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Jordan Litz: So my plan is to run the marathon and do the shows, and anybody that has worked with me over the past five years in Wicked knows that I never call out of shows unless I am on my deathbed.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey everybody, and welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners presented by Peloton. I'm your host Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Road Runners, and I am flying solo today. Becs is away, so we'll miss her this week. Look forward to catching up with her next week. Well, for a lot of people, this past weekend was all about the BMW Berlin Marathon. It was the 51st edition of that race and it featured more than 54,000 finishers, including a lot of New York Road Runners members. And a number of New York Road Runners Set the Pace guests in the past, including Patina Miller, who ran with New York Road Runners Team for Kids. And Becs's partner, Austin, who was one of a few hundred runners to earn their sixth star from the Abbott World Marathon Majors this past week. And that's why I'm solo because Becs was in Berlin. They're still making their way back from Germany.

It was great, by the way, to see that moment on Becs's Instagram. It was beautiful. They exchanged a long hug and you could see how much it meant for Austin to get that sixth star medal. We were so thrilled, by the way, to help Austin get in. You might remember an episode some time back when we told Austin that we were using one of our entries for Austin to have that opportunity and he did a great job, so that was terrific. Congratulations to him, to Patina, to all of our TFK runners and all of our New York Road Runners members over in Berlin. Listen, I know that it was a hot day over there. I was getting messages from people all through the weekend, all concerned about the weather. Looks like it got up to about 80 degrees on Sunday in Berlin, and that is not easy. It sounds like the humidity was up as well.

So congratulations to everybody who managed to get to the finish line over there in Berlin. That is not easy to run in those conditions. And so, if it wasn't a PR, I know a lot of people go to Berlin hoping to run that fast time because it's flat, but those conditions can definitely counteract the flatness of the course. So congratulations to everybody who finished in Berlin and I hope you guys had a great experience over there, as I did last year for the 50th Berlin Marathon. On the elite side, it was a Swiss sweep in the wheelchair division. Marcel Hug won with a time of 1:21:46. Manuela Schar one on the women's wheelchair side, 1:35:08. And it was a Kenyan sweep in the open division.

Sebastian Sawe with time of 2:02:16 was the men's open division winner. And it was Rosemary Wanjiru with a time of 2:21:04 to win the women's open division in Berlin.

Well, back here in New York City, we are officially in fall. And fall marathon season is in full swing as everybody starts to gear up for the TCS New York City Marathon. We had our 18-mile training run in Central Park on Sunday. Over 4,000 runners took on the hills of Central Park in a long run ahead of a lot of people's fall marathons, including my own by the way. I ran that training run for the first time since 2013, which is the last time I ran the TCS New York City Marathon. And man, oh man, let me tell you, that is no joke going around Central Park three times, up Harlem Hill three times. I just don't know that I ever will do that again. That was really an incredibly difficult run. But the good news was, unlike in Berlin, the weather was absolutely perfect for all of the runners.

I was so glad to see that. We had a really a picture-perfect morning. I actually felt like the weather got better as the morning went on. A little breeze picked up and it just felt terrific. I ran four miles before, so a total of 22. I'll talk about that in a second. The winners of that, and it's funny to talk about winners for a training run, but we had some folks go out who ran very, very quickly. Danqing Liu on the men's side, 1:48:12. Jacob Caswell, non-binary winner, 1:51:30. And Alissa Kolarik on the women's side, 1:59:03. So great times there. But yes, for so many people, this was really all about training for their fall marathons. Almost everybody, of course, training for New York there, but we had a number of Chicago folks getting ready as well. That race was three weeks out from Chicago and it was the perfect spot for me to do my last really long run.

I'm now officially into the taper mode and my long runs will be getting shorter the next couple of weeks. I don't have Becs, so I can't really bounce off of her much of what happened for me. But I did send her my day and I actually felt really good about it. I ran just about 15 seconds on average over my goal marathon pace for that full 22-mile run. I ran about 11 miles inside the training run at marathon pace and considering the hills in Central Park and the flatness of Chicago, I felt really good coming out of that. I think that's one of the things that in New York we really have going for us. Whether we're running New York and you need those hills to train for the hills of the TCS New York City Marathon, Central Park is really the perfect place to train for our marathon here in New York because of the hills and the preparation you've got to do.

And as I said, when I spoke at the starting line, for someone like me who's running Chicago, a very flat course, I'm hoping that running Harlem Hill and Cat Hill and the

Three Sisters three times this weekend is going to make Chicago feel downhill. I really hope that that hill training is going to help me feel like I'm running with a wind at my back in Chicago.

So we'll see how it goes, but it's really a great thing for our running community here in New York to have that opportunity to train not only in Central Park with those hills, but all the support that you've got when you run in an event like that. The fluid stations, the Maurten Gel station that we had as well. So much support out there both in terms of the things you need as well as just the other runners pulling for each other, the staff, the volunteers with the cowbells all out there. There's no better way to do a long run than in the New York Road Runners TCS New York City Marathon training series. So congrats to everybody who ran this weekend here in New York.

