

00:00:00

Susanna Sullivan: I didn't actually realize that I was in the lead American spot until very, very late in the race, maybe a mile ago. I started to have suspicions of it at about the halfway because I feel like I heard somebody say top American, and I was like, "No, surely I must have missed somebody with all the chaos at the start, somebody must be still further ahead." But then with about a mile to go in Chicago, one of the motorcycles pulled up alongside me and was yelling to other people like, "lead American."

00:00:35

Rob Simmelkjaer: Hello everybody, and welcome to Set the Pace, the official podcast of New York Roadrunners presented by Peloton. I'm your host, Rob Simmelkjaer, the CEO of New York Roadrunners back on video for a second week in a row with Becs Gentry who's joining us from her homeland in London, England, United Kingdom. Becs, it's great to see you. We're not in person this week, we're separated by a little ocean, but it's great to see your face.

00:01:00

Becs Gentry: It's very different. Yes, side by side, literally in person last week to being separated by the Atlantic Ocean. But we're here. I'm back home for a couple of weeks in London. Well, I can't really call it home anymore. My original home here with Peloton whilst our studios are having a little bit of a revamp in New York and then, yeah, it's fun. It's great to be back.

00:01:23

Rob Simmelkjaer: So they sent you to London to teach because there's a studio over there and you're using that and getting a little trip home as well out of it. Not bad.

00:01:30

Becs Gentry: Yeah. Yeah. No one's here. Well, my sister is here. Well, she's in Norfolk.

00:01:36

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, because your parents moved, right?

00:01:38

Becs Gentry: Yeah.

00:01:38

Rob Simmelkjaer: So you're kind of like a Londoner without family in London anymore, but of course Austin and your child are back in the States, Tallulah. What's it feel like to be home, but maybe not feeling so at home with all your

family in different places?

00:01:56

Becs Gentry: Yeah, it's strange. I think once I see my sister in a couple of days, I'm going to go to Norfolk, which is the east coast of England, to see her for 24 hours or so, and I think I'll feel more like I'm home in that respect. But yeah, right now I do feel a little bit like an American in New York walking around like, "Ooh, this is such a sweet city. It's so small." And I just walked across London. You don't just do that in New York, you don't just hop out of your house and you walk everywhere. So it's been very nice, very, very fun. But I'm definitely going to be missing my little family by the time I get home. Right now I'm still like, "Mom's having a bit of a break."

00:02:38

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, yeah. Well, I'm sure it's nice, but I'm sure they miss you and we get a little time with you, which is awesome. So Becs, we have some excitement to announce this week. It's crazy, Becs, I really don't consider myself a marathoner. I ran the New York City Marathon as you know when I was graduating from law school back in 1997 to date myself a little bit here, and that was going to be kind of like a bucket list experience, and it was incredible. And then something got in me to do it again 16 years later in 2013 when I was just about to move out of the city with our family, and that was incredible, a beautiful day and achieve my goals and all that. And then I was pretty sure I was done running marathons, of course, getting back to New York Roadrunners now and working around them all the time, something has happened to me and I find myself doing this now, running marathons over and over. And I think what it is that I go to these marathons.

I went to the London Marathon the first year I was here at Roadrunners and I wasn't running it. I just went to be there. I'm on board of the Abbott World Marathon Majors, so of course I go to a lot of the other majors, and I found that being at a marathon, I wasn't running. I just didn't enjoy that. It was hard for me to be in the scene and in the mix and not run it. And so other than New York, which of course I'm around every year, but don't run it, can't run it because I've got way too much going on. I'm way too busy. But other than that, I haven't been to a major since then that I haven't run. So as you all know, I ran Berlin last fall. I ran Tokyo in March, that left me halfway to the six stars of the Abbott World Marathon Majors. And so I've just decided to keep this party going, Becs, and I'm going to run the 2025 Bank of America Chicago Marathon on October 12. So excited.

00:04:42

Becs Gentry: Yay. That is incredible. Well, congratulations first of all on taking the hardest step, which I think is committing to doing well, not the hardest, but it is very daunting for most people to commit to a marathon, any race, knowing that you've got a big bulk of training between you and the race day, and then tough run between you and the finish line. But how wonderful, because you get to take yourself on another adventure, both physically, mentally, and you get a nice big shiny medal at the end of it. And as you say, you're one step closer to that elusive six star of the World Marathon Majors medal. I mean, so cool. So cool.

