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Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey everybody. Happy New Year and welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners presented by Peloton. I'm Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Road Runners. Becca Gentry is off today. It's New Year's and we want to wish each and every one of you an incredibly happy 2026. Hope you had a great holiday season. Hope you looked back on a terrific 2025, both for your running life and the rest of your life. Hope it was a great year and hope that you are excited for the new year ahead.

Becca and I wish you all the best, whether it's the race that you're training for, a PR you want to set, a first time marathon you're hoping to accomplish or any distance that you're looking to take on in the new year. It's such a great time to look ahead, set goals, and get excited about the year ahead. Maybe your goal is just a recovery. A lot of us, and myself included, ran a lot in 2025 and still are feeling some of the after effects of that. I think Becca was in that boat last year after running the 777 race. And so took a year to kind of recover, reset.

So maybe that's your goal and you got to plan to do that with some cross-training and weight training and some shorter runs. Or maybe you're going to take on your first marathon. Maybe you got into a race you've never gotten into before. Whatever it might be, we wish you all the best for 2026. And we obviously hope to see all of you out there at a New York Road Runners race sometime this year.

Well, we've got a great year ahead of us. We're so excited about a lot of different things. But of course, as we often do, we kicked off the new year at New York Road Runners right where we like to be at a starting line. The Midnight Run took place on New Year's Eve and it was a great, great night out there. This race has been around for a long time. It was founded in 1979. It's actually one of the longest standing races at New York Road Runners.

Sadly, it didn't take place last year. You might remember we had some thunderstorms in the area, but the weather, good this year. By the way, just so you know, we record this on Tuesday. So I'm talking to you before the race, but I'll be out there for New Year's Eve. Can't wait to ring it in with all of you. And for those of you who ran, it's sold out about 5,000 runners set to take it on. We hope that you had a great four-mile run through Central Park.

And it's not just a race, of course. It's New Year's Eve.

So we're not just out there running. We had live music, fireworks, on course entertainment, these new glow of the dark bibs, which were a new thing that our Runner Services Group developed. We've got this really cool blue light that's on at the finish line and it shows a Happy New Year message on the bibs as folks cross the finish line. There's a photo booth and all kinds of funny games.

So it was a great New Year's Eve. Hope everybody had a great one and just a great way to ring in the new year, whether it was that or ... A lot of folks I know out there in New Year's Day, they like to get up and get in their first run of the year bright and early on the first day of the year. So maybe you're out there doing that. Maybe you're listening to me as you're out there taking on your first run of 2026. I hope you're having a great one and hope that your holiday season was fantastic.

Coming up on this, our first show of 2026, a true member of the New York Road Runners community, ABC News, Sam Ryan. Sam, you've seen her on Eyewitness News. She covers all of our local sports teams. She worked at ESPN for many years, covering all the different sports. She's covered Super Bowls. She covered everything. And of course, she's covered the TCS New York City Marathon many years at ESPN and ABC.

Well, she's going to join us this year to talk about not just covering these races, but her own running journey, which is really an incredible one from having childhood asthma and getting a note from her doctor saying she didn't have to run one mile in middle school to now running 13 marathons, including Boston and Chicago in 2025.

So Sam will be here with us to ring in the new year. Sam was also running the Midnight Run this year as well. And then later on the show, running influencer, Christina Gibbons will be here focusing on the mental side of running. She's here to tell her story. And then finally, in today's Meb Minute, Meb will share how winter training can help you build momentum for your big spring races. I think when the calendar changes to the new year, if you've got a spring race that you've signed up for, maybe it's the United Airlines, NYC Half, maybe it's one of the spring marathons in Tokyo or London or Boston or whatever it might be, your mind starts to shift. Now, you're in the calendar year and you know it's time to start focusing on getting yourself ready for those spring races. So Meb will be here to help get you in the zone and focused on getting ready for whatever you're up to this spring.

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Speaker 3: Peloton's most advanced tread yet is here. The new Peloton cross-training series, Tread Plus, powered by Peloton IQ, designed for runners who want top tier performance. It

features premium hardware that makes every run and workout more efficient, effective, and motivating. And it accelerates your personal growth mile after mile.