Coming up in just a moment on Set the Pace, we have the fastest man on Broadway joining the show, Jordan Litz, who's currently starring in Wicked on Broadway, earned that title earlier this month, breaking the tape in the inaugural Broadway Mile at the New Balance 5th Avenue Mile. He'll be on in just a few minutes to talk about his next role as a marathoner in the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. Then a little later on in this show, Harlem Run's Torian Wiggins will be Meb's guest on today's member moment. And then finally, Meb will continue his mile by mile countdown to the TCS New York City Marathon with miles 16, 17, and 18. Those are some challenging miles. You're getting up into the Bronx during that stretch, I believe. And so you got to get through those miles to get back down through Harlem into 5th Avenue and of course those final miles in the park. So definitely want to hear Meb's advice on taking on those miles as well.

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Speaker 3: As you head into peak training. Don't let nutrition slow you down. Let CookUnity's award-winning chefs fuel your run with endurance-boosting dishes hand-picked by a sports dietician. Every meal is delivered to your door and ready to eat in two minutes or less. Head to cookunity.com/NYRR and use the code `marathonmeals` to get 50% off your first week.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Jordan Litz is a Broadway actor and singer currently starring as Fiyero in Wicked. He's a California native and a former competitive swimmer, and he's built a career on stage with performances in national tours as well as regional productions before he made his big Broadway debut. Now off the stage, he's still a passionate athlete who recently took first place in the first-ever Broadway Mile at the New Balance 5th Avenue Mile. This November,

he'll step into an entirely new spotlight running his first-ever marathon at the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. Jordan, we've had some challenges technically, but we've got you back on. Thank you so much for joining us on Set the Pace. We appreciate it.

00:09:07

Jordan Litz: Dude, thanks for your patience. We're going to make it happen. It's going to be a great chat.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I want to start with your run on 5th Avenue and what that was like for you. It was such a fun event, this Broadway Mile that we pulled together, these amazing actors and people from behind the scenes, executives from shows and theaters from around the city. You guys raised \$15,000 for a great cause, Broadway Cares, Actors Equity Fights AIDS. So what was that like for you both to get to compete at that distance of a mile and also to be around so many of your colleagues and people in that amazing New York City theater community?

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Jordan Litz: Just to be able to get to be a part of the 5th Avenue Mile was really special for me. I've watched that race now for several years. It's been one that I've been excited to be a part of. I was actually signed up to run the race even before the Broadway Mile became a thing. I was already going to run it this year, and then New York Road Runners and the Broadway League and Broadway Cares all came together and through this Broadway Mile thing, which made it just even more special. And then to get to tap into the competitive background, that side of my life was also really special. So it was an incredible day.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. And obviously, very different swimming and running. But at that distance of a mile, did it feel similar to you? What kind of distances did you swim when you were competing in the pool and how did it feel maybe similar or different competing at that one mile running distance?

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Jordan Litz: It was relatively similar. That's about as far as I would go distance-wise and time-wise. I went to Olympic trials in both the breaststrokes 100, breaststroke 200, breaststroke 200 IM, 400 IM. So the longest race I did was about four minutes. So to get up and do a little extra, an extra minute, is still within the range of my ability. But

three hours, I don't know. We'll see how that goes on November 2nd.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. So that is a very different kettle of fish, if you will. What inspire you to sign up for your first marathon?

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Jordan Litz: There were several things. I was looking for a new outlet to challenge myself. So running seemed like the natural progression from swimming. It's an aerobic sport and it's an accessible sport. All you need is a pair of shoes and a road and you're good to go. You don't need any fancy things. You don't need a pool, you don't need any technical equipment. You can literally just go out and do it. If there's a sidewalk, you can run. So that was really appealing to me.

Then the other thing, round about 2022 in the fall, Wicked was in Chicago. I was on the national tour with Wicked at that point, and we happened to be in Chicago and the Chicago Marathon took place while we were there. And so I got to walk out of my apartment that I was staying in and be able to see those elite athletes and everybody else sprinting down the road. And that really inspired me. Then obviously Kipchoge had just broken the world record, I think, in Berlin around then, so I became aware of him. And I fell in love with his work ethic, and his personality, and who he was, and what he's done for the sport, and that really inspired me to want to get out on the road. So it was a few combinations of things, but it's been a blast.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's amazing. And that's a fun tie into what we got going on the Chicago Marathon coming up in a couple of weeks, which by the way, I'm running, Jordan, so-

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Jordan Litz: You are?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... it'll be my first time running Chicago. Yep. Very excited about that. We've been talking-

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Jordan Litz: Wait, so-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... about that on the podcast the last few months.

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Jordan Litz: ... how many of the majors will this be for you now?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That'll be my fourth.

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Jordan Litz: Which ones are you missing?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I will still after this need Boston and London. So my goal is to qualify for Boston in Chicago. That's the hope. We'll see how that goes. We'll need a good weather day.

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Jordan Litz: So what do you need? A 255? What do you need for that?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Oh, you're so kind. I'm a little older than you think I am. So I actually, in my current age group, which I'm aging up to another age group actually for the 2027 Boston Marathon, I need a 330 and I ran a 327 in Berlin, but-

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Jordan Litz: Oh, come on.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... minus the buffer and everything, I'll probably need to shave a few minutes off of that, so we'll see. But hey, if I get a good weather day, I think I got a shot, I think I got a shot.

