribs flare. So naturally things change so dramatically so that your breath also changes dramatically. So, I started with just connecting with my core and my pelvic floor again before doing anything at all. And then it just turned into working, doing pelvic floor exercises, core work. And then from there walking and then walking turned into light jogging.

But it's not a linear, at least it hasn't been for me, a very linear process. I did all this work and I worked with a pelvic floor PT and was so good about my homework and really focused on that core work. And then I started walking and jogging and then my lower back would get, I would throw my lower back out a little bit. So then, I'd have to go back and stop running and jogging and go back to square one and build back up again. And I'm still in that building phase. And I think one of the harder parts, for me personally, the hard part isn't showing up and doing the exercises. The hardest part is the mental part of having to be okay with the fact that I am not where I was before and I never will be. And when I say I never will be, I don't mean I never will hit paces that I hit before.

I mean, I never will have the same body I had before children. And so, I have to approach running and getting back into running very differently than I approached my first time choosing to run a marathon before I'd ever had kids and ever did the damage that I did to my body. So, I talk about this a lot right now and I talk about having grace and I think it's important to have grace. It's very important to have grace in that way to understand that I am where I am because I did this amazing thing, this miraculous thing and I can honor that and honor what I did and that I brought life into this world, but I can still want more for myself. Having grace doesn't mean being complacent. It just means that you have respect for what you did, but I still

want more.

And so yeah, I think the hardest part is staying there and not letting the, I want more turn into you suck because you're not running the same paces yet or because that other runner, she came back faster or whatever it is because we all really have experienced different journeys. Every pregnancy is very different. Everybody started at a different point too. If somebody got pregnant at their peak athleticism versus, I don't know, someone like myself where I had a number of losses and I was trying for a long time to get pregnant. And so, within that time span, I also had pulled back on my focus being running paces like I was running before. So yeah, I think that's the toughest part, finding that balance, having that grace and also ambition at the same time and learning how to rock that in between.

00:35:04

Beccs Gentry: You show up with all of those things very beautifully for sure in the squares that we see curated on social media and on Peloton. But I want to know the honest side of it because having gone through it with one baby and I definitely got in my head about this not just being a day-to-day, 9:00 to 5:00 office job that I was going back to. It was going back to being on camera, multiple different angles of being on camera. I think the tread is a safety net in many ways because you're encompassed by this giant machine, but in the strength studio, you're exposed and you're also then exposed to social media, to criticism, to good or bad as well. There might be some good criticism and bad. And how have you navigated that whilst understanding to have this grace and this patience as well?

00:36:13

Selena Samuela: Yeah, you're absolutely right, Beccs. It's so intimidating. I think that was the toughest part of me coming back to work. It wasn't, can I teach the classes? I was ready to teach the classes, physically able to teach the classes. What is the number on the tread screen as far as my sprint today versus four years ago or whatever. Sure, but that's not as important. So, the thing that was the scariest was coming back and having to show up in a body that looked very different and that maybe you're right, I wasn't 100% ready to expose. And I think I had to... Yes, the truth of it is that is hard. It's hard to be half naked in our sports bras and our shorts in front of everybody and to do that when you've changed in a way that sure you couldn't help and you did on purpose.

And again, look, we're so happy with our babies, but it's still a reality. I just keep leaning on the fact that there are other people who are going through what I'm going

through and that it is not a niche narrative. It is very much there's so many people. 50% of the population are women. I don't know what percentage of that population ends up giving birth, but I'm sure it's not a super small percentage of the population. So, it's a lot of people out there and postpartum is forever. Postpartum isn't just the first year after you had a baby, it's the rest of your life. Your body changes for the rest of your life. Pelvic floor, your pelvic floor is different and the way that you have to approach fitness is different for the rest of your life.

And I know that might sound scary to somebody, but I think it actually makes us stronger individuals overall and it can make us so focused in a totally different way. Motherhood makes you focused in a completely different way, in my opinion. And so yeah, that's what I lean on. I lean on that. I lean on the fact that there are so many other people that are experiencing something very similar or have experienced something similar and that it can be something that we can be doing together so we're on this journey together.

00:38:50

Becs Gentry: Yeah, I love that. And I guess that's why you decided to be very open with your followers in the Peloton audience about your mom pouch.

00:38:59

Selena Samuela: Yeah.

00:39:00

Becs Gentry: So, talk us through that. Talk us through the mom pouch and what it means to you and why you're sharing it.

