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Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey everybody, and welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Road Runners. We are presented by Peloton. I'm your host and the CEO of New York Road Runners, Rob Simmelkjaer. And with me this week and just about every week, my lovely co-host, a Peloton running instructor, and an incredible runner in her own right, Becs Gentry. Hey Becs, nice to see you.

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Becs Gentry: Hello. Hi, I missed you. It's been a couple of weeks while I was having a bit of family time, but I missed having our chats.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I know. It's always hard, but we knew you were coming back and I follow you on your Instagram and all the places so it sounds like you guys had a great, great time and Becs-

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Becs Gentry: We did.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... this is exciting. We are joined today by a whole new audience. We've got now a new partner in iHeartMedia, and for the first time this week, our podcast is being broadcast over the airwaves of WOR 710 AM here in New York City, so welcome to all of our new listeners-

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Becs Gentry: What's up?

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... on WOR with iHeart. It's super exciting to welcome a whole new group of people to this podcast. And for those who don't know what they're listening to right now, this podcast is all about running. We are New York Road Runners, which of course is the nonprofit organization in New York that puts on the TCS New York City Marathon and many, many other races. And so every single week, Becs and I get together, we talk a little running, and then we always bring in a guest sometimes too, to talk about what running has done for their lives. And we've had so many different kinds of people over the years who have been runners and have had their lives really transformed by running. And so we like to talk to those people, and that's what we do here on Set the Pace, Becs.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. And it is so awesome to have all these new ears listening and maybe getting inspired to come along to their first New York Road Runners event in the future.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's the idea. And you don't have to see yourself running a marathon-

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Becs Gentry: No.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: ... to just go for a run. You can go outside and run a mile, find a track nearby, run a couple laps, and guess what? You've started to run. And then we've talked to so many people on this show over the 100-plus episodes we've now done who said they never thought they would run and then they something or someone inspired them to give it a try, and they took that first little jog and that turned into a longer one and a longer one. And some of those people end up at the starting line of the New York City Marathon. Some of them don't, and that's okay because it doesn't mean you have to run a marathon just when you start running, you can just love running and get something from it at any distance.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly. And even if you do one, that's it, one and done of any distance. The other thing you do though, once you're in the running world, is you come and cheer for all of your friends in the running world. So if you've never come down to a New York Road Runners event in either capacity, we can't wait to welcome you down however you choose to be there.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's right, that's a huge part of our community. It's a huge part of what we do and talk about here as well as all the support that runners need from folks. So hey, the New York City Marathon, we call it the best day of the year in New York City.

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Becs Gentry: True.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: But it's just one day of the year in New York because New York Road Runners is putting on running events just, well, not just about every single week and weekend of the year, whether it's one of our 40 races or

our open run, which are free races and free runs, 5K runs in New York City parks, our rising New York Road Runners program where we've got over 100,000 kids in schools running. So there's so much we're doing and you can be a part of it. So if you are new to us, you can check everything out at nyrr.org and come join the party.

Well, Becs, the running community did get some sad news this week we have to talk about. New York Road Runners Hall of Fame member Nina Kuscsik, a legend in women's distance running and a lifelong advocate for women's participation in sports died this week at the age of 86. Becs, Nina was the first official woman finisher in the history of the New York City Marathon. In 1970, she was the only woman to participate. She had to drop out due to illness that year in 1970. In 1969, she ran the Boston Marathon unofficially as the race didn't even recognize women finishers at the time.

And then in 1972, of course she was famously part of the Six Who Sat. Those were six women who showed up at the starting line of the marathon in Central Park. But when the gun went off, they sat down because they were protesting the fact that women had a separate start and they thought they should be able to start with the men. After the press got a hold of that story, the women stood up and they started running. And Nina, she won that race in three hours and eight minutes. She was, Becs, a real legend in the sport of running.

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Becs Gentry: She truly, truly was. And also that year, 1972, she was a Boston Marathon champion, and that was the first year that women were officially able to actually run the Boston Marathon, which is just wild. She's worked with other friends of New York Road Runners, Fred Lebow, Kathrine Switzer, and together the three of them actually co-founded Crazylegs Mini Marathon. Have a Google of it, it is amazing. And she worked tirelessly alongside Kathrine Switzer to bring the women's marathon to the Olympics, which we all know finally did happen in 1984. Go JBS for winning that one. And in 2022, so relatively recently, Nina received the Abebe Bikila Award presented annually by New York Road Runners to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the sport of distance running. I think that is really, really just the icing on the cake of how she will be remembered and celebrated forevermore in the world of running.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Becs, it is hard to imagine running and distance running and marathons without women today in 2025, just about half of our finishers are women these days. They've made such huge contributions at the professional

level, at the amateur level. I just can't imagine this sport without the incredible gender equity that we have, and Nina was a trailblazer in making all of that happen. I mean, she was running at a time when there was a widespread belief by the powers that be in the sport that distance running was not something that was appropriate for girls and women. And she realized that was hogwash and she stood up and sat down and did all the things that make the world that we have today possible. So she just was a huge force for change in the sport

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Becs Gentry: She was, and as a female in the sport of running, I will be forever in her debt for allowing us to be here and doing all the things that we get to do today. So guys, if you want to learn more about Nina's incredible legacy, head to the link in today's show notes and deep dive and learn more and more will help widen your mind, which she's always a bonus.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's right. You can find out more about her at nyrr.org as well. We had a great blog post about her and our social media as well. So rest in peace, Nina Kuscsik.

Well, Becs, last Saturday was a little bit rainy. We had some wetness, but luckily no thunder, no lightning. And so that allowed the show to go on at the Citizens Queens 10K. A giant field turned out at Flushing Meadows Park right there between Citi Field and the US Open National Tennis Center and the Hemisphere. It's such a great environment where the old 1964 World's Fair took place and the rain did not hold 10,997 runners back.