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Jordan Litz: Well, from what I remember when I was there in Chicago, obviously I didn't run it, but the weather felt perfect to me. So hopefully you get another day like that.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's what we're talking about, and hopefully you get a day like that on November 2nd. It makes such a difference to folks when they get a good weather day. I've seen both sides of it. We had a beautiful day last year in New York. The year before that, not so much. So it's just all about catching that right weather and I'm obviously hoping that you and everybody gets a great day. How's the training

been going? So we know you ran the mile for 5th Avenue, and that's obviously a little sprint compared to a marathon, the training. How has it all been going and how has it been balancing your marathon training with acting in Wicked on Broadway?

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Jordan Litz: I'll not lie to you. It is really hard. When I started, this is going to sound crazy, but I did a 26-week training block.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Jordan Litz: And I'll tell you why. I'll tell you why. I kind of just started running this year, to be honest. I had dabbled in it, threw in a couple of runs within my normal training regiment here and there from 2023 up until the start of this year. And then I ran in March or April, and that is when I kind of started to take running more seriously. And so I don't have a lot of miles on my legs. I have a lot of miles on my shoulders from swimming. But as far as being able to take the beating of what a training for a marathon entails, I wanted to start really, really slow and build up to those high 40-mile weeks.

So those first couple of weeks were 15 to 20 miles just kind of getting used to the pounding and incorporating it into my normal lifestyle. So to start, I was running five days a week and lifting two days a week. And about 13 weeks into the block, I was not doing well. I was not surviving the runs, I was hitting all of my paces, but the effort to get there was not what I wanted it to be. So I dropped that to four runs a week and still lifted twice, and then I cut caffeine, I cut artificial sugars, and anything that was going to upset my stomach because that's also been a large challenge for me is figuring out the gut training aspect of it. And ever since then, it has been smooth sailing. The training has been fun. It's been challenging, but not unattainable. So yeah, 26-week training block. But I feel like it's going to pay off because I just did a 20 miler last Saturday before two shows and felt great.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow. First of all, thank you for sharing all that. I love that story and it really does come down to finding what works for you and everybody's going to have something that's going to work for them. A number of runs a week mileage, it has to balance that with the rest of your

life and what your preexisting running experience was. So it makes sense to me actually that you would've thought about a 26-week block when you really hadn't been running. I mean, people ask me, okay, if I don't run, what do you think is a good amount of time to train for a marathon? I think half a year makes a lot of sense because you need that gradual build up to keep from getting hurt. And so you did that, plus you took a little bit of load off by cutting that one day a week and it seems like it's working for you, which is fantastic.

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Jordan Litz: Yeah, it really is. Well, and then the other thing that I incorporated was I'm doing eight Broadway shows a week, 52 weeks a year. So I figured it was probably okay if I dropped off one day of running and counted those eight Broadway shows as an extra day of running or an easy day of running. So I felt like, yeah, that kind of makes sense and I won't be too hard on myself for cutting that day.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I think that is really interesting. Really it's the breath work, right? Because you're out there singing, the amount of breath control and stamina that you need. Especially I got to imagine on those days where you're doing a matinee and then a show at night, that's some serious stamina. Do you find that there really is that crossover between performing and the stamina endurance that that takes and what you do out on the road?

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Jordan Litz: Absolutely, dude. Absolutely. I've had so many... Well, I won't name names, but I've had Fiyero's say that Dancing Through Life, Fiyero's big number, is taxing and they're out of breath by the time they get to this big note that you're on the statue holding this big long note. And because of the swimming background and now because of all of this running that I've been doing, I can honestly say that that has never been something that has even crossed my mind being out of breath or having my heart rate spike too high. Every now and then I'll wear my watch in rehearsal just because I'm curious like, "Hey, how hard am I working during Dancing Through Life? I'd be curious to know what's my max heart rate here." And my max heart rate's 119 during Dancing Through Life. So I think because of all of that aerobic training, it has just made it so simple and so comfortable to survive the rigors of eight shows a week.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's so interesting. A 119 is a very

manageable number if you're trying to get through and your voice has to stay even, right? The audience can't know-

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Jordan Litz: For sure.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... that you're working that hard, so you've got to be at a point where you're working, but super comfortable.

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Jordan Litz: Well, yeah, and Fiyero's philosophy of life is Dancing Through Life. Everything should be cool. It should be smooth. You're gliding through life, so it has to seem like it's easy and comfortable for him. So if you're up there and you're huffing and puffing through the song, the audience is not going to believe anything you say.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. This is a, it's great, great behind the scenes of what it's like to perform and run at the same time. I'm sure you heard the stories about Taylor Swift running on a treadmill, and performing, rehearsing her songs for her tour while running on a treadmill. So you really see how that VO2 max really carries over to live performance.

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Jordan Litz: I actually had not heard that before. She practiced her songs on the treadmill?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. She would get on a treadmill, and actually I think she was either lightly running or at least fast walking, and she would try to get through her whole set list on a treadmill. And that was part of her preparation for her big Eras Tour. So yeah, you're not alone in seeing that connection.

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Jordan Litz: Interesting, interesting. Yeah, I can see that for sure. I think I'd probably have to walk at an incline or something like that because I don't know that the bouncing of running would be all that conducive to helping me figure out how to sing Dancing Through Life in a healthy way. But walking at an incline I think works.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. It's so interesting. So tell us

about your journey as an actor. How did it start? When did you realize that the stage was the place for you, and how did you manage that journey from California to Broadway?