The rubberized slat belt cushions every single step and creates an energizing running space for each stride. And with strength workouts, you can stack right into your routine. You'll build lower body muscle to support stronger runs. With auto incline adjusting automatically to match instructor queues, your intensity stays exactly where it needs to be so you can stay in the zone and focus on your workout. Experience our most advanced tread yet at onepeloton.com. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner of New York Road Runners.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Our final guest of 2025 is someone very familiar to us at New York Road Runners and to our fans out there, Sam Ryan, who is a sports anchor at Channel 7 in New York. And she's been on the air with us for years, helping us to tell the stories of our races and our runners. And she is one of our runners herself. She's lived those stories, completing 13 marathons, including four New York City marathons, and she's been an ambassador for our team for kids. And the last time I spoke with Sam was up in Boston, right before the Boston Marathon where she was hoping to have a good day. And since then, she's added Chicago to her list. And this week, she's going to come back out to Central Park to run the Midnight Run with us to celebrate 2026. Sam, great to see you.

00:07:05

Sam Ryan: So great to see you. Happy holidays and happy New Year. What an honor to be the final guest of 2025. Wow.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. I guess you're kind of technically ... It's kind of like the Midnight Run. You're like the last of '25 and the first of '26 because this episode will actually post on New Year's Day. So happy New Year to everybody out there listening, obviously. And first, I want to go back to Boston. We were together at the House of Blues, I remember in Boston when you were getting ready for your run up there. How did it go?

00:07:38

Sam Ryan: I think I do better under pressure because I put it out there. We were on the podcast. I had not run a marathon in about four and a half, five years, and pretty much thought that my carbon fiber plate shoes were in the past. And I believe I called it the redemption tour, the

redemption run when we last spoke. I didn't know what to expect and I had the marathon build and it was really fun to have a healthy training block and really focus more on weight training and nutrition, and it worked in my favor. I've run Boston now four times and that was my best Boston time. And obviously, I'm older, but I think there's something to be said about running with pressure and running with eyeballs on you.

I only slept an hour and 47 minutes the night before and the nerves were ... I had the anxiety going. I used my Peloton sleep meditation app. I probably went through five of them to try to get to sleep. Finally, I put my AirPods in and used white noise to get to sleep and I was under the covers of the hotel. I didn't know how I was going to do it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I always say the sleep the night before a marathon is kind of like a bonus if you get it. You're not really going to sleep so well the night before, typically. It's those nights before that, you got to build up the sleep. Yeah.

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Sam Ryan: It's like when you're a second-grader and the night before the first day of school, who's going to be in my class? You just don't know. Back in the day, we didn't know any of that. Yeah. And I was really happy. For me, like I said, it was my best. I'm not a fast runner, but it was my best marathon time for Boston.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's awesome.

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Sam Ryan: I just wanted a four in front of my time and I got it. So I'm really happy with it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I'm happy for you. That's fantastic.

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Sam Ryan: Thank you.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And then you turned around and obviously got the bug again because you turned around and I guess about six months later, ran Chicago, which you know I ran as well. And that was, I think you and I have chatted, that was a warm day for me. It was a beautiful day, but it got a little warm for me and it caused me to fall apart in the

second half of the race. How was Chicago for you?

00:10:02

Sam Ryan: Same. Same. I had the perfect build. It was actually, I was stronger than Boston and I really focused on the glycogen stores, carb loading. I tried to take in all the science of it, monitoring my V02 max, just doing everything the right way. Now, I knew I had the base. I knew I could do the distance. Now, I wanted to add more speed. I wanted to finish feeling healthy and not have any issues. And I felt really good going into that. I actually, I ran a local half marathon as part of my taper a few weeks before and I finished third of my age group. So that was just a bonus. I'm like, "Oh, this is great."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Nice.

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Sam Ryan: And I think a lot of people were telling me, "You will PR this race. You're so ready. It's flat." It was pancake flat and the energy was amazing. The walk from my hotel was maybe two blocks. It was amazing. Everything was perfect, but it did get warm. And I think something about ... And I don't know if you can speak to this also, with the terrain. When the course elevation, you prepare for a hilly marathon and sometimes you take it easy on or you crush the uphill, but there's the reward of the downhill, but you don't want to push the downhill. When you have a flat marathon, you need to prepare for that also. And it was a steady pace and that's something that I'm not used to. So none of my training runs were pancake flat.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's hard to find that around New York. Yeah.