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Becs Gentry: So good.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Including yours truly by the way.

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Becs Gentry: Well done.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Running that race for the second year in a row. It was a great day and luckily the rain eased up. By the time the race really got going, there weren't too many raindrops and it was such a fun day out there in Queens for the Citizens Queens 10K. It's one of our Five-Borough race series. It's the fourth Race of the year in that Five-

Borough series. And the winners this year for the women it was Khia Kurtenbach with a time of 34: 33. She's with Central Park Track Club. The non- binary winner was Pierce Lydon at 36:44. And for the men it was Bekele Shiferaw Agunafr, hopefully I pronounced that correctly, with a time of 30 minutes and 52 seconds from West Side Runners. Becs, this is a fun race.

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Becs Gentry: So fun.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And having Citizens on board as our partner has made it even more fun because there's just this giant festival that goes on a big stage and music and giveaways and it's just a fun spot to be. And you know what, there was one really big piece of news actually, Becs, out of the Citizens Queens 10K, speaking of the marathon, are you familiar with the rapper named Nore?

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Becs Gentry: Yes. And I follow him and it was all over Instagram, yes.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's right.

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Becs Gentry: So cool.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Nore, who is a native of Queens and has had a very successful hip- hop careers, had a couple of big hits, Nore with his whole crew, he's got a run club that he runs with, and they get to the finish line of the Queens 10K, and then Nore drops the big news that he is going to run the TCS New York City Marathon this fall, first marathon of his life, and yeah, the internet went crazy when he announced that.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: But yeah, we love it when someone who has a huge fan base like Nore and think about it, a guy like that who's got this huge number of fans, many of whom probably most of whom are maybe not runners, and they see him taking on this challenge. And I love this announcement because he said, "Running makes me happy." That's what he said when he announced that he's running the marathon.

I'm like, " That's a beautiful thing to hear." It's not the kind of sentiment that we maybe expect to hear from rappers like hip-hop guys running makes me happy and I love that. And that was the reason why he said he's going to take on the marathon.

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Becs Gentry: That sentiment is really permeating all of the world right now. As you say, you don't expect to hear it from certain types of people, but it really is coming through with musicians, actors, business people, whoever. Oh, it makes my heart sing, I was so happy to see that. And then I went on a deep dive on his Instagram and yeah, great. We can't wait to see you crush it, Nore.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Something to look forward to this fall.

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Becs Gentry: Absolutely.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, Becs. Coming up on the show, it's a great show. We have an amazing guest today, a New York City sports legend, a longtime friend of New York Road Runners Tiki Barber will join us to talk about his running journey and how he went from running back to runner. And then later on you can check in for today's Meb Minute. Meb Keflezighi, if you don't know him, of course, a legendary runner in his own right, New York City Marathon and Boston Marathon champion. He joins us every week to give us a little bit of a running tip. And this week, Meb's here to remind us of what we should be thinking about as we begin summer training for fall marathons.

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Becs Gentry: And before we go into too many more marathons, Rob, I just want to tell everybody a little bit of my marathon news if that's okay.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Absolutely. Now, we knew that you were planning to run the Grandma's Marathon out in Minnesota.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, this coming Saturday. And unfortunately, but fortunately in many ways, I have decided to withdraw from the race because I talk a lot about mental health and enjoying running and the love of running. And if you followed me during this training, you know it's been a

strange one for me, Rob, to be quite honest, I thought I was ready to go after 777, ready to push it. I was invited to run this race as an elite. My body just was giving me so many signs that it wasn't the right time to do this. There's no injury, I'm absolutely fine, I'm running every day, but my heart was not in it to race the marathon distance this Saturday. And sometimes you've just got to put your gut instinct first and look after yourself. And I thought long and hard about why am I putting my body through this stress? What was the reason?

And I live by the mantra forward is a pace, and I know I could have run it at any pace and finished in any time and been proud of it. But alongside that, I have to remember, and I always remind people that 26.2 miles is a lot of cortisol on the body. And oftentimes you have to just say, "Hey, you know what? My body doesn't need that right now," and that's where I was. And serendipitously, alongside that, I am hosting my first ever run event alongside the actress Jennifer Garner this weekend in Los Angeles.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Becs Gentry: So logistically, it would've been really difficult for me to do both getting from New York to Duluth to Los Angeles all within 72 hours. But if you have followed mine and Jennifer's Instagram, Jennifer decided to run a mile a day for 67 days for Save the Children. And I had this harebrained idea a few weeks ago. I said to her, "Hey, we should do a run on day 67 as a finale," and it's spiraled into an event that will be held in West Los Angeles on Sunday. Event details will have dropped when we air this.

We're really, really excited to just help spread this radical love that we're trying to get around the world to help save as many children as possible from the brink of starvation to help improve their nutrition and health because \$67 is all it takes to help that journey kickstart. We've already helped just over 6,000 children since this hashtag has been rolling 67 strong for kids, so we're hoping it's going to at least double it. So if you're interested, check it out on my Instagram, check it out on Jennifer Garner's Instagram and on Save the Children. And if you're in the West Los Angeles area, look out for us on Sunday.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That is amazing. Absolutely a phenomenal reason to change your running plans and an incredible cause as well, so congratulations to you to Jennifer Garner as well. So cool that I know someone who knows Jennifer Garner.

That's the headline for me to this entire conversation, but it sounds really cool. And for those who don't know or who are new to the podcast, Becks referred to 777. That was seven marathons on seven continents in seven days that she took on back in November, so yeah, I guess I could see how your body might still be in recovery mode. I think I'd be in recovery mode for the rest of my natural life if I did what you did. I think that you're owed as much time as you want before you decide to race the marathon distance again.