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Jordan Litz: Well, I failed as an athlete and I had to find something else that I liked to do and that I had a skill for. Yeah, as I mentioned earlier, I went to Olympic trials in 2012, swam the IMs and breaststrokes. And unfortunately, Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte went to those trials as well, and-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: They were pretty good, pretty tough competition.

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Jordan Litz: They're pretty good. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, they're the greatest in history. If Michael Phelps doesn't exist, Ryan Lochte is the new Michael Phelps. So those guys were just behemoths in the sport of swimming. And look, I wasn't even close to them anyway, so it was either wait around four more years and try again in 2016 for Rio or move on with your life. And I decided to move on with my life and it was the right choice because those guys didn't retire anyway, and they came back. So I decided to go back to school. I studied vocal performance for maybe a year or so in school. And in the process, as part of the curriculum, I had to do a musical. And I didn't want to do it. I wasn't interested. I wanted to be a session vocalist in the studio and record for pop artists, and jazz artists, and things like that as maybe a backup vocalist, but I fell in love with it.

I was the first person to have all of my notes and words memorized. I showed up to rehearsal every single day so prepared because I was so excited about this prospect of marrying acting with singing and movement and all of that. I became obsessed in the way that all great athletes become obsessed with their sport. And so after that production of Sound of Music, I did a couple of smaller community theater/regional productions just to make sure that, yeah, I have a love for it, but do I actually have the skill set to take this and make it something professional? And because there are two very distinct things. I love running. I'm not going to go compete with Conor Mantz in a marathon to qualify for Olympics or be a professional.

So I wanted to make sure that I knew that I had that ability to... If I wanted to go to new or somewhere else and be a professional performer that I could do it. And fortunately, the feedback was really, really positive. So I ended up going to work at Disney World for three and a

half years. The plan was three months. I ended up staying there for three and a half years because I was having so much fun. I actually met my wife there who was a Disney princess at the time, and so we met working at Disney World together and bonded over our desire to move to New York and conquer that-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: What roles did you have, what were you cast as at Disney World?

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Jordan Litz: People are always like, "Ah, he was a prince. He was a prince." I actually was never a prince. I did the singing show. So I was a Dapper Dan, the barbershop quartet on Main Street. I did this group called The Voices of Liberty, which is an a cappella group in Epcot. I also did Gaston at the Beauty and the Beast musical. And several other things. I recorded for parades and fireworks shows and all of that. It was a dream. I would go back in a heartbeat. I loved it there. And some of my best friends to this day still work for Disney. But yeah, my wife and I met there and we moved up to New York together and not, I want to say five months after working in New York, I got cast in the National Tour of Wicked. And five, six years later, I'm now the longest running Fiyero in Broadway history. So it's been a-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Jordan Litz: ... crazy, crazy journey, but one that I wouldn't trade for anything.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow, what a great journey.

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Jordan Litz: I loved it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: A life of a performer is so interesting. It's so different and fascinating. You have to be a bit of a rarity. I mean, someone who competed at an Olympic trials for any sport to then be a Broadway performer. Do you know of anybody else who was an athlete at that level who has been on Broadway as well?

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Jordan Litz: I can only think of one. His name is Cody Simpson. He is a huge pop star in Australia. He was also growing up a stellar swimmer until 15, 16 years old, and then he became wildly famous as a pop star. So he quit swimming to become a pop star. He does all of that. And then he came over here and he was in a production of, I think he was Dimitri and Anastasia for maybe six months to a year or something like that. After that was all over, he said, "You know what? I miss swimming. I want to do that again." And he jumped back into swimming and he went to Olympic trials for Australia. He came up short, I want to say he was 4th or 5th in the 100 fly. So he came up short to that top two to make it to the Olympics. But still that's unbelievable to all of a sudden just say, "Ah, I'm going to stop performing for a little while and just tackle swimming." And within a year and a half or two years, he already jumped to the ranks and almost made-

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Jordan Litz: ... the Olympics for Australia. And Australia is one of the best swimming countries in the world.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Always. It's always the US and Australia going head-to-head-

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Jordan Litz: Exactly.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... in the pool at the Olympics.

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Jordan Litz: Yeah, exactly. So I think he's the only one that I can think of that was at a very, very elite level in athletics and also a performer at an elite level.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow. It's incredible. The people with that kind of combination of talents do not grow on trees. So all I can say is it's more than a little impressive. And I have a feeling you're going to show another impressive performance on November 2nd. So I'm curious about Wicked and what it's been like as the longest running Fiyero you said on Broadway and your castmates. What's it been like to watch the movie and how the movie has succeeded? I'm really curious as a stage performer, what it was like when that

movie came out and you saw the success and the cultural impact that the movie ended up having as well.