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Sam Ryan: Yeah. And it was different. I had side stitch issues. I spoke to Becs, our colleague and coach afterwards. And it's my breathing. I need to adjust my breathing, so that's something else I need to work on. So I entered the lottery again for next year and I got in. So this will be my Chicago redemption.

00:12:08

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. I love it. I love it. I similarly would ... Yeah, perhaps I'll go for redemption in Chicago because it wasn't the day I wanted, but we'll see. It sounds very similar actually to the day you had. And, yeah, flat takes some adjusting too. I had a good race in Berlin the

year before on flat, but it definitely takes some getting used to. And I think it's something that people do need to train for.

Sam, it's interesting having this conversation with you at the end of the year, because I think a lot of people who run and run marathons, here we are at the end of the year, beginning of a new year, right? And everybody's thinking back on the year they just had looking ahead to the year and okay, what are their hopes? What are their dreams? What races have they maybe already gotten into? What are they hoping to get into? Maybe in the case of New York where folks are still going to be waiting for the drawing in the early in the winter. What are you looking ahead towards with excitement? It sounds like Chicago. Any other kind of like year-end or year beginning thoughts you're having right now about what you did accomplish and what you're hoping to accomplish next year when it comes to running?

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Sam Ryan: Really Chicago, but for me, it's more about my younger self was in awe with a marathon distance and completing the marathon. And if I could go out and get a PR, that was great. For me now, it's about health, staying healthy, no injuries. And to go through this year, two marathon training blocks without any injuries, I'm knocking on wood right now. I'm thankful for that. And just to learn more about health, nutrition, fitness.

I was talking about glycogen stores earlier, V02 max. I'm trying to understand V02 max and how that plays in. Am I a speedy runner? No. I think I said that already, but how can I maximize this science to be a stronger, more efficient runner? And I think something that's telling, and I don't know if you experienced this also, when I finished Chicago the next day, there was no soreness, there were no issues. And granted, I didn't have the time I wanted, but I was six minutes slower than Boston. So that's not a big chunk of time.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Fascinating. That's fascinating, by the way.

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Sam Ryan: But I did not have any issues walking downstairs. The soreness that my younger self would experience there, I mean, there was no icing afterwards. I walked away from that and I felt really good and I think that's telling of my training. So although I had side stitch issues and that was hampering me the last six miles of Chicago and there were heat issues, physically my muscles, they felt strong. So let's keep it up.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. I felt similarly after Chicago, not that sore. Partly I think because I also just called off the dogs in the second half of the race. Once I got to about 17 or 18 and I was like, "This is not going to be my day." I really did pull back a lot and just kind of turned it into a pleasure run. So that definitely helped with the soreness. But hey, every day is different. Every marathon is different. Every year is different. And that's what's exciting about the beginning of a new year. You just never know what's going to come at you, whether it's in running or in life. So it's always an exciting time when we start a new year. And so you're going to be starting the new year with us in Central Park at the Midnight Run. By the time folks listen to this, it will be the new year. But you last ran this 10 years ago and it's a very special and unique event in New York and in the running world. What helped you decide to come back and run it again this year?

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Sam Ryan: I love being part of the running community. And I felt that 10 years ago, 2015, 2016, heading into the Midnight Run, that was 2016 later that year, I ran at that point, a marathon PR. PR and since then, the 2017 New York City Marathon, but the 2016 New York City Marathon was magical for me. And I think that year, just kicking off the new year in Central Park with New York Road Runners on the running community, really just you embrace the commitment to running and to see so many faces out there. Our colleague and dear friend Liz Cho, she's running this also.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's awesome.