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Becs Gentry: Thank you.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: And I think people talk about running marathons, but you just can't overstate the physical toll that a marathon, especially when you're going all out and racing a marathon, takes on your body. It is really a hard thing to do.

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Becs Gentry: It is, so we have to listen to those signs and as joyful as it can be to get out there and get those medals, I'll be cheering from afar with our podcast friend Carrie Tollefson will be there. Dick Beardsley, their amazing panel that they host out there, and my girls from the 777 race, Ash, Hillary, and Chirine will be there still competing so I'm definitely going to be cheering so loudly for everybody running that race this weekend.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Our guest today is a New York sports legend and one of my heroes as a lifelong New York Giants fan. Tiki Barber spent 10 seasons as a running back for the Giants before retiring from the NFL in 2006. In 2014, he ran his first New York City Marathon and he was hooked. And over the next decade, Tiki completed more than 15 marathons including Boston, Chicago, Big Sur, and Jerusalem. He's been a regular in New York Road Runners events, and also served as an ambassador for Team for Kids raising money to support

youth fitness programs.

His last official race with New York Road Runners was the 2023 Achilles Hope and Possibility four miler, where he served as a guide runner, and so Tiki is here to talk a little running and maybe a little football. This is an honor, my man. I've seen you around in races a lot. You're such a great part of our running community, but to me you'll always be one of the best running backs in New York Giants history. I think the best, I'm not even going to say one of, the best running back in the history of the Giants. So it is great to have you on. How are you?

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Tiki Barber: I'm doing fantastic. It's great to see you Rob. And Becs, I run with you daily on Peloton, so I feel like I know you even though I don't actually have met you yet, but this is exciting for me. Yeah, I'm a different kind of runner these days. And you talked about that first marathon in 2014, I sucked so bad. I basically walked the last 10 miles, but I finished and then I was hooked.

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Becs Gentry: Yes, but you know what? Getting to the finish line, Tiki, that's what we always talk about. It doesn't matter. Forward is a pace. You get there and it's learning, it's all learning. And the most beautiful thing is, as you say, you were hooked from that.

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Tiki Barber: Yeah.

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Becs Gentry: That sucky 26.2 wasn't enough to make you go, "Nope, not doing that again." It made you go, "Ah, how do I do this better?"

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Tiki Barber: Well, my body said, "Don't ever do this again." And then about a week later my mindset said, "You can't be that bad as a runner." I also had to change my body. I mean, I still had a little bit of a football body in 2014, I was weighing over 205 pounds or so.

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Becs Gentry: Wow.

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Tiki Barber: I couldn't push my muscles for 26.2 miles. And so over the next couple of years I got down to more of my natural weight. You guys know I have an identical twin

brother.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Ronde, yeah.

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Tiki Barber: Yeah, Ronde. Our natural weight is about 185 to 190. And so now I weigh about 190, so I'm back to a natural weight as opposed to wearing shield of muscle to play football.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: How does that feel different, Tiki? Just walking around day to day must feel a lot different. You must feel so much lighter just going up and down stairs and doing your day-to-day stuff versus all that mass you had to carry to take and sometimes deliver a hit on the football field.

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Tiki Barber: I'd say, Rob, it's freeing in a way. There was a point in my life where I had to have this padding on me because I'm getting hit 30 times a game, and it became natural for me even after I retired to want to lift weights, power lift, dead lift, bench press 300 pounds, all the stuff that was just part of my existence for two decades. But I realized that once you get older, once you hit 35, your body doesn't respond to things anymore and you actually started doing yourself damage, and so I just started to feel heavy and once I lost a lot of weight, I actually got down in one year because I ran three marathons. I was down to 178, which was a little bit too skinny.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah.

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Tiki Barber: You could really see it. But I feel so much better. I changed my diet and I'm not as much of a carnivore as I used to be, but I feel so much better as of now, a 50 year old than I did when I had all that weight on me.

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Becs Gentry: Isn't that just incredible that you at 50 can say that and having such a massively successful sports career before you turn to running that you feel better now? I

think most people would just be like, " That's unfair, man. That is so unfair," because you were the top of the world in football and now you are saying how incredible it is to run, but.

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Tiki Barber: Yeah, it's funny, Becs, because people always ask me why I work out so much because I still run, even if I'm not training for marathons and putting in 50 miles a week, I still run three or four times a week and I'm always working out. I'm always in the gym.

People always ask, " Why do you keep doing that?" And I say, " Because I'm vain." I like to look good.

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Becs Gentry: Listen, that's totally fine because it's important when you look in the mirror, if you're happy with what you see that does translate to the rest of your day and how you are outwardly and how you are outwardly is how you affect other people.

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Tiki Barber: 100%.

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Becs Gentry: Circular, it's all circular.

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Tiki Barber: And it also, so it's part being vain, but I also am so competitive that I wake up one day or I wake up in a couple of weeks and I'll be like, " Man, I used to have better abs. I want to get that back."

Or, " Man, I used to be strong. I used to be able to put up at least 225. I want to try to do that again."

And the same thing happened with running. The first one, I told you I finished it, and you have it Rob, I think it's five hours and 18 minutes or something. I finished right with my wife Traci because I waited for her and then we come just walked across the finish line together.

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Becs Gentry: Aw, I love that.

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Tiki Barber: And then since then I've taken an hour off.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: That's right.

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Tiki Barber: So I don't think I'll ever get under four hours just because my body is not built-

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Becs Gentry: Never say never.

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Tiki Barber: ... for 26.2 miles, but.

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Becs Gentry: I got you buddy. I got you. I can get you that.

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Tiki Barber: Okay, maybe. But it's a competitive nature in me to just want to continually improve, even if I'm getting older.

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Becs Gentry: Yeah, absolutely. Tiki, I have to ask you a question, because being English, I've got to stop saying that really after I've been here now eight years, I should know a lot more about American football. I have to paraphrase that as American football. And initially when I see running back I'm like, "Well, he should have always been really good at running. I don't understand."