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Jordan Litz: There has been no better time to be a part of Wicked than this last three years or so. I was fortunate enough to be cast in the 20th anniversary cast of Wicked, and this was back in 2023. The show opened October 30th, 2003. In that process that I got to do a lot of unbelievably cool things surrounding the 20th anniversary. And then the following year, the first movie came out, which took this unbelievable musical phenomenon to a worldwide stage. There had already been productions in Japan, and Korea, and Germany, and all over South America, and it was a worldwide phenomenon before. But now it was a household name. Everybody throughout the entire world knew what Wicked was and had the access to be able to watch it. So our ticket sales went through the roof. Wicked is always sold out, but the prices were just astronomical.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Jordan Litz: People were clamoring to get in and see our show, because the part one of the movie was just the first act. So you could come and see ours and know what happens in the end. So we had so many first time people that were coming to see Wicked for the very first time. I got to meet people at the stage door after all the shows, and they were so excited to know what happens and get to meet us. And it's the best time to be a part of Wicked. And now with part two coming out somewhere, I want to say, a couple weeks after I run the marathon, I'm sure that there will be a new resurgence of people wanting to come and see the show again.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it's just turned into an unbelievable franchise, if you will. It started on Broadway and now to see what it's doing in theaters on the movie side is incredible. Did you ever get a chance to hang out with Jonathan Bailey, or Ariana Grande, or Cynthia Erivo? Was there a stage and a movie cast kind of get together or maybe give Jonathan Bailey some tips on how to play Prince Fieryo?

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Jordan Litz: So first off, I would never give that guy tips. He killed it. He was so good, man. It's obviously a

different medium. The song was in a different key. They had different scenes. It felt like somebody running a marathon in Alphaflys and somebody running a marathon barefoot. It's just like a completely different kind of feel. But we had a screening for the original Broadway cast, the current Broadway cast, and a bunch of the movie cast and people involved with the movie maybe a month before the first movie came out. So we all got to sit in a room at the Director's Guild of America Theater somewhere, I want to say, on 57th Street. And we all got to watch the movie together. And it was this unreal experience. It was almost like watching live theater. There were standing ovations after every song. The energy in the room I can't even describe to you.

And that's the only time that I've seen Wicked the movie, because the experience was so amazing that I don't want to go back and watch it again because I feel like I'll watch it with a more critical eye this time around. And I want to leave it in my memory as this perfect night, this perfect experience. But yeah, Jon Chu was there. I got to have a lovely 25, 30-minute conversation, Jon Chu's the director of the movie, with him. And he is a Wicked nerd, man. He wanted to talk about nothing but Wicked, and it made me so excited for part two of the movie because I could tell how much he truly cares about this story and doing it justice. I didn't get to meet Ariana, I didn't get to meet Cynthia, but I know that a lot of the witches did because they have the special green and pink camaraderie that is so unique within our community. And I don't think Jonathan Bailey was there, but maybe for the part two screening, we will get a chance to bump into each other.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's really cool. What a great story of having a chance to watch that with those two casts together. Very, very cool. And yeah, your point is so interesting. I mean, obviously film is such a completely different process and it really is. If you got to run the marathon broken up one mile at a time, that's kind of what it's like when you-

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Jordan Litz: Oh, exactly, dude.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. You're not doing it in one fell swoop when you put a movie together.

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Jordan Litz: Well, and doing it, you got to think of it like running the marathon on a track indoors with very controlled

settings. It's still impressive. It's just a different kind of thing. You're not singing it live, it's edited. There's a lot of post-production that goes into it that changes the feel of it.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, no doubt about it. It's a fascinating parallel. So what are your goals when you show up to the starting line in Staten Island on November 2nd? Do you have a time goal in mind? Is it just to finish? What are you hoping to do that day?

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Jordan Litz: Am I crazy for wanting to try to run as close to three as possible?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Ooh, three hours. I love it. That is a legit goal for a first time marathoner. But with your athletic pedigree, I don't think it's crazy. I don't know much about how your training has been. What have your mile splits been in your long runs?

00:33:35

Jordan Litz: Well, so I'm trying to take my long runs conversational, which is I've been using Runna. Shout-out Runna. It's unbelievable. It's been an unbelievable source of information and inspiration because I'm training completely alone. I think I've had maybe a couple people join me on a couple 6-mile, 7-mile easy runs, but the majority of my training has been completely solo. It's been fine. My 20-mile run last week was like, I think I was 856 pace for 20 miles with average heart rate of 124. So it was really, really cozy, felt nice. I've got a 20-mile progressive run in a couple of weeks, and that will be really, really telling for me on whether or not three hours is going to be possible.

00:34:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, because Runna will push you to hit some time goals in some of those long runs. They'll ask you to hold a fast pace for a good number of miles just to see if you can do it. So you will learn some things. And it's interesting, I mentioned that I'm running Chicago, so a big topic of conversation between me and Becs Gentry, who's normally my co-host, has been how hard to go at those long runs. And this is my 5th marathon. I've normally done exactly what you do, keep it very conversational, and a lot of my long runs have been that way.

But Becs has pushed me to push myself a little harder in

some of these long runs. So I ran a half marathon Labor Day weekend, and I ran 20 miles that day, but the half I ran at marathon pace. And I ran 22 this past weekend. A good chunk of it was in the 18-mile training run that we have at Road Runners, and I ran about 11 of that at my marathon pace. So I'm trying to just establish in my mind that, all right, I can hold this pace for a while so that I have the confidence when I come out in Chicago to know I can do it for a sustained period. So Runna will push you to do that as well. And you'll learn a lot between now and the marathon, I'm sure.