00:05:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: Becs know, listen, I'm super lucky. I realize how lucky I am because of my role I get to get into these marathons. It's a lot easier for me than it is for the average person to get in, and I am very appreciative of that. And I want to thank Carey Pinkowski, Mike Nishi, the amazing team out in Chicago for inviting me to run this year. So Chicago is such a beautiful city and I'm just excited to be a part of it. In addition to it being my four star, I also really decided, Becs, that if I'm going to go for this sixth thing, it lines up well schedule-wise for me because London is next spring. If I come out of this feeling, well, that would be a good time to go for that. And then of course there's Boston and I can run Boston, of course I can get a bib.

I know I can get a bib and they'll kindly give me one. But there's something about Boston, Becs, that makes me want to take on the challenge of qualifying. And it just turns out that the way that the Boston Marathon qualifying cycle works, when you qualify for the Boston Marathon, the time that counts, it's not the age that you are when you run the qualifying race. It's the age you are on the day of the Boston Marathon that you're qualifying for. I just learned this by talking to my friend Jack Fleming, the race director of the Boston Marathon. So it turns out Becs that I can qualify for the 2027 Boston Marathon, which is the cycle that we would be in in October for the Chicago Marathon. And I will be, I'm just going to put my ages out there. I'll be 55 on the day of that Boston Marathon, but I'll only be 53 on the day of the Chicago Marathon that I would be running to try to qualify for.

00:07:18

Becs Gentry: Is it a different qualifying time bracket?

00:07:20

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's a different bracket. So I, at the age of 53, which I will be on October 12th because my birthday is October 21st, I will be 53 trying to qualify for the 55 to 59 age bracket at the Boston Marathon.

00:07:37

Becs Gentry: Fantastic.

00:07:38

Rob Simmelkjaer: And for me, that's a good thing because I'm not getting a lot faster. The magic of my running career, Becs, is that I've managed not to get slower, but I also haven't gotten a lot faster. But the qualifying times are getting slower, so that time to hit for me will be three hours and 30 minutes. As you know, I ran 327 in Berlin last year, so I clearly got that in me. I'd like to run a couple minutes faster to create a little bit more buffer. Because everybody knows you need that buffer time a lot of the time to actually get into Boston. So yeah, that's my goal. Becs, is to run 325 or better to try to qualify for Boston in 2027.

00:08:20

Becs Gentry: So many twists, so many wonderful, wonderful things that you will be able to celebrate.

00:08:25

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well, I need one thing though, Becs, if I'm going to accomplish this and I want to run a good time in Chicago, I need a coach. I need some help. I've had some great help along the way the last couple of years I've used Runna, the terrific app that we have at New York Roadrunners and I continue to use that. I've been using that to build my base. This summer I used that for Berlin. Of course, I've had Roberto Mandje who people know paced me and helped coach me in Berlin, and he was amazing. But I was thinking, Becs, who do I know who's really good at running marathons, who's got an incredible track record, who's a teacher who could help me get ready for Chicago?

And I thought, "Gee, there's somebody I speak to just about every week who I know is really good at this." And so I thought maybe Becs would help me. So, Becs, I'm here to ask, would you consider coaching me to get me ready for the Chicago Marathon because I think it'd be great for me to have your help. I know you're not a coach in this way, you're obviously an incredible coach for all your Peloton followers, but this is not really what you do. But I know you know what to do.

00:09:32

Becs Gentry: I do.

00:09:33

Rob Simmelkjaer: So would you help get me ready for this and maybe our listeners can go along for the ride as you coach and hopefully don't torture me too much to get ready for the marathon this October?

00:09:45

Becs Gentry: I would be honored too. I'd absolutely be honored too. I think that will be very funny. And if it's okay with you, I think we should talk about it on a weekly basis how I'm not torturing you. I know a lot of my-

00:09:59

Rob Simmelkjaer: You can torture me a little if it's going to make me you faster. Yeah, just a look.