And then my partner's explaining it to me and he's like, "No, he basically sprints for a living really, really fast but then has to stop dead because there might be another massive guy coming towards him at the equal speed and he has to try and stop him but then carry on sprinting."

I'm like, "Oh, got you."

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Tiki Barber: Right, that's exactly right. It's a bunch of starts and stops and change directions.

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Becs Gentry: Start and stop. See, you're HIIT training.

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Tiki Barber: I was never the super fastest guy, but I always was elusive and I always considered myself above the Xs and Os and so I could tell where the contact was coming. So I didn't get hit a lot, but I did have to have a quickness to me, just not an endurance. It's not like the football that you're probably used to in London or England, wherever. Where are you from over there?

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Becs Gentry: Originally from Worcestershire. Like the sauce,

yes.

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Tiki Barber: So what's the team? I'm a Liverpool fan.

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Becs Gentry: Okay, Worcester doesn't have a team that we'll talk about.

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Tiki Barber: But which one's good?

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Becs Gentry: Well, they're terrible. My dad supports Ipswich because he's from Ipswich.

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Tiki Barber: Got it.

00:24:42

Becs Gentry: If I had to say I supported anyone, it would probably be Chelsea.

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Tiki Barber: Chelsea?

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Becs Gentry: But definitely Chelsea women's.

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Tiki Barber: Right. But they're playing in the World Cup or the Club World Cup. I saw them yesterday against, I forgot who they were playing, but they won yesterday 2-0.

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Becs Gentry: Doing well.

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Tiki Barber: But those football players run miles.

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Becs Gentry: They do, but the stats are so different.

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Tiki Barber: We don't run nearly that far.

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Becs Gentry: Exactly, yeah. So that's why in my mind I was just like, "I rarely have to get to grips with this American lingo here."

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Rob Simmelkjaer: It's very different, and most Europeans would argue shouldn't be called football because the feet are rarely involved in actually touching the ball. Only one or two players on the field actually kick the ball. But that's another conversation. We love American football, I love football. I have to ask Tiki, what was it that first put the idea of running the marathon in your mind?

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Tiki Barber: The first inkling I had of it was, well, first of all, I have a long experience with the marathon, but really not in a good way. So I lived on the Upper East Side and so every marathon Sunday, I used to go home before games. So wake up at 5:30 in the morning, I'd go home, see my kids then have to be over at Giants Stadium by around 11:00 or so. I remember the first time I got caught in marathon traffic on the Upper East Side and I couldn't get across town. And I'm like, "What in the world is going?" I'm panicking because I'm going to be late for the game. And eventually I just went to the outsides and went all the way down. It took forever.

But CC Sabathia, CC and Amber Sabathia have a foundation. And we were over at their house one Memorial Day and they started talking about ways to raise money for PitCCh In which is their foundation.

And I said, "Yeah, let's look at the marathon."

So they said, "Yeah, let's do a marathon team."

I was like, "Yeah, I can do that. It's easy."

And so I kind of trained but didn't really know how to train and got hooked because the PitCCh In Foundation was sponsoring a bunch of runners to run that first marathon in 2014. And the thing I remember most about it is it was freezing. I'm scared of heights, not really, but just if I feel like I can fall, I get scared being at altitude. And so we start, we're on the Verrazzano Bridge and we're running up this bridge and I'm like, "It is windy and this wind might throw me over the side." You know the barrier in the middle? I hug that thing like it was like my child.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, no.

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Tiki Barber: I was so scared running over this bridge, but I was flying. I mean I'm naturally about a, I don't know, I run nine and a half, 10 minute miles maybe. I think I did that first mile in seven minutes.

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Becs Gentry: Oh, gosh. Took a bunch of that downhill.

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Tiki Barber: And that was uphill. And then going down, I did it in probably 6: 50.

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Becs Gentry: Oh my God.

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Tiki Barber: And then we get to the bottom, I'm like, "I am going way too fast. I'm basically sprinting right now." So I had to pull myself, I tried to pull myself back and it was challenging, but it was awesome. Running through the burrows and the support that's out there, it's something that you never get tired of.

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Becs Gentry: No. And I can imagine for you having been supported by New Yorkers for your whole career, having New Yorkers show up to every game you played, even if you were on the bench for some reason, they were there screaming and shouting and supporting you, and then it's like you're in a different role.

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Tiki Barber: It's true.

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Becs Gentry: And they're truly getting you through in this one.

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Tiki Barber: Well, the beauty of running is that it is all encouragement. Unlike in football, there are times where they will boo the hell out of you. That happened to me often. And so the one thing I always felt that running before I got really involved with it was a solitary event. You train, maybe you train with a partner, but when you're out there, you're running by yourself. It's a mental fortitude that you have to have. But the reality is it is so collective. And after my third or fourth one, I kept hearing this mantra, right? You're not going to win, so just best yourself.

I found myself always just challenging myself, but then as I got to six or seven or eight of them, you realize that everybody there that you're running with is your teammate. And so that's what I've come to love most about running is the community of it. And you don't have to know anybody yet you do know them and they will pick you up, especially if

you're struggling. And it's a beautiful thing. It's a solitary thing, but it's also a collective beauty that comes with being out on the pavement and trying to complete a marathon or a half-marathon or a 10K or whatever race you happen to be in.

00:29:37

Rob Simmelkjaer: I'm always curious with people who have crossed over to running marathons from other super successful athletic careers and other sports where they see the similarities and the differences. I think you just talked about one, I mean the community and the support you get from other people. I know on a, certainly on a team, an NFL team, obviously the support you get from your, especially on the offensive side, you've got linemen and people who are there and you can't be successful without them so it's a different kind of community. What about the differences? What's the biggest difference for you other than no one trying to take you out when you're running the marathon?