00:35:47

Jordan Litz: Yeah, exactly. I did the Bronx 10 Miler a couple of weeks or a week ago, and my long run for that day was 15 miles, but 10 miles at marathon pace, so that worked out perfectly. I was able to get out on the road, do a couple mile warmup, and then do the race. And Runna had me at seven-minute miles for a projected 303 or something like that, and it felt super cozy. So I think-

00:36:17

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's awesome.

00:36:17

Jordan Litz: ... maybe if the weather is right and the conditions are good and I hit my taper just right, who knows? Maybe I can drop that down to a 6:52 pace and yeah, I have no idea what I'm capable of.

00:36:33

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's going to be fun to see what happens. So everybody out there listening, we're all going to track you right now. Let's see. We can put your name in the app as soon as it's ready, and I want to see how it goes. And I'll be there at the finish line to see you come across as well. But that's really an awesome goal. And listen, it's your first one, so no matter what happens, you're going to feel great when it's over and you're setting a bar for yourself, right? If you decide you want to do it again, you'll know what went well, what didn't go well, and you go from there.

00:37:05

Jordan Litz: Yes, exactly. And I hope that this experience instills a love of distance running in me, and it doesn't make me hate it, you know what I'm saying? I hope that I finish it and I'm like, I'm itching for more and I want to run all the major marathons, and that's my hope. At the end of the day, regardless of what the clock says at the end,

I hope that the experience makes me fall in love more with this sport.

00:37:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: One thing I can just about guarantee anyone who runs the TCS New York City Marathon, the experience on the day will blow you away no matter what your time is. And that's one thing I also really encourage people to do, especially the first time they run, is, okay, have a time goal if you want to, that's all great, but make sure you soak in the experience of it as well. And don't let your time goal and looking at your watch keep you from looking at the crowds, and hearing the music, and hearing the energy and the people yelling your name as you go by, because that's such a huge part of what makes it special.

00:38:09

Jordan Litz: Yeah, that is my number one priority. I think everybody talks about having the A goal, B goal, C goal. My A goal is just have an incredible experience. C goal is sub- three.

00:38:24

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. I love the way you're approaching it. I am super impressed at the times you're talking about, so I can't wait to see what you do. How nervous do you think you'll be at the starting line? The nerves, and I've done a little theater for fun when I was in school, but nothing remotely serious. But I still can't think of the butterflies that you get or just doing... I've done a lot of live television, like the butterflies that you get before the red light goes on for a broadcast. How do you think your pre- show butterflies will compare to your pre- race butterflies on November 2nd?

00:39:01

Jordan Litz: Well, I'll be honest with you, I don't get nervous for Wicked anymore. I have done 1500 shows of Wicked, so it's pretty ingrained in my body and in my mind at this point. It's very rare that I will go out to do a show and feel any sort of nerves. If there's somebody in the audience, we had Norbert Leo Butz, who's the original Fiyero, in the show a couple of weeks ago. And so that definitely jacked the energy a little bit, and that was one of the most nervous performances I've had of Wicked. The 20th anniversary performance of Wicked was very nervy, and my debut in Wicked was very nervy. As far as the marathon goes, I have no expectations of success other than finishing it. So I don't feel a lot of pressure to perform at a high level, although now that I said I'm trying to go as

close to three hours as possible and all these people are going to hear this, maybe I feel the pressure now. But I don't feel-

00:40:10

Rob Simmelkjaer: You put it out there, I love it. We're manifesting this for you. Come on now, let's go.

00:40:14

Jordan Litz: It's in the universe. I've got my Alphafly 3s, they're ready to go. But I don't feel the nerves really with this. The only thing that I will say is that I hope that my knee cooperates. I broke my knee about five or six years ago playing Disney Company softball of all things, stupid. So I hope that that cooperates. It hasn't been an issue this entire training block, and I hope that my gut cooperates. If those two things happen, I'm not worried about my conditioning. I think that's going to come through for me. Yeah, I don't think the nerves are going to play a factor for me. I'm just excited. I'm excited to lace up the shoes and get out there and see what I can do.

00:41:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. I really do love it. If you need any help on the nutrition side with your gut, let us know offline. We've got some great folks in the Road Runners community who are nutritionists. I'm actually working with one myself to make sure that that stays right too, because that's a big, big, big factor. All right, so one last question I got to ask you before we let you go.

00:41:23

Jordan Litz: Ask away.

00:41:23

Rob Simmelkjaer: Is it true that you are going to go from the finish line of the marathon to perform not once but twice on Broadway? You're going to do Wicked two performances after the marathon, is that true?

00:41:36

Jordan Litz: So look, we have two scheduled that day. And anybody that has worked with me over the past five years in Wicked knows that I never call out of shows unless I am on my deathbed. I think the first two years that I was in Wicked, I called out one time. And then my first year on Broadway, I think I called out no times. I called out no times except for my paternity leave. I had a kid the first year at Wicked. So my plan is to run the marathon and do the shows. I don't know if that will come to fruition, but

the goal is to do two Wicked's after the marathon. So I can't promise that'll happen. I'm not sure logistically time-wise. You've run the marathon, when should I expect to finish?

00:42:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, first, we got to figure out what wave you're in and let's make sure we talk offline with our team to make sure you're in the first wave because you're going to have to be to have any chance of that.

00:42:40

Jordan Litz: I am in wave one. I am in wave one. I can tell you that now.