00:10:03

Becs Gentry: I will. You know I will. All of our listeners who know me know I will. And that will be awesome and we should definitely make sure we get you into a Peloton class at some point during this time period as well. So I can actually see you running and check it out, but I'd be honored to come on this journey with you.

00:10:21

Rob Simmelkjaer: Check on my form a little bit because you and I, as much as we've talked about running, you and I have actually never run together. There's a good reason for that, which is that I can't stay anywhere near you.

00:10:31

Becs Gentry: We're both normally working with these races.

00:10:32

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yes, there's the work thing, but there's also the fact that you would be walking and I'd be running. But other than that, we just haven't had a chance to do it. But yes, that would be great if I came to one of your classes and you can yell at me for not picking up my knees and that sort of thing.

00:10:47

Becs Gentry: Absolutely. Oh my gosh, this is so exciting. Well, thank you for picking me.

00:10:50

Rob Simmelkjaer: Coach Becs. Great. So we'll keep everybody in the loop. This'll be fun. The next 12 weeks or so, we'll

do some updates. You know what I'll do? Maybe we'll put on social some of the things, Becs, that you're asking me to do every week and then I can come back and report on how that went, how the workouts went, how I felt-

00:11:11

Becs Gentry: Sounds good.

00:11:11

Rob Simmelkjaer: ... what Becs asked me to do. So thank you very much, Rebecca. I appreciate that and I'm excited to run Chicago with you as my coach. So should be a lot of fun. Well, looking back to New York for a second, Becs, we've got a couple races coming up this weekend. We have a new event coming up in New York this Saturday. It's the first time event, it's called the Start Line Series, and this is a brand new two and a half mile fun run. It's going to be out in Queens and it's part of New York City's Department of Transportation summer streets. So New Yorkers know that the city's been shutting down streets around the city during the summer on weekends to give people a chance to just walk and enjoy the streets. And so we're getting a chance to run a little bit of a race early on those closed streets. And so it's really for beginners, it's going to be a lot of fun. It's not competitive, it's not a nine plus one.

It's not all of the kind of challenge that so many people have getting into our races. It's open, it's free, it is unscored, it's untimed. And so it's a great opportunity for anyone out there listening or if you know someone who just wants to get into running, to come out and feel a little bit of what it's like to run a race. So come join us. We still have spots left as we tape our podcast today. You can go to nyrr.org, create an account, sign up, you can even sign up on the day of the race, by the way. So there's that opportunity as well. But hopefully folks will come out and join us at the Start Line Series. Hope to see some new runners out there on Saturday. And then, Becs, on Sunday we are back in Central Park for one of my favorite events of the year, the New York Roadrunners Team Championships event. It's a five miler, super competitive, runner favorite for all those club runners out there. The clubs are super competitive trying to get their team points and all that, and it's double the point for the team championships.

00:13:06

Becs Gentry: Oh, it's exciting. Very exciting.

00:13:06

Rob Simmelkjaer: Absolutely. Oh, so we have the men, the women, non-binary club points, races, all worth double and, Becs, I

don't know if you've been to that event. The best thing about it, the food. The food is incredible. So many of the clubs come out and bring picnics and they party after the race. So unfortunately I'll miss it this year, but I wish everybody a great time on Sunday.

00:13:28

Becs Gentry: Yeah, absolutely. Best of luck to all of them and all the teams because I know how much this community will come together and just have a lot of fun. And also, I just have to say I do love the NYC Department of Transport Summer Streets. It is one of my most favorite times of the year. I adore the fact that the streets are just closed and people can move, ride their bikes, walk, run, whatever you want, and in the different locations around, it's not just Manhattan, it's everywhere. So if you can't make it to Long Island, then don't fear. There are other places you can do this. So thank you to the city of New York to doing this because it really does entice people to move and that's what we're here for. That is what we're all here for.

00:14:18

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, it's a special thing. It's been a really nice initiative in New York over the last few summers. Well, Becs, we've been talking about Chicago and my run though. We're going to talk to someone today who ran Chicago just a little bit faster than I am going to be running Chicago this fall. Susanna Sullivan, who was the top American finisher in Chicago last year, ran a blazing personal record time of just over 221 and she will be representing the United at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo this summer. She's an incredible runner. She's also a school teacher. She's a sixth grade math teacher.