00:30:15

Tiki Barber: Right, you're not getting knocked out and blindsided. I would say the biggest difference is the length of focus that you have to have. As a football player. People always think, "Oh, you guys played perfect."

I'm like, "No, we didn't. We messed up a lot."

You just can't tell, right? Because you don't know. You see a successful play, but 10 things might've went wrong, but the play could still somehow be successful. But it happens like that, right? There's an immediacy to it. And after every play, after every quarter, after every game, whether or not you are successful or not, but in running, you have to have a plan. So that's the similarity. Same thing, game plan. You have to have it. You have to follow it. And if you don't have a plan, you're going to be all over the place. Kind of like my first marathon where I'm running 14 miles in the first two 14 minutes in the first two miles.

And so you have to have a plan, you have to be consciously sticking to it, but always aware. Right? There's no bench time, there's no defense taking the field while you no special teams. It's a constant awareness that you have to be dialed into. And that took some getting used to. I think the first couple I ran, I didn't have a plan. I was just like, "All right, just run as you feel," right? Because you know you have those training runs, run as you feel. I said, "I'll just run as I feel." And that's why I started getting in trouble around the 59th Street Bridge.

00:31:37

Becs Gentry: As a lot of people do.

00:31:39

Tiki Barber: Don't worry.

00:31:40

Becs Gentry: That is one of those sneaky bridges that people are like, "There's another one. Really? Really Rob and Ted?"

00:31:45

Tiki Barber: Another mile uphill?

00:31:48

Becs Gentry: Another one. All right, so let's talk about the other ways that running has changed or added value and love to your life.

00:31:56

Tiki Barber: Yeah.

00:31:57

Becs Gentry: And you've mentioned before that you've used running as a way to travel. And when Rob interviewed you, there are some really cool places that you've run marathons. So talk us through your favorite destinations, reasons why.

00:32:09

Tiki Barber: Yeah. I did a lot of national ones, meaning United States first, so Chicago and Boston and Big Sur. And Big Sur was just gorgeous out on the Pacific, right on the water, it was amazing. But I also realized that, man, this is an opportunity for me to go do something that I never would've thought of. And because of a relationship with a buddy of mine, Ron Berkowitz, who was working with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, they invited me over to run the Jerusalem Marathon and I'd been to Israel before back in 2005 and I had seen it in a different context. And so when I went over for this marathon, I had no idea what to expect. I know that it's somewhat hilly, but I didn't expect it to be this hilly. And in fact, when people ask me about it, I say it's punitive because it's that much of an incline over the course of the marathon.

But it was my favorite because at mile 10, almost exactly at mile 10, you're on top of the mountain and you're looking down at the Wailing Wall and the Dome of the Rock. It's just this gorgeous view of the bed of Biblical and religious history for so many cultures and it just moves you. It was emotional. I stopped and took a picture and it was crying a little bit because of what it meant, and then you're running through the old city and the cobblestone roads. I love that marathon for what it brought to me

emotionally. It's Jerusalem. How many people can say that they've run that marathon? It was an odd start because the half and the full start at the same spot, and if you take the wrong turn, you're running the half as opposed to the full, so you really have to be aware.

00:34:00

Becs Gentry: Bonus or not, it depends on your mood that day.

00:34:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, your day could end a little early and you're like, "Oh sweet, okay, I'm going."

00:34:06

Tiki Barber: Right, Rob, it's not like in New York where everything is so corralled and perfect and you can't mess it up in New York, you get directed to where you're supposed to go. In Jerusalem, it's like you're just wandering around, all right, we're going to start now.

00:34:25

Becs Gentry: Do whatever.

00:34:26

Tiki Barber: But it was an awesome experience.

00:34:29

Becs Gentry: I just saw that, I just looked up and it says it's just over 3000 feet of elevation gain.

00:34:35

Tiki Barber: Oh my goodness. Wow.

00:34:35

Becs Gentry: Just under 1,000 meters. That is unreal. So it's just rolling hill after hill after hill.

00:34:42

Tiki Barber: Becs, I felt like I was constantly going up. I was like, "All right, I just went up. I know I have to go down and here comes another hill."
And I'm like, "God, here's another hill?"

00:34:53

Becs Gentry: Was that when you were hoping someone would come and take you out?

00:34:55

Tiki Barber: Exactly.

00:34:55

Becs Gentry: You're like, where's that big guy coming to tackle me, please?

00:34:58

Tiki Barber: You know what was crazy? We live on such a small world. So Amar'e Stoudemire has become friends of ours just because he was in New York. He lived in former-

00:35:08

Rob Simmelkjaer: Former great Knicks and Phoenix Suns forward, yep.

00:35:12

Tiki Barber: Right, so he lived in Israel at the time and we knew his wife, obviously Alexis. I'm running through this neighborhood now. We're off the mountain and we're going through these neighborhoods. I come right on this corner and I see Alexis right in front of me, out of all of places in Israel, we're running right by their home. And I stopped. I was like, "Alexis, what's happening?"

She's like, "What the hell are you doing here?"

And so the world is just tiny and you have these experiences when you live experiences. It's one of the reasons I love marathoning. Paris was another one that I thought was amazing. It was unfortunate that day because I stayed with a buddy of mine who was out in (inaudible), which is a little bit about an hour away outside of Paris. And I drove in that morning, my plan was to just find some place to park the car, go run a marathon, and then literally get on a plane and come home. I parked the car in the garage, I had five bottles of water so after I was done running, I could just drench myself with water, put my clothes on and get on a plane and come home. And as I'm getting on the plane, I hear the news that Notre Dame is on fire. And so that happened the day of the marathon in Paris and I was there and my brother was texting me on the plane.

He was like, "Dude, what'd you do?"

I'm like, "I didn't do anything."