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Sam Ryan: And this makes me so excited, because to see her journey and to see if we can run and what we accomplish and others watch and they take note and then they're inspired by it or motivated by it, how fun is that? So to see Liz's journey, and I remember when I got back from Boston and she wanted to know all about it and she was very curious. And then being part of the Good Morning America Relay, she really embraced the New York City Marathon and now she's running the New York City Half and running this New Year's Eve as well to see her journey is it's fun. It's fun to see the growth in the running community. And when it's your colleagues and your friends, because we were there. So we wanted to know everything about it. We got the bug and when you get ... I don't want to say I

ever lost the bug, but a couple of years ago, " Yeah, I ran so many marathons," but I never felt that I was going to run a marathon again, although I didn't officially hang it up. So to know there's something left in the tank, it's comforting to be back, but when you see others too, when you see others embrace it and join the journey, it's so much fun.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it is, and it's a special thing to do it at midnight, the dawn of a new year in Central Park and the vibe of it.

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Sam Ryan: The energy.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Now a couple years as CEO, I'll be out there on Wednesday night as well celebrating 2026 with our community. And yeah, there's just something really special about it. It's very positive and it's a fun way to start a new year. I love-

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Sam Ryan: No, I did this 10 years ago, so I don't know what's changed, but I remember the fireworks at the start and just the energy, and wow. And as you start running, the fireworks are still ... The sky is amazing. I take it in and I don't race it, but you just ... And you have the revelers from Times Square after the ball drops.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: They come up.

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Sam Ryan: They're making their way through Central Park. So all of a sudden, it's like running the marathon. You have spectators and people cheering for you along Central Park, which is just amazing. They're coming back from their parties or Times Square and they're welcoming the runners through Central Park. So it was just the electricity is amazing.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. It's really cool. Sam, I love the idea of someone like you. You cover sports obviously for a living, not only the marathon, but you cover all of our New York teams, you're on Channel 7. And so being on the reporting side of sports is what you've done for your career. What does it mean for you with these races, with marathons and other races to kind of get to be on the

other side? You're an athlete when it comes to this part of your life. You're not just covering athletes. How does the running side of what you do help you maybe on the broadcasting side in terms of relating to what it's like to be an athlete and the challenges that these professional athletes are going through with what they're trying to do?

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Sam Ryan: I think it gives me a better understanding about not only going out there and performing in whatever sport they're participating in, but the commitment and the build that goes into it, the training that it involves. When we relate it to running, for example, let's bring up Becs again. Last year, she completed the Great World Race. She ran seven marathons on seven continents in seven days, which is ... I mean, that is an amazing feat.

I mean, to understand the magnitude of that and the training, just to train for one marathon, but then to do the back to back, to back to back. And you know, and I know the recovery from one marathon, so to experience that and then to try to put that into perspective, it's just really hard to fathom. Had I not been a runner, I may look at that and say, "Wow, that's amazing?" But not really grasp. And I'm not saying that people don't grasp it, but once you experience the marathon build and the marathon recovery, to know that it's pretty difficult to run a marathon a day after a marathon, let alone seven in seven days on seven continents, it's mind-boggling.

So I think it puts into perspective the training, the commitment, and the mindset also, whether it is running. For the example, when we're covering the New York City Marathon, you see, and we talk about it all the time, 55,000 finishers, 55,000 stories. And whether it's someone running a two-hour, 31 minute PR or someone running a five-hour, 15 minute PR, that's their story, that's their moment. That's what they worked for. And to see those smiles at the finish line, to see that sense of accomplishment, we've been there and we know they poured their heart out to cross that finish line to cover the 26.2 miles. Whatever the story is, whatever obstacles along the way, there is the commitment that goes into that. Whether it's on the grid iron or on the basketball court, there is a buildup. There's training. It's the walk-on who was undrafted. It's the undrafted rookie who's finally getting the start, who went out there and proved himself on the practice squad. It is that journey, that commitment that really transcends all of sports.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's such a different thing though when it's your living. I mean, we all love to do this stuff. We love

to run. We do it for ourselves, for our mental health, for finding community, and it's awesome. It's so pure in a way what we do. But these guys and gals who are out there doing it for a living, whether it's running or the football and baseball and basketball and hockey players that you cover at Channel 7, and it's a business that they're in, and they're out there. Of course, they're playing to win and to get better, but it's also their paycheck. It's how they're going to survive in the world. And I don't know, I'm always in awe of it. And we all are sports fans in New York and we criticize our teams when they're not doing well. And let's face it, we've had a lot to criticize this football season.