It's actually to me, the perfect combination of being a teacher and being a runner. She's going to talk to us about how she did what she did in Chicago last year, how she's planning to attack the world Championships in Tokyo, which promises to be hot and hilly this summer, and how she balances all that with teaching sixth graders pre-algebra. So Susanna's coming up in just a minute. So excited for that conversation. And then later on today's member moment, our friend Meb Keflezighi will be here with a runner who after two knee replacements ran his first marathon at the age of 75.

00:15:38

Becs Gentry: Wow.

00:15:39

Rob Simmelkjaer: Incredible. That's unbelievable. So that will

put all of our complaints right where they belong, which is in a basket far, far away because that's an incredible achievement. So we'll hear about that. And then today's Meb minute, we'll be here to help those of you who are training for fall races and that includes me, stay in shape, beat the heat. It's been a struggle, Becs, the last couple of weeks and get ready for running in the fall even if you're taking some vacation time. So stay tuned for that.

00:16:10

Speaker 4: Try the Peloton app for free and access classes for every type of runner. Whether you're training for your first race or you're a seasoned pro. From outdoor runs and intervals to strength, yoga and stretching, you'll find the perfect fit for every part of your routine. Whether it's a long run day or you just need a quick five-minute reset, the Peloton app meets you where you are and helps you become a stronger, faster runner because it's designed for someone like you. Try the app free for 30 days and download it now from the app store or Google Play. Terms apply. Peloton, the official digital fitness partner for New York Roadrunners.

00:16:51

Rob Simmelkjaer: On weekdays she's Ms. Sullivan, a sixth-grade math teacher in Virginia. But on race day, Susanna Sullivan has proven herself to be one of the fastest American women on the roads. Sullivan was the top American finisher at the 2024 Chicago Marathon, a blazing 221:56, making her the 10th fastest US woman in history for the marathon. She then went on to be the top American finisher at the 2025 London Marathon, all while juggling lesson plans and grading homework. And Susanna Sullivan is here to tell us what it's like to go from teaching pre-algebra on Friday to competing against world-class runners on a Sunday. Susanna Sullivan, it is great to see you and great to have you on Set the Pace. Welcome.

00:17:39

Susanna Sullivan: Thank you so much for having me.

00:17:41

Rob Simmelkjaer: I've had a chance to see you from time to time around events, but we've never really had a chance to chat. I know you're meeting Becs for the first time, but it's really great to have you. And I guess I would start by asking you how you got here, how did you get to this point, Susanna, of being a competitor at this level at the marathon distance? Is this where you thought you'd find yourself at 35 years old?

00:18:10

Susanna Sullivan: Not at all. The last several years have really just been such a dream. I mean, as many distance runners do. I started out in soccer as a little kid and got involved in cross country and track when I was in middle school. My sister is two years older and she showed some promise in cross country, in track. And so with sibling rivalry, I wanted a shot at it and I just really enjoyed it. I love that there's always something you can do better to improve. There's something you can focus on whether that's strength work or nutrition or hydration. And I just found that showing up every day and putting forth my best effort was resulting in me making progress. And so I just loved that about the sport and so headed off to Notre Dame for college, had a kind of underwhelming college career. I've learned so much about the mental side of the sport in the year since graduating.

And I really do think I just put a lot of pressure on myself and I didn't think I communicated with my coaches as well as I could have about how much the training day in and day out was beating me up. So when I graduated, I headed back to the DC area, that's where I went to high school and linked up with a running club there and was on that team for eight years and made some progress. I qualified for two Olympic trials with capital area runners. And then during the pandemic when I was teaching into my computer, I was slipping out at lunchtime and I didn't have a commute on either end and I was just finding pockets of time to get outside and get really active. And I think that being able to increase my mileage in a deliberate way 2020, 2021 kind of just really helped me to see that if I could stay healthy, I actually could put together, string together a lot of good workouts.

And I started to make a lot of progress in 2020 after I started working with my current coach, Andrew Gerard. He's at George Mason University. And since working with him, I went from running 235 in the marathon, was my PR when we first started working together and now it's 221. So working with him really I think has been the catalyst for so much of the progress that I've made in the last five years or so. We didn't completely revamp my training, but I feel like the communication, the trust there is just like I couldn't ask for more. We've really increased my strength training. So that is one element of things that I think was a big change from what I was doing before.