00:36:35

Rob Simmelkjaer: I actually did not know that that fire started on the day of the marathon, I never put those two and two together. That's crazy.

00:36:42

Tiki Barber: It was insane. And I happened to be there.

00:36:42

Becs Gentry: It started small, I think.

00:36:45

Tiki Barber: Right. So there's been a lot of experiences from running and I'll never forget any of them.

00:36:51

Rob Simmelkjaer: So you are—

00:36:52

Becs Gentry: And still, you didn't get out of them.

00:36:53

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. So you're halfway to the Abbott Six Star Medal right now. Which are the three that you still need?

00:36:59

Tiki Barber: Well now I'm three—sevenths of the way. Because of—

00:37:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: You still get a medal for six though, Tiki. So you can still focus on the six, and then worry about seven afterwards if you choose.

00:37:11

Tiki Barber: I was on a grind. I had done 15 in seven years and then COVID happened. I was booked for Tokyo and 2020 shut down the world, and I was going to go, even though they weren't going to run the Amateur, I had never been to Japan. And a buddy of mine was like, "You're not going to be able to come home if you go, you're going to get stuck in Japan because of this COVID thing." And so we ended up canceling that trip and I haven't done that one yet. I still need to do London and obviously Berlin, and so I can now I think try to make time for them. The hardest one is Berlin because it's in the fall during football season, but I think Tokyo and London are around the corner in the next couple of years. And then now obviously I have to go do Sydney.

00:38:00

Becs Gentry: Which is not a shame to go all that way.

00:38:02

Tiki Barber: No.

00:38:03

Becs Gentry: That will be amazing. All right, Tiki, let's talk recovery because I have no idea how a football player would

recover other than I'm guessing massages and I don't know, ice bars to get the bruises away. I just think it's a violent sport. That's why I'm saying that, compared to running.

00:38:20

Tiki Barber: It is. It's much more violent than you can even imagine.

00:38:22

Becs Gentry: Yeah. So how did your training and your pre-hab, rehab routine change from being a football player to being a runner, and especially now at 50?

00:38:33

Tiki Barber: Yeah, so it's interesting. As a football player, you get beat up so much and you're ridiculously high after a game, meaning emotionally it's like, man, that moment, just whatever, and so it was always hard to come down and honestly, and this isn't a good thing, it's just the reality of athletes. Sometimes guys would turn to alcohol, and now as the case is, it's mostly legal and not punitive to cannabis to bring themselves to a homeostasis or at least what they think it is. But as I've gotten older, I realize how bad that is for your body and how much alcohol breaks down your muscles. And so if you're beat up, it only doubles the damage, so to speak. And so now as more of a runner than a football player, I take so much care to first of all, hydrate, but then also stretch because we used to just finish a game and go take a shower, do the interviews and go home, and we'll worry about how we feel the next day.

You do this inventory check when you get out of bed. All right, does my foot hurt? Nope, that's good. Does my ankle? It's all right. All right, my back feels all right. You had to check yourself and then you'd go get worked on. I think as an older now runner, it's more about preemptive maintenance, and so I still get worked on a lot. You talk about massage, I try to go at least once every two weeks. Sometimes I'll go every week if I'm training heavily. Stretching, sometimes I'll go acupuncture in just different ways to get myself feeling emotionally and physically with myself. And it's definitely harder now that I'm 50 because I can't run five days a week anymore. And so it's three a week schedule. If I'm going to train for something, maybe I'll kick it up to four, but I have to supplement it with other types of workouts now and high intensity training, complex movements, things of that nature to get my heart beating and sustaining this 30 or 40 minutes of pump without actually pounding on my legs.

00:40:49

Becs Gentry: It is so important to mix it up as you get older. Just, we all need to keep looking after our bones, our joints and running is a fantastic gentle cardiovascular exercise for sure. But to stay healthy as we get into our later decades, yeah, we need that strength training. We need that multi-plane movement exercise. So our brains are also getting that like, "Oh, which way am I going to go now?" Instead of just la, la, la, la la.

00:41:16

Tiki Barber: It's funny because I tell my wife all the time, and she's younger than I am, but I was like, "I'm 50, you'll be there in a decade or so." But the most important thing, and I've heard this often is protecting yourself against false as you get older, because that's what kills you. You break a hip, you do something that keeps you, makes you sedentary for an extended amount of time, your body doesn't respond well. So building muscle is so critical, one, to protect yourself and keep you from having weaknesses and muscles, but also if you should fall, at least you have some girth there. I know for especially women who are focused on their body image, they think they're going to build muscle by lifting and doing squats and things of that nature. But in order to put significant muscle on your body, you'd have to squat at least double your body weight. And most people, they're not going to do that.

00:42:17

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:42:17

Tiki Barber: And so it's all about cardio, physical strengthening of your bones and your muscles and your tendons, and the only way you can do that is by lifting weights. I know people are so scared of it sometimes they're like, "Oh, I'm going to get bulky."

00:42:31

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:42:31

Tiki Barber: It's hard to get bulky. It really is hard to get bulky. You can do it.

00:42:34

Becs Gentry: You really must take my classes because I do it often when we're running up hills and I'm like, "Anyone out there who's worried about the aesthetics of running up hills,

your calves are not going to bulk up unless you eat a cow and directly put it into your calf."

00:42:48

Tiki Barber: That's right. That's exactly right.

00:42:52

Rob Simmelkjaer: Tiki, I'm wondering about the best reaction you've had in a corral when someone is lined up, ready to run and they just turn to their left or their right. And there's Tiki Barber because you're still a pretty recognizable guy around New York from your playing career and then also from all the work you do on TV, so have you had some pretty funny reactions from folks who realize they're running next to Tiki Barber?