00:42:43

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, so if you're in wave one and you're talking about three hours and the matinees are at what? 2:00?

00:42:47

Jordan Litz: 2:00. Got to be in the building at 1:30.

00:42:51

Rob Simmelkjaer: Be in the building at 1:30. So yeah, you could do it. It's possible. You could really do it. I think we got to get you off that walk off very quickly, get you to a shower, a massage I think as well. I want to see this happen, okay? Because this has to be some sort of Guinness Book of World records. It has to be only person ever to run a marathon and then perform twice on Broadway. No one has ever done this. I am quite confident no one's ever done this. So we're going to work with you, Jordan, to see if we can make this happen. And I want to make sure our PR people are on board as well, because if this happens, this has to be covered by the media. This is something that must be told and given attention to.

00:43:33

Jordan Litz: I will do my best. I don't want to sacrifice my experience of having a good time, and enjoying, and savoring the moment of finishing a marathon in order to get to that first show. So if it doesn't happen, I won't be crushed, but I will definitely do the night show, 100%.

00:43:52

Rob Simmelkjaer: Incredible. Really incredible. So much fun talking to you, Jordan.

00:43:57

Jordan Litz: Thank you.

00:43:57

Rob Simmelkjaer: You're quite an inspiration as an athlete, as a performer, truly doing everything. So congrats. We wish you luck. I cannot wait to see you on race day. And I just wish you good training from here till then, and we'll see you at the finish line.

00:44:13

Jordan Litz: Thank you so much. Good luck in Chicago, man. You're going to kill it.

00:44:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, and thank you for your perseverance. It was not easy to get this interview done, but Jordan stuck with it and it was a great conversation with Jordan Litz, Broadway star.

00:44:26

Speaker 3: Maybelline New York, the official cosmetic partner of the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. Get a bold look that lasts with SuperStay Matte Ink. Focus on your finish. Maybelline has your look covered.

00:44:41

Rob Simmelkjaer: Torian Wiggins is not just logging miles, he's helping others do the same. He's a New York Road Runners member who has finished major races including the TCS New York City Marathon, the New Balance Bronx 10 Miler, and the United Airlines NYC Half. For Harlem Run, Torian is known for leading the eight-minute pace group at Monday night runs and organizing Saturday morning long runs. He even helped launch Harlem Run's weekly speed workouts in order to make the community faster and stronger. Torian's passion for running comes with a passion for people. He's all about seeing his neighbors challenge themselves and strive to be better.

00:45:17

Meb Keflezighi: Torian, welcome to Set the Pace podcast. How's it going today?

00:45:22

Torian Wiggins: It's going good. Thank you for having me.

00:45:24

Meb Keflezighi: Glad to have you. You have run some NYC's biggest races, the Marathon, the Bronx 10 Miler, the NYC Half. What was your experience like conquering those events?

00:45:34

Torian Wiggins: The experience is always great. I think just getting one with the community of just running and just feeding off the energy of the crowd, the people that you're running by, it makes things so easy and just motivating and inspiring to just go out there and just run along with everyone.

00:45:55

Meb Keflezighi: Pretty awesome. The friendship that you make is huge. You are a leader with the Harlem Run, have 10 pace and the 8-minute per mile group on Mondays. What do you enjoy about guiding the pace group and how does your running together help the community bond?

00:46:12

Torian Wiggins: Well, I like doing the eight-minute pace group. I actually initially fell into it because someone got hurt and I end up becoming the pacer at that time and then I just never let it go. But I love it because at one point you feel the energy of the people that are depending on you to hit a certain pace and at the same time I'm feeding off the energy of them. So in a way, we're all just working together to just hit a pace, be at a conversational pace. I think I enjoy it because it's outside of my comfort zone as well as someone to just start to lead to become a leader of the group as well. And it was, it's just amazing. So from there I started from just running along with some of the slower paces to building my way up to it and then now I'm in a position to lead as well as try to encourage others to get better along the way.

00:47:16

Meb Keflezighi: Wow, you all are about helping others and that pace, eight-minute pace is no slouch either. Keep up the great work that you're doing. But we know you also help organize started long runs. What do you think having multiple paces group or routines is important for runners training for the big races?

00:47:35

Torian Wiggins: I think it's important and mostly for those that even just preparing for the races here in New York, we have the course in our backyard. I done ran all up and down Harlem, so it's like for me, someone that came from Florida, that was a good way for me to explore the city. So with me and just doing the running community and getting paces not only to just to be out there training, but just to socialize and just be with the community to say, "Hey, you want to see what this place is with a cafe? Let's just

run there and everything." So that's how that kind of originally started. It was a way to explore the city, but not just Harlem, but the rest of the community. So going to Queens, going to Brooklyn, going all the way up in the Bronx just for some carrot cake. I think it was important to just do something different but at the same time enjoy the city while it's here.

00:48:35

Meb Keflezighi: I'm in Florida and those Harlem hills are really tough, so I'd rather come from Harlem to Florida than Florida to the Harlem hills. Those are very, very challenging. But you also do the Harlem Run, introduce weekly speed workout to help everyone get faster. You were part of the starting those sessions. What inspired that and how have you seen that once the speed workout impact runners over time?