00:21:12

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's so interesting to hear that, Becs, to make that big of a jump that is no joke, 235 to 221 and, Becs, to hear the strength component of that and what that's

done as well.

00:21:25

Becs Gentry: It's so true, isn't it? I mean you see these big jumps throughout professional and non-professional careers, but the more people I talk to, the more people who honestly say, "Yes, I was running a lot more. Yes, I was doing some slightly different speed work," for example, but the vast majority of people really do contribute that big change in PR time to strengthening their body, their bones, their muscles, their joints. And just feeling strong, especially over the marathon distance because boy do we all know that we need that support for 26.2, right?

00:22:03

Susanna Sullivan: Right. I mean, I think we've all known it for a while that consistency is so critical and I think for me, having that strength training base so that I can stay healthy so that I can string together weeks and months of training has just been huge. And I really credit my coach in figuring out how to gradually get me to a place where I can be doing several hours of isometric work, which really wears you out. But managing to balance cross-training and the running work and the strength training work so that I'm able to handle it at this point. And it's now just a regular part of the week's training.

00:22:49

Becs Gentry: Yeah, it's part of your life. So the past 2024 to 2025 has been another kind of roller coaster really for you. Rewind back to February '24 with the US Olympic trials in February, and you unfortunately had an injury that meant that you couldn't compete that day. In hindsight, I bet the weather you were like, "Well, it was a pretty rough day down there." But your, for want of a better word, comeback was October that year where you went to Chicago, the amazing Bank of America Chicago Marathon, and you ran 2:21:56, which was the PR that you've mentioned.

Seventh overall, first American, and then we're going to talk about that in a second. But fast-forwarding to now or June, a few weeks, it's just been announced that you're representing the USA in the marathon at the World Athletics Champs in Japan. And so definitely want to come back to Chicago and the PR, but this is so fresh and so incredibly exciting. Huge congratulations by the way to you and to Jess McLean there at the camp. But how does it feel to be like, "I'm going to Japan, I'm going to be there with Team USA," seen as you missed the chance for Paris?

00:24:13

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, no, I'm super excited. The injury that ended up keeping me out of the trials, it was an injury and I got COVID the week of the race. So it was pretty clear that going to Orlando was not going to make any sense, but I got that injury at the World Championships in Budapest, and so when I limped away from the course in Budapest, I just wanted another chance. And these things are never guaranteed and you can wish it and want it.

And I remember walking away thinking, I hope that we can find a way to get back and have another shot at Team USA and put my... and just have a day that I can really feel satisfied with and feel like it reflected all the work that I had put into it and all the work that the team around me had helped prepare me for. And so yeah, then fast forwarding to the trials, we had kind of gotten the knee cap to a place... I had fractured my knee cap at the World Championships. Heading into it, about a week before the race I started to have some knee pain, but I kind of felt it go at 5K. There was a girl that got her foot underneath my heel, and it lifted up my heel and I think I just hiked my hip enough that just, I (inaudible)

00:25:42

Rob Simmelkjaer: What does that feel like, Susanna?

00:25:45

Susanna Sullivan: I'm not sure how I made it to the finish line because it didn't stop hurting just walking around for months. So yeah, it was a lot. But then we got to a place where I felt like you never know what'll happen in a marathon. So we felt like heading into Orlando, maybe there was a chance. I definitely wasn't as fit as I wanted to be, and I was kind of having to contend with the emotional strife of knowing that I was capable of more than what I was going to be able to put together on that day. And then I think it was the Monday of that week I was at work, and that was still when the school office had stockpiles of COVID tests and I just started, I really wasn't feeling well and I went to the school office and said, "Can I borrow a COVID test?"

And they said, "Yeah, sure." And I took it and they said, "You need to go home." And I thought, "Yeah, and also Saturday's the Olympic trial, so I guess that's off too." But maybe in retrospect, maybe it was... I think running on COVID or with COVID on a not a hundred percent kneecap probably would've meant that Chicago wasn't as magical a day as it ended up being. So everything happens for a reason. And so I was so excited that Chicago went as well as it did. It was the first marathon that my coach ever was there in person for, and I feel like having him there before just as

a calming presence and then out along the course just to remind me to calm down, just visualize the training that we had done to get to that point. It was just really special.