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Sam Ryan: Wait, you're a Mets fan, I know that.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I'm a Mets fan. That's been a rough go.

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Sam Ryan: How are you holding up? How are you holding up?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I'm a Giants fan, not much better. The Jets. Sorry for all those Jets fans out there. At least the Knicks are doing well, but it's rough being a professional athlete. You got people criticizing you all the time, coaches being criticized all the time. We don't have to do that when we run our marathons. The people who are criticizing us are ourselves when it comes to running these marathons, right? I can't imagine what that world is like.

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Sam Ryan: Yeah, but we can be our own worst critics also. We're both still sitting here thinking about Chicago and ...

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And I know there are all listeners out there right now thinking about the good days they had and the bad days they had in 2025. Yep.

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Sam Ryan: We're all thinking about that one race where we could have done this. "What if we did this? I could have shaved off two minutes, two minutes doing this. And what went wrong?" Rather than, "Wow, I just ran another marathon. Look at this. This is a beautiful thing. I have the gift of health and I finished my 13th marathon and I should be happy with this and pat myself on the back." But rather

than that, it's, " Nope, I have to get better. What can I do to get better? How can I push myself and get those two minutes?"

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Rob Simmelkjaer: 100%.

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Sam Ryan: But that's what we do.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I remember in Boston, Sam, you were aiming to log a thousand miles this year. Did you make it?

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Sam Ryan: Yes.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Nice job.

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Sam Ryan: Yes. With two marathon builds and four half marathons, it was this year.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's a good way to run a thousand miles. Yeah. That's not too difficult.

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Sam Ryan: Yeah. I wasn't anticipating two marathons back in April, but that's what we did.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It happened. What are your goals for-

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Sam Ryan: Yeah, we have the bug.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Other than Chicago redemption, do you have any other goals for 2026?

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Sam Ryan: Just really stay healthy and rather than an 18-week training block, I don't want to say I'm going to have a more extensive training block, but I really want to focus, like I told you, on nutrition, continue with the weight training and just not take time off. Just really continue this slow build. But there's a base now where I'm not going backwards. So now that I have this base, keep this base up and

really` go into Chicago feeling strong and healthy and just getting out of my own head rather than, " Oh, I have side stitch. Oh, this is difficult." Fight it, fight it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, yeah.

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Sam Ryan: We're going to fight the Demogorgons.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Exactly. Fight the demons within. Fight those-

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Sam Ryan: That's a Stranger Things reference if you didn't-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I've heard of it. I don't watch the show, but I've heard the reference.

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Sam Ryan: Okay.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: We talked about in Boston, you had asthma as a kid and you had a doctor's note to keep from having to run the mile in school, right? So what's it like for you to look back on that young Sam who wasn't able to run a mile and see what you're doing now running these marathons?

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Sam Ryan: It was not athletic at all. I remember homecoming in high school and I was in the marching band. I was not an athlete. And between asthma and scoliosis, I never thought ... I remember the first time we ran the mile in, I believe it was middle school and I was towards the end and it was just like, " Yeah, no, this is not for me." And then with the asthma and the scoliosis, I had the note and I never had to do that again.

And to go back and to think about that, because now what's neat is I'll hear from teens and from some of my students who are amazed when I had to cancel class on ... I teach at Hofstra, I'm an adjunct professor. So on the Boston Marathon, I had to cancel my class and the day after the Chicago Marathon, I canceled class. And when I explained the reason why, because I'm running marathons, to see how my students, they were really impressed. They were, " Wow, you're running a marathon?"

So to think that the younger me would never have not even think about a marathon, but just completing a mile or two

miles and to love it. I mean, this was something I despised, but now to go out there and to not feel myself until I run, or even last night on my treadmill, just to get the miles in and to feel better, it strengthened me. Yeah, I still gasp and I get side stitched, but my breathing is better and I don't use my inhaler. I haven't used my inhaler in a while.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: You ran, I think, your first marathon or two with an inhaler, right? Just in case.