00:39:07

Selena Samuela: Bro, the mom pouch is pouching so much right now. It's really pouching after twins. It's next level after twins.

00:39:15

Becs Gentry: If everyone could have seen us in the green room the other day, they'd laugh.

00:39:19

Selena Samuela: Oh my God, yes. No, I think that the mom pouch is a beautiful thing. Sure, especially after twins, like I said, it's different. It's made it so that I can't wear the running shorts that I used to wear at the moment because there is so much extra skin that I actually do have

to wear compression, something compression to help me out in my runs at least. Not so much with strength training, obviously, but with running. So, there's that. But I do love the mom pouch and I love the process because it is a reminder of what the bad assery of motherhood and that's where our babies came from. So yes, we want more. Yes, we want better. Yes, we're going to work towards a world where the mom pouch isn't so extreme so that it hurts us when we run. But in the interim, I know this sounds cliché, but we can't hate our bodies into change. That is not how you progress. I mean, it's the same thing with running, right? You can't hate your way to a better pace

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Becs Gentry: Well said.

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Selena Samuela: You can't. So, leaning on... When I look at the mom pouch, I'm like, "Oh yeah, you're such a badass. You did that. You carried twins and look at what you're doing now. And that's where those beautiful babies came from and how could I hate the thing that made my beautiful babies?" And so yeah, we love the mom pouch. We rock the mom pouch.

00:41:01

Becs Gentry: Yes, yes. Exactly.

00:41:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. There must be a huge mental health lesson here too, Selena, both in regards, I mean, of course, some women just are dealing with straight-up postpartum depression and that's a thing that we've had conversations about on this podcast, women who found running in movement helpful to them in getting through that kind of thing. But then there's also just what you're talking about, which isn't postpartum depression per se, but it's just issues about self-image and expectation management of what your body was, what it is, what it can do versus what it used to be able to do. All of that is also, it's mental health at the end of the day because our self-image is a huge part of our mental health.

00:41:59

Selena Samuela: Yeah, absolutely.

00:42:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: What have you learned through this journey about that and the role of the movement and the running for you in helping you, I guess, in a way reshape your image

of yourself as a mom of twins in this case?

00:42:16

Selena Samuela: Yeah. I think one of the first things I think about when you ask that question is, I don't know, you go on your Strava and you see your old running paces. I actually posted about this. I did that recently where it's like I couldn't help myself. I scrolled through it and I looked back at, I don't know, I think I had ran four miles that day. So, I looked at when I ran four miles in the past and it was like a 6:30 mile and then I had just finished a 9:30 mile and I was just like, I think in that moment we have a choice. In that moment you can be like, "Oh, I suck." Or you can look at that pace and be like, "Wow, what a badass. You did that." And cheer yourself on because you're like, "Wow." And it's amazing that I went through everything that I went through and I'm still here.

And then remembering, okay, how did I get to that 6:30 pace? Did I just magically start running that pace? And I know for some people, and by the way, for some people, that 6:30 pace is not fast. That is my version of fast and I didn't magically get there. I was a boxer before I was a Peloton instructor and so running was always part of my story. And then I always loved running, but I wasn't a fast runner by any means. It took me three years of running and working on my running and working on my paces to go from running around a 9:30 mile for four miles to running those 6:30 miles. I took a long time to get there and I had no babies back then. I had no babies back then. So, it's just putting it into perspective right there.

And so rather than having to do crazy mental acrobatics, I mean, well, we always have to do mental acrobatics sometimes to just fake it till we make it kind of stuff and I'm all about that. But yeah, just putting it into perspective that way and understanding that since I know I've done it before, if I really wanted to, I could do that again. The question is, my goals might have shifted today to maybe that specific pace, it's not necessary, not today, but maybe it will be in the future. I've got a triathlon coming up in September and I'm shooting for a Half Iron Man towards the end of the year. So, I don't know. I think you have a choice. You could decide to knock yourself or you could decide to be proud of yourself and be inspired by it.

So, when people are like, oh, I think again, there's this fine line. Someone said to me like, "Forget about that girl. She doesn't exist anymore." I'm like, "I don't ever want to forget about that girl. I'm proud of that girl." That girl, she worked really hard, but this girl right here is also working really hard and also deserves the flowers. But I don't think it benefits us to play small. We should still

be like, " She was a badass."