00:43:17

Tiki Barber: Yes, but Rob, it's not even in the corral, it's on the course. And it's funny because I wear my name just like everybody, and sometimes people will be like, "Tiki, Tiki, Tiki." They can't say it. I'm like, "It's all good. I know you're talking about me," just smile. So they don't know who I am, but they're still screaming my name. But then every now and then I'll get the guy I'll either pass or I'll be running next to, and then they'll speed up and be like, "Hey man, can I get a selfie?" And so I can't tell you how many running selfies I've taken over the last 10 years or so, and so it's kind of awesome, but it just goes back to that community thing. We're not winning, we're out for a nice little stroll.

00:44:03

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, and you make somebody's day with that selfie out there at mile 13, whatever it is, it's a beautiful thing.

00:44:10

Tiki Barber: But there's something about people yelling your name, and this is why everybody should wear a name when they're running because you just hear it and it just lifts you up. And you talked about when I was ambassador for Team for Kids, I love the Go Team for Kids, you see it all the time. Now I'm doing some work with Achilles International and they're amazing. I forgot I was at a run down in Spring Lake, New Jersey, they had a five-mile run and I ran with my 11-year-old daughter and she did it in 55 minutes, which I was impressed by.

00:44:46

Becs Gentry: Wow.

00:44:46

Tiki Barber: Five miles. I know, I was shocked, but I saw an Achilles athlete running, being guided, a blind runner being guided, and I was shocked because I usually only see them in the New York Road Runners events, but the Achilles athletes are everywhere. And so I ran by and I was like, "Let's go Achilles." And so that encouragement is so meaningful, especially when you get to latter parts of marathons and you read the signs and you know they're lying to you. "It's not that much farther. You only got a couple miles left."

00:45:15

Becs Gentry: The worst couple of miles of my life.

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Rob Simmelkjaer: I love it. Can you talk, Tiki, about your time with Team for Kids and what drove you to do that and what's your memories are? I mean, I know it meant a ton to the people at Road Runners to have someone like you involved with these kids. I mean, I can only imagine what it meant to the kids who you were with, but talk about that and what did you most get from that experience?

00:45:40

Tiki Barber: I first got introduced to it because of the 5th Avenue Mile, and so I went and ran the mile. Christopher Susan, who was in the PR a couple years ago, invited me. And so I see they had the kids race before and I see these kids that are running and it got explained to me what Team for Kids does. And because running is so simple, all you need is a pair of shoes and a place to go get out and run around, and it's a great activity for kids who are becoming, unfortunately, a lot more sedentary and at home and they want to be on their games and not outside and playing. It was a way for me as a former athlete to talk about how important it is to just be athletic, and that's anything.

Jim Harbaugh, who's a football coach now for the Chargers, the Los Angeles Chargers, when he was a coach at Michigan, we had him on one of my radio shows and we were talking about these odd ways that he recruits athletes. And so one thing he started talking about climbing trees. We're like, "Why are you climbing trees?"

And he's like, "It's an athletic rep. It's just something that gets you active and moving." And it's really the philosophy that I have for kids is just be active. Go play, go run. And running is so simple. And the fact that Team for Kids had those programs for young kids and young adults to get them out and effectively competing was something that

I really galvanized and felt really strongly about.

00:47:21

Becs Gentry: Absolutely. You have six kids?

00:47:25

Tiki Barber: I have six kids, yes. I have a 23 year old who just graduated from Princeton.

00:47:29

Becs Gentry: Oh, congratulations.

00:47:30

Tiki Barber: Thank you. A 21 year old who's at Brown, 15-year-old twins who were getting ready to go into their sophomore year in high school, and then a 11 year old, and a soon to be 9 year old.

00:47:41

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow.

00:47:41

Becs Gentry: Oh my gosh. You are spread in all of the moods.

00:47:48

Tiki Barber: Yeah, 23 to nine, right? It's kind of crazy, but it's awesome. It keeps me young and I'm lucky. I have great kids.

00:47:57

Becs Gentry: And they're all, I'm getting active. I mean, you already said your one daughter crushed the five miler there with you.

00:48:02

Tiki Barber: Right. My oldest played football, so both my boys played football. AJ at Princeton. Chason is going into his senior year at Brown. My twins are running track in high school at Greenwich High School, they're both sprinters. And then my two youngest daughters, Brooklyn and Teagan, are competitive cheerleaders.

00:48:25

Becs Gentry: Oh, no way.

00:48:25

Tiki Barber: Now I know some people don't know cheer, but cheer is as intense as anything any of my kids have done because it's serious. They're there to win. It's not participation. They travel, they've been to Oklahoma, this is

yearly, Dallas. They go to Nashville, Maryland. The Summit Championship is down in Orlando, and so it's a massive commitment, but it teaches them about teamwork and focus and dedication to a team, and they're good at it and we love it. And I've become a cheer dad.

00:49:04

Becs Gentry: Aw, that's really cute. Also kind of brutal as well.

00:49:07

Tiki Barber: Oh, yeah.

00:49:07

Becs Gentry: Because those falls are like you getting slammed by that big guy.

00:49:10

Tiki Barber: No, that's exactly right. I'm knocking on wood, luckily my girls have not fallen yet. They've gotten very close. Back last year, Brooklyn, one of the bases just was just a little bit too far apart from each other, and her head got that close to hitting the ground.

00:49:29

Rob Simmelkjaer: Ooh.

00:49:29

Becs Gentry: Oh God.

00:49:29

Tiki Barber: They caught her and pulled her back up and she got right back into the stunt and everything was fine. But I get nervous watching her as a flyer because she gets tossed up in the air, all this other stuff. But she's a great athlete and she, like me I think as a football player, doesn't have fear. So when you have fear, it gets hard to perform and she doesn't think about what negative could happen. It's all positive and trust. It's really what comes from team sports.