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Sam Ryan: With an inhaler.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Sam Ryan: Oh, yeah. Yeah. My first couple of marathons and races with the inhaler in my pouch. I believe my New York City Marathon finish picture from the photo from 2013, I'm holding my inhaler up in my hand. I have a Hershey bar in one hand and my inhaler in the other hand, just because I didn't know. I had never tackled that distance, nor had I at that stage run even a 5k and just pushed it where I just put my foot on the gas and pushed it because I just didn't know am I going to start wheezing? And once I learned and played with the distance, I'm like, "Okay, I'm getting stronger and healthier."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Did you just grow out of it, the asthma and the need for the inhalers? How did that happen? I know I've spoken to people who had asthma or exercise-induced asthma as a young person, and then it just got better as they grew and their lungs developed. What was the story for you?

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Sam Ryan: Yeah, I don't know. I remember in my 20s going to a pulmonologist and having the test done, and I was very dependent on my inhaler. Anytime I would get sick, have the inhaler nearby, but just wouldn't push it. And I don't know what the science is behind it or the medical terminology behind it, but I do know, and nor do I want to say to anyone with asthma, "If you go run, you'll be okay," because I don't know. But I do know that gradually, when it's exercise-induced asthma, as I started gradually adding distance, my capacity was ...

It's like, "Okay, now I can go. I'm building up my

stamina." And rather than running to the corner, now I can run to the corner and around the corner. Now, I can run a whole loop around the block. Now, I can run one and a half times around the block. And I didn't feel winded. And I think that is just the growth and the strength. And I don't know what the medical terminology or their physiology is behind that, but it works. For me, it does.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. All right. I'm going to make you talk sports with me for a quick minute here before we say goodbye. So the New York sports scene right now, a mixed bag, let's say. The last team to win a pro team to win a championship in New York, well, it was actually the Liberty. They won a championship not long ago. What do you think the next professional sports team in New York to win a championship will be?

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Sam Ryan: Well, Gotham just won. Gotham FC.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, yes, that's right. Major sport as well.

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Sam Ryan: In the National Women's Soccer League.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yep. Okay. Yep. And they've won a couple times. They've won a couple times actually in a fairly short history. Yeah.

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Sam Ryan: Well, the Jets and Giants, we know this is not their season and-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: They seem a long way off.

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Sam Ryan: The Liberty are strong. The Knicks, they're having a really good season. They just won the NBA Cup. I do know that they're not finished.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Do you think they have a chance to be-

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Sam Ryan: Do I think they have a chance? Absolutely.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah.

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Sam Ryan: Absolutely. They're a strong team. They're a deep team. Their bench is solid. So, yeah, I think the Knicks have a really good shot.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Can you imagine Sam how crazy New York will go if the New York Knicks win a championship? I'm in my 50s and I don't remember the Knicks winning a champion. They won a couple times in the early 70s, but there are 50 year old Knicks fans who have never seen the Knicks win a championship. And this is a real basketball city. So I think the city would lose it if the Knicks made it to the finals and certainly if they won.

00:33:07

Sam Ryan: And they've come close against the Spurs, but now look what they're building. And I really like this team. Let's also look at our NHL teams. And when you look at the Eastern Conference and you look at the Metro Division, that Metro Division is also close. So you could be in third or fourth place, but still within two or three points of first. So really, that's anyone's. Wouldn't count the Devils- Rangers or Islanders out either. We'll see how that shakes down.

Yankees, we're still waiting to see on Cody Bellinger and we're still waiting to see are the Yankees finished? Is Brian Cashman finished? But the Yankees had a good team. They got beat by a better team, the Blue Jays. And we'll see what the Yankees do in the remaining of this off season. As for the Mets, you know. I mean, Mets said goodbye to Peter Alonso. They said goodbye to Edwin Diaz. They said goodbye to Jeff McNeil. It's tough for Mets fans right now. We'll see what David Sterns, if he makes any more moves or is this... And also, I forgot to say Brandon Nimmo as well.

So is this a dismantling of the team as we know it? Yeah. Rebuild or do they add star players? We'll see. We'll see what the Mets will put out there on the diamond this year, but the Yankees do have a good team and they are getting back a healthy Gerrit Cole. So keep that in mind too. Max Fried had a stellar season, last season for the Yankees. And now Gerrit Cole, while he'll miss opening day, he'll be back probably late April, early May. You have two aces now. That's pretty amazing.