00:45:39

Becs Gentry: Yeah, I agree. And that comes really nicely around to you talking about, you've been saying this a lot at work and personally, the acceptance is not the same as complacency. So, you're encouraging people to instead of potentially giving up on where they are right now because it is not quite where they were or where they would like to be immediately accepting it and not just being like... So how has that helped you?

00:46:11

Selena Samuela: Yeah. I mean, I think it's like a little bit of my mantra right now where it's like having grace is important, it's necessary, but grace has an equal complacency and you're absolutely right, Becs. You shouldn't quit something just because you're not where you were before. It's a horrible... And we keep talking about like you can't hate yourself into progress. If you are trying to run a faster pace and you're telling yourself you suck, you can't do it, you're so much less likely to do it. So, it's the same kind of idea. It's like, you got to tell yourself that whatever it is that you're shooting for, and I think it's important to have goals and aspirations, you got to tell yourself that you can.

00:46:56

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:46:57

Rob Simmelkjaer: 100%.

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Becs Gentry: How do you do that on a hard day when you've had the twins waking up in the middle of the night, Torin is three and a half years old, like he's going through his own growth leaps right now as well. So how do you put those fatigue, tiredness, frustration aside and not just give up and not just be like, " I'm going to take a nap on the couch because I need one."

00:47:27

Selena Samuela: Yeah. I think it's like the blind trust in the process.

00:47:33

Becs Gentry: The decades in the industry.

00:47:35

Selena Samuela: Yeah. It's the blind trust in the process.

Yeah. And it's like training plans aren't training plans for nothing and we know and timelines might be different and that's the thing that I've had to really work on is that I might have a plateau or I might have to live somewhere a little bit longer than I did in the past. I might hit fatigue faster and that's just a data point, but just like blindly trusting the process. I think I talked about this, another thing I talked about on my social media today, talked about this stuff a lot, but I was talking about how I had felt, like my legs were lead and that I wasn't improving on both the endurance and power side of my running. I was hovering around this like 10K being the most that I...

I couldn't really run past it without feeling really bad and I couldn't really move past a certain pace and it was like a little daunting, but I just, again, trusted the process, kept showing up even if they weren't the paces and the comfort that I was hoping to achieve. And then literally, just a few days ago or yeah, I don't know, like four days ago or so, I hit a PR that was literally almost 10 minutes on my 10K. I went from running a 9:40 something mile on my 10K to an 8:30.

00:49:16

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:49:17

Becs Gentry: Wow.

00:49:18

Selena Samuela: It just, boom. And so, it-

00:49:20

Rob Simmelkjaer: The light switches sometimes. The body wakes up, something clicks.

00:49:25

Becs Gentry: That plateau is the adaptation's happening and then bam, there you go.

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Selena Samuela: And then, bam. Exactly. And again, it's not like the 8:30 is the fastest I've ever run in my life or anything by any means.

00:49:36

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's your postpartum PR. That should become a thing by the way.

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Selena Samuela: It's my postpartum PR.

00:49:38

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

00:49:38

Selena Samuela: And it was a huge massive PR too for a 10K.

00:49:42

Rob Simmelkjaer: We should start using that language more when you think about it. What would that be? PPPR.

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Selena Samuela: PPPR.

00:49:48

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's a great idea to start-

00:49:48

Selena Samuela: Triple PR.

00:49:53

Rob Simmelkjaer: Triple PR because I mean, it's real, right? It really is real and it gives women who've had kids something new to shoot for and not to your point, Selena, being a captive to your pre-partum self. I think it's a really interesting thought. I'm going to have a meeting about that at Road Runners. We're going to see if we can start working on that. I love that idea.

00:50:17

Selena Samuela: Yes. And also, one more thing I wanted to share that is helpful. It's a little tip for anybody who is struggling with that, doing the mental acrobatics and not really getting bummed out about the pre-partum numbers. I like to think of that girl that really fast, Selena. I like to think of that girl as I'm not chasing her shadow, her shadow, she is my bestie. She is cheering me on. So, it's like that girl is so proud of the girl that I am today. And I think about that a lot. I'm like, would Selena back in 2020 or whatever, would she be knocking Selena today because she has an 8:30 PR versus a 6:30? No, absolutely not. So yeah, she'd be celebrating. So, I like to think of that as my bestie shadow.

00:51:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: And you know what? Postpartum Selena has something that prepartum Selena always wanted, I presume.

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Selena Samuela: Yeah, 100%.