00:50:01

Becs Gentry: Yeah, and I'm sure they've seen that from you, living your life as a football player and now being not afraid to change to an endurance athlete.

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Tiki Barber: Right, exactly. Even though that's harder.

00:50:11

Rob Simmelkjaer: All right, Tiki, so we got to get you on the record now for when we're getting you back out there running another marathon.

00:50:17

Becs Gentry: I knew this was coming.

00:50:18

Rob Simmelkjaer: This is when we put the pressure on. So what's your plan? It sounds like London maybe is the next thing you have circled. It's in the spring. It's outside NFL season, so are you going to try to go for that in 2026?

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Tiki Barber: Yes, 2026. London is going to be on the docket. I'll probably run.

00:50:40

Becs Gentry: You've got a coach right here.

00:50:40

Tiki Barber: Right, there you go.

00:50:40

Becs Gentry: I'm in.

00:50:40

Tiki Barber: I'll probably run with Achilles, but in the very short term, not very because it's actually in the fall, I'm going to be running the Staten Island Half with Francesco, who is a blind runner. Francesco is a great runner, and so when I guide him, he's actually guiding me because he pulls me along, and so I'm going to do the Staten Island Half in October, whenever that is, and then shoot for London in 2026.

00:51:11

Becs Gentry: What a great race to do. I love that you're guiding him, but he's pacing you.

00:51:15

Tiki Barber: Yes, that's exactly right, Becs. That's the perfect way to put it.

00:51:19

Rob Simmelkjaer: He's a very good runner, Francesco from Achilles International. Yes, that sounds like a killer combination right there. Tiki and Francesco, he's got the speed. You'll get anybody out of the way, right?

00:51:30

Tiki Barber: Right.

00:51:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: Anybody's in the way, you will clear a running lane for Francesco.

00:51:35

Tiki Barber: I just got to get myself back in shape, Rob. I'm in sprint shape right now, I'm not in half-marathon shape yet.

00:51:42

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's a great race, Staten Island Half, so I ran it a couple of years ago. You'll have a really good time out there. All right, well, we can't wait to see you back in a New York Road Runners Corral. It's been a minute. Can't wait to see you back out there with Francesco out in Staten Island. And yeah, you've just been, you've done so much for the organization. You're such a great ambassador for running as well of course, as for football. Have you gotten any of your former teammates to try running any Giants that you've tried to convert into marathoners?

00:52:13

Tiki Barber: I did. I got Jason Sehorn to come run. God, this was before COVID, so I can't remember how long, so it was six or so years ago, and he absolutely crushed it. I think he ran 3:30 or something. 3:20.

00:52:30

Rob Simmelkjaer: Wow. He was a defensive back, as I recall. Is that right?

00:52:33

Tiki Barber: Defensive back. It was his first marathon. And I saw afterwards, he's like, "Yeah, I'm done. Not doing that ever again."

00:52:38

Becs Gentry: Made it.

00:52:38

Tiki Barber: He's like, "I killed it and I'm not doing it again. Bucket list checked. I'm good."

00:52:45

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hey, we love the bucket listers in the New York City Marathon. They are a big part of our community and we love that because let's face it, if you're a New

Yorker and at this point, Tiki, you are very much a New Yorker, it's just one of those New York City passport stamps you have to have to be a true New Yorker, and you've had it stamped many times.

00:53:06

Tiki Barber: You're right, and New York Road Runners, I commend you guys because your races have become iconic. They're part of the fabric of this city. And whenever there's a big marathon, especially the New York City Marathon, the 60 plus thousand people that run this thing and all the supporters that are out there, it takes over New York for a day and it's awesome. And I commend you guys because I can't imagine that's easy to do and coordinate yet. You give so many people from all across the world this amazing memory that will last their entire lives. So I thank you guys for what you all do.

00:53:46

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you. Tiki, you took over New York a few times yourself on a lot of Sundays wearing the blue and the red out in New Jersey technically, but it was for New York.

00:53:56

Tiki Barber: Right.

00:53:57

Rob Simmelkjaer: And we certainly, we love you, New Yorkers love you, and it's great to still have you as part of this community through running as well as through the broadcasting so great to have you, Tiki. Thanks for being on.

00:54:09

Tiki Barber: Good to see you. And Bees, one of these days, I want to meet you in person.

00:54:13

Bees Gentry: Oh my gosh. Anytime. You're welcome in the studio, anytime. And we'll go for a run when you're in the city. I'd love it.

00:54:17

Tiki Barber: I would love that.

00:54:32

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.

And now it's time for today's Meb Minute with Meb Keflezighi.

00:55:03

Meb Keflezighi: Smart summer training. Summer is a fun way to train to be able to just do gradual mileage. Sometimes we want to run as many miles as we can, but this is a good time to be able to do drills, to be able to just be smart, when to run, and also be wise to be able to do the... Sometimes let the body, it's not about the mileage, but going out and doing a little bit of stretching. Run five minutes, stretch a little bit in the shade, and continue with your run. It is good time to be able to just visualize your workouts or what is going to look like because you have to be able to just see yourself run those miles, do the cool down, do the stretch. Sometimes in the winter, you can't wait to get fast enough to the house to be in a warmer place, but in the summer you can go in the shade and be able to just stretch the muscles, and the mileage is important, but the speed is more important on this day.

00:55:57

Rob Simmelkjaer: That does it for another episode of Set the Pace. Thanks again to our listeners on WOR 710 in New York, and to all of our regular listeners on all the podcast places. We want to thank our guest today, Tiki Barber. And hey, if you like this show, make sure you go on to wherever you get your podcasts, follow the show, subscribe to it, leave it a rating as well, we like five stars, so that folks can find it as well. And we'd love to hear from you so you can leave a comment because I love reading the comments of how people enjoy listening to this show. Thanks for joining us. We will see you next week. Enjoy the miles.