00:35:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right. So I'm putting my money on the

Knicks as the next New York team to win a championship and that would really be fun to see. So we will see, Sam. I'm looking forward to seeing you out there in Central Park on New Year's Eve. And of course, looking forward to checking you out all year long on Channel 7. Thanks for your awesome coverage of all of our events. And I know we'll see you for the United Airlines NYC Half on the air as well this spring. So can't wait to see out there, but thanks for joining us and happy New Year.

00:35:30

Sam Ryan: Oh, thank you for having me and for everyone out there running. I mean, we are our own worst critics, obviously, but you're doing it. We are all doing this and we're doing this because we all share this love and passion for running. And I'm so thankful for New York Road Runners and for all of you and the support of the running community. You guys are all awesome.

00:35:51

Rob Simmelkjaer: Awesome. Thanks, Sam. Happy New Year.

00:35:54

Sam Ryan: Happy New Year to you.

00:35:56

Rob Simmelkjaer: 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.

Christina Gibbons is a New York Road Runners member who four years ago wasn't sure she could run a full mile. Since then, she's only completed four half marathons. Her running journey hasn't been without some setbacks. She had to pause training twice due to injuries. Experiences that taught her patience and a deeper appreciation for building strength, both physically and mentally. Christina has also built quite a following on TikTok by sharing the ups and downs of her journey and highlighting how running has helped her mental health. Something we talk about a lot here at New York Road Runners. And the beginning of the new year is a great time to think about that aspect of running as well. Here's Meb with Christina.

00:37:04

Meb: Thanks, Rob. Christina, welcome to Set the Pace Podcast.

How are you feeling today?

00:37:09

Christina Gibbons: Feeling pretty good.

00:37:11

Meb: Well, we're so delighted to have you. When you think back the time when you were running, you didn't feel like you run one mile hard, what finally helped you believe that you can go that distance?

00:37:21

Christina Gibbons: Honestly, slowing down and that it's not about the pace. I think beginning when I started, I really wanted to improve, so I needed to put that mindset of running as fast as I can aside. So I always tell people that if they're just getting into running to slow down and it will help them love running, not hate it. And ultimately, that was my goal.

00:37:45

Meb: It's a good call. Some people have the misconception that I got to go hard and survive, but slow is wise.

00:37:51

Christina Gibbons: Yes.

00:37:52

Meb: You have had to stop due to injury twice. And what did you learn about yourself during those breaks and what helped you come back each time?

00:38:03

Christina Gibbons: Yeah, those injuries were not fun. I learned, honestly, during those breaks, I learned a lot about proper fueling, proper warming up. I learned PT exercises. And most importantly, I learned that I needed to actively make a decision to take recovery days, or else my body was going to choose those days for me.

00:38:25

Meb: Yeah. Injuries are part of the sport, but it's not how many times you fall, but how many times you get back up. So you tell your stories on TikTok about mental side of running. What made you want to share that publicly and how has running helped you feel stronger mentally?

00:38:41

Christina Gibbons: Yeah. I always say running is a mental game. I even think the rest and recovery days are part of that

game as well. Running is hard. There are so many points during a run and even the moments before a run where my brain will convince me that I either can't do it or don't want to do it. And it really isn't about wanting to do it or not because in order to build mental toughness, we sometimes have to do the things that we don't want to do. Of course, there's a fine line and we have to be a little bit easier on ourselves. But I always say if you don't feel like going for a run, do it anyways and then see how you feel during it, you might surprise yourself.

00:39:21

Meb: Christina, that's a wise advice because the hardest part I tell people is lacing your shoes up and getting out of the door. And once you get out after a mile, so you will have that energy and endorphin.

00:39:34

Christina Gibbons: Yes.

00:39:34

Meb: But preparation is the key success, but you have said that racing in Central Park made you feel connected to the running community. What does being part of the NYRR races mean to you now?

00:39:47

Christina Gibbons: I love running in Central Park. I really never get tired of it. And when I first started running, it was honestly just a personal challenge just to see how much that I can achieve. And as I got into racing over the past few years with NYRR, it connected me with a lot of people who share the same hobby, same mindset. I've also met so many lovely people from NYRR volunteer opportunities and races. So it truly has just built up the running community for me and I've loved it.