00:51:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's three children, right?

00:51:26

Selena Samuela: 100%.

00:51:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: That is the beauty of it. It really is. Hey, what would you say, because I know we know there's moms out there listening to this. They may be on long runs training for something, or maybe they're just trying to get back into the swing of things, right? They're dealing with that postpartum run, maybe that first postpartum run. What would you say to them, even mid-pregnancy, wherever they are in their journey about how this can go for them?

00:51:57

Selena Samuela: Yeah. I think I would lean on my current mantra where it's like, "Hey, this might not look exactly like what you want or what your ideal is. This might be that in between phase, but A, you're not alone so many other people experience it including your favorite athlete, including your favorite athlete. It's just obviously looks different because they're a professional athlete, but everybody experiences this." And I would just lean into that mantra where it's like celebrate what you did, it's amazing and give yourself that grace, but also lock in because... And lock in at the pace that you need it to be. Focus on what you can do in the moment. Focus on what that next... Focus on that. And that's what I mean by lock in. Not like lock in and you better get that PR from four years ago.

00:52:59

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Focus on the now. Focus on right here.

00:53:02

Selena Samuela: Focus on right here, what you have in front of you, because there is so much that you can work on right now. And I think that's exciting. It's exciting to be like, oh, cool. It's like almost like a new puzzle or something.

00:53:13

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:53:13

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: Perfect.

00:53:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's great.

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Becs Gentry: Perfectly said.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you so much, Selena. This is an amazing conversation for so many reasons.

00:53:26

Becs Gentry: Rob's just struck.

00:53:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

00:53:26

Becs Gentry: He's "I have learned so much right now."

00:53:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: For sure, for sure. No doubt about it. I mean, but even as a guy, I've got so many women in my life who've gone through this kind of thing and we've got so many of our members who are going through this. It's a huge storyline in the world of running. And your story is a great way to hear it, hear it personalized for someone who's pretty well known as an athlete and someone who's active and you've got a lot of people who look up to you in that world. So, Selena, it's been really great having this conversation. Thank you for sharing. You've shared a lot and you share a lot on your social... This is what you do.

00:54:04

Selena Samuela: I'm an open book.

00:54:04

Rob Simmelkjaer: Which is amazing. Really, it's great.

00:54:08

Becs Gentry: Yeah. It truly helps everybody out there to see the real side of it because there's far too much curated goodness out there and we all need the goodness, but you definitely have, I know, helped. I see so many more twin mom hashtags on our Peloton leaderboard and it's wonderful to see the openness and the joy as well.

00:54:31

Selena Samuela: Yeah. It's been really great to be back on

Peloton. It's been great to be back running again.

00:54:37

Becs Gentry: Yes.

00:54:39

Selena Samuela: The joy of running, it's unlike anything else.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you so much.

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Becs Gentry: We're here cheering you on in your triathlons and Half Ironmans this year. Good luck.

00:54:50

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you, Selena.

00:54:50

Selena Samuela: Thank you. Thank you so much.

00:54:52

Rob Simmelkjaer: Best to you. Best to your family. Appreciate it. New York Road Runners is a nonprofit organization with a vision to build healthier lives and stronger communities through the transformative power of running. The support of members and donors like you helps us achieve our mission to transform the health and wellbeing of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at nyrr.org/ donate.

June is like a sneaky, sneaky, busy month at New York Runners. People think it's November and then the halves that are busy times and of course they are, but we've got the MasterCard Mini 10K, the Citizens Queens 10K. We've got the Achilles Hope and Possibility, Four Miler, the Pride Four Miler. So much happens in June.

00:55:42

Becs Gentry: So much fun.

00:55:43

Rob Simmelkjaer: We're gearing up for a really busy and fun month of running. A lot of that will be in Central Park as well as in Queens in the month of June. Well, that does it for another episode of Set the Pace. What a great conversation, Becs, with your colleague, Selena Samuela. Hopefully one that a lot of people will hear and that folks can relate to. I know you can.

00:56:05

Becs Gentry: Yeah, absolutely. And she is doing such a good job. Make sure you go and follow her on her Instagram. If you do want to know more about her journey or if, as Rob said, you are an aspiring mom or currently pregnant, especially if you are pregnant with twins. She is going to help you out a lot.

00:56:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. Well, that's it for today. If you like the episode, make sure you leave us a rating or a comment. We'll see you next week. Enjoy the miles.