00:49:02

Torian Wiggins: So for me, speed workout is pretty critical to training and I know for me that it's really hard to do speed workout by myself because I tend to slow down and just take my time with it. So with me, and the good thing is with the community, it's not just me that personally built it up, but also another leader. His name is Hussain, so shout out to him. There was just one day where we was just talking, it was like, "Hey, let's just get some speed workout in." And then we decided to say, "Hey, we'll just see if anybody else wants to join." And so from there it was just maybe initially started off with four people and then we just being consistent, we're showing everyone that we did our speed workout, we're showing pictures, and then it started to gain speed. Everyone seemed to recognize it and then that's when we started to say, "Hey, well what's a good day for everyone to do the speed workouts?"

So we put it in the app, we got a vote, everyone said, "Hey, this day, this time we can do so." And then it just started to build up from there. So we've been doing it since the beginning of the year and it's always encouraging because running with people that are faster than you or even at the same pace and at different paces is always motivating to know that you're not going through the pain by yourself and everything like that. So you come in, get the speed workout in, just enjoy yourselves and watch yourself grow as you consistently come out.

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Meb Keflezighi: I'm just curious, what was the first intervals that you guys did or the speed session?

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Torian Wiggins: Yeah, so we started with, so we're always Wednesdays on the Great Hill in Central Park and what we initially did is we did a one mile warmup, we did four 400s and then two 800s, and then we had some rest in between there. And what we did initially was to just start to build from there. So the very next week we would say, "Hey, we're still doing the 400s, and then we'll add a 800 and then we'll just keep adding each week until we got to six or eight. And then we'll start to switch it up just to kind of keep the variety going and everything."

00:51:19

Meb Keflezighi: That's pretty awesome. So you have said that running gives you a sense of freedom while challenging you physically, mentally, and spiritually. Can you talk about what means for you personally, maybe an example of how running has tested or feed you in those ways?

00:51:35

Torian Wiggins: Yeah, so always feel like, again, mentally, physically, and spiritually, you have to have that alignment to have that balance in order to have a good run. Because if one thing is not aligned with the other two, it's going to affect your run in a way. So whether it's physically, whether you're hydrated, you warm up, make sure you respect the warm up of course, and you're ready to go run, that's good in itself. So where's your mind? Is your thoughts are on the stresses of this world or what are you focusing on at that time? And of course, you've got to have the right attitude in order to do that. So if one thing is out of balance, I feel that you could potentially have a bad run. But if you can just center, just warm up, be prepared, well hydrated, your mind is not wondering, you just kind of focus on to clear your mind from the stresses of the world. You have the right attitude most importantly, I think that is the formula to having a good run.

And when you think of the stresses in the world of what's going outside, maybe political, maybe recent shootings, what's going on when Gaza, Ukraine, Burma, anything. It's a lot of things that can get you depressed or in a sad form of state. But the time that when I'm running and I'm aligned and I can focus, I can just for that run for 45 minutes or so, I can just ignore everything and just be in the now, focus on myself, focus on my breathing, saying that I'm blessed to be able to run. And that gives me a sense of freedom from everything just for that moment.

00:53:22

Meb Keflezighi: Torian, it's great work that you guys are

doing, just keep up the great work. And yes, running is all about the expectation about yourself, not somebody else's. And for that hour or an hour and a half, you're in the zone and it's a beautiful thing. And keep up the great work.

00:53:37

Rob Simmelkjaer: If you're training for a race or just trying to stay motivated, Peloton is the perfect running companion. Their instructor-led runs and walks are built to fit into your training routine with classes that help you stay consistent, build speed, and enjoy the experience. Take your metrics, see your progress, and train smarter with pace targets, hit runs, and so much more. They've got it all to help you reach your goals and stay on track. Ready to take your race training up a notch. Learn more at onepeloton.com/race-training. Peloton, an official partner of the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon.

Thank you so much Torian for joining us and for being an outstanding member of New York Road Runners. Now it's time for the final part of today's show, our Meb Minutes.

00:54:27

Meb Keflezighi: Thanks, Rob. Back to my mile-by-mile countdown to the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon. This week we are counting down mile 16 through 18, 1st Avenue North in Manhattan. This is the time of amazingsness, flat and loud and electrifying. This is where you kind of came from a silence of the Queensborough Bridge to the people whether they're watching from their condominiums. They're 10 deep, 15 deep. This is where the sound can move you, literally, can move you. But you have to be able to control that you still have 10 miles to go. But pump your chest, give them thumbs up like I did. This is where you acknowledge them, but at the same saying, "Hey, I still got 10 miles to go." And miles 16 to 18 is fairly flat. The crowd does move you, but use it to your advantage. Don't sprint but be able to say, "Hey, (inaudible)." Feel the thrilling sound of the TCS New York City Marathon. People come to support the marathon and this is pretty evident. And you know what? Acknowledge it, but at the same time, don't push too hard too soon.

00:55:44

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right folks, that does it for another episode of Set the Pace. We missed Becks today, but I tried to carry the load for her. Thanks to our great guest today, Jordan Litz and Torian Wiggins. If you liked the episode, make sure you subscribe, rate it, leave us a comment or a question. We'd love to hear from you and that helps other people find the show as well. Enjoy the miles. Good luck to everybody out there as you continue your builds or maybe

your tapers if you're running Chicago. We'll see you next week. Enjoy the miles.