00:40:22

Meb: Yeah, definitely. The New York Road Runners do an amazing job, but also been in Central Park. Some people ask me, "Can you live in New York?" I said, "Well, if I'm close enough to Central Park, I think I can." So the community is pretty, pretty deep.

00:40:32

Christina Gibbons: Exactly.

00:40:34

Meb: So you have built a following online while also training. How do you balance creating content with focusing

on your own running goals?

00:40:43

Christina Gibbons: I mean, I genuinely enjoy training and running for leisurely purposes. I feel like creating content fits in perfectly, especially when training because I wanted to show people the realistic side of training that some days I won't hit my paces, that my hill workouts are actually hard. And then also sometimes that I don't always take my easy days easy and that I have to remind myself to do that. So creating content really hasn't felt like an extra thing to do because I'm excited to share my experience with people in hopes that other people can join such a welcome community.

00:41:26

Meb: That's a wonderful community it is. And so saying that how hard it was the first time you ran a mile or I didn't think I can go now to be able to be embraced in the community, can you tell us the lessons you learned?

00:41:37

Christina Gibbons: Yeah. I mean, first of all is that I built a lot of mental toughness and a lot of discipline from just going from one mile to like now I go. My long runs are like 12 miles on weekends, which is just so fulfilling. And like I said before, I think just being part of these races and this community, I've been able to also meet so many people to run with as well that have really helped me, again, build the strength and really build the encouragement as well to keep running.

00:42:17

Meb: New York Road Runners has done a great job trying to bring the camaraderie together and positive energy and many great runs. So thank you for being at Set the Pace and best wishes.

00:42:26

Christina Gibbons: Thank you.

00:42:28

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you so much, Christina for joining us. Thanks for being a member of New York Runners. Thanks to all of you, by the way. Over 90,000 of you who come into the new year as members of New York Road Runners, we are so thrilled to have you all as part of our community. Now on to the final part of our show, today is Meb Minute.

00:42:45

Meb: Off season is a great way and a slow pressure for goals. Sometimes you tell those goals to your friends or partners or your training partners and things like that. Big goals start with tiny ones. For example, saying, "Hey, I just want to run this many miles, especially New Year resolution." As they come up to just say, "Hey, I just want to run 15 miles a week or I want to run 50 miles this month," whatever that might be. If you hit your weekly runs, that's a win. If you do your strength training, that's another win.

Win is tax. Confidence build up from overcoming situations and from building confidence and doing the small things. After the good race for me as an elite athlete, it's always great to say, "I want to be able to set a new goal." In fact, my brother Howie, my manager, I tell him, "All right, that went really well." Sometimes I say, "You're good as your last race." So that race went really well and say, "Hey, sign up for Boston Marathon or for the London Marathon or Chicago Marathon. Let's go after that."

So focusing on the process and showing up daily and improve is very, very important. I think momentum, you got to write the momentum. And it is a beautiful thing when things going your way, when they click. For example, I've been very fortunate when things click, like the 2004 Olympics, I was already signed up for New York City Marathon and you have to make some sacrifice. I have to pass on, visit to the White House as an Olympian to get ready because you want to prove people wrong that, "Meb got silver medal. It was a fluke." I'm like, "No, it's not. I'm going to show it to you in New York." So you train for those things. So make sure you set your goals right away. And again, if you had a bad race, that's okay. You just got to set a new goal and you would be amazed what the body can do. When the mind and the body meets, amazing things can happen.

00:44:36

Rob Simmeljaer: All right, folks, that does it for our first 2026 episode of Set the Pace. We want to thank our guest, Sam Ryan from WABC and Christina Gibbons. Once again, happy New Year to everybody out there. Hope to see each and every one of you at a race or a run, a group training event, maybe out there on one of our virtual runs or somewhere in our New York Road Runners calendar. We hope that you all join us somewhere and we hope you have a great, great year. Remember, if you like the episode, subscribe, leave a rating or a comment so we can hear from you. Have a great, great 2026. Enjoy the miles. We'll see you next week.