And so I was just so relieved that it came together on that day because there had been a lot of hours in the pool and the comeback from the kneecap injury that my husband and my coach, I feel like were kind of playing tag team to kind of keep my spirits up for months. And so I felt like I needed to do my part to stay on it in the weight room and physical therapy and all the things I was doing to recover and really stay on it in cross-training and trying to build a base so that when I could get back to running that it would build something like Chicago. So it was just such a relief that it came together because I mean, as we all know, lots can happen on Marathon day and you don't always get the day you prepared for.

00:28:27

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, I mean you talk about it coming together and that really is it, isn't it? I mean, a lot of things kind of have to align sometimes to have a day like the day you had in Chicago. And you talked about your college career injuries, I know were a part of that, and that held you back from maybe accomplishing what you wanted to accomplish in college. You talked about the injuries you had as a pro, and so what did it feel like for you to just have it all come together that way and cross the finish line and have the realization of the changes you'd made in your training, the changes you'd made in your body, everything that you'd done kind of all come together on that day. And then when it does, how do you feel about, okay, can you make it come together again, right? Because it's almost like you feel like lightning strikes in a good way and then you're trying to make it strike again.

00:29:24

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, I mean I feel like I was just living a dream for the week or two after it, and then I feel like I've been around the sport long enough. I read everything, books all these elite athletes, especially in the last couple of years, a lot of books have come out. And I've read a lot about that understanding that it's nice to be able to learn from other people's mistakes and you obviously have to learn from your own as well, but a lot of people say that they have a big performance and then they think that they have to do something bigger and greater in order to get to higher heights. And I think that I've learned from enough people who've gone before me and have kind of shared their story that it's really about consistency and you don't have to do something.

You don't have to run significantly more miles or do significantly more cross-training or lift heavier weights or completely change your diet or whatever it is. It's a matter of just continuing to stack bricks. And so I think that that was something that my coach and I reflected on after the race that I didn't need to do anything drastic to feel like I could continue to improve. And so I think just checking in on that and remembering that every once in a while, that if I just keep doing what I'm doing and focus on the things that have worked for me in the past and don't pay attention to what everybody else is doing, and if it's different from mine, not second guessing my approach to training, and that's probably going to be what serves me best and is going to make it more likely that lightning can strike again.

00:31:13

Becs Gentry: Absolutely. So talking about doing what you do best as well as running, you are also a second grade math teacher, is that right?

00:31:26

Susanna Sullivan: Sixth.

00:31:26

Becs Gentry: Sixth grade, I've been in the US long enough I should know, but I have no idea about the school system as my daughter's about to enter it, and I'm like, "What?" Sixth grade math teacher. So what age is that? What age are they?

00:31:38

Susanna Sullivan: They're 11 and 12.

00:31:40

Becs Gentry: Oh geez. Okay. So really you have-

00:31:43

Rob Simmelkjaer: Tweens as we call them.

00:31:43

Becs Gentry: ... full on days. Yes, there's attitude, there's probably a lot of patience being taken from you. What is your typical day?

00:31:57

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, yeah, I mean it is a fun age and I started out with little, little kids when I first started teaching. I did pre-K and kindergarten.

00:32:07

Becs Gentry: I know that one, that's why she is. And then

00:32:08

Susanna Sullivan: I then made the jump to fifth grade, was fifth grade for nine years and then have been in sixth grade the last three-

00:32:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's a big jump by the way. As someone who's had two girls go through all those ages, that's a big change.

00:32:24

Susanna Sullivan: I feel like people told me I'd find the things that I didn't like and that I liked about each age group, and I do like that, I mean, I love the relationship building part of that age. I have girls in my sixth grade class who really got into the running thing and their mothers would shoot me emails just letting me know they're having a really hard time building up the nerve, but they really want to have lunch with you. And they're going to say it's about math, but they really just want to talk about running. And so it's just a cool time in their lives where the relationships that they build with the people outside of their family are starting to have more and more of an impact on them, and they're seeking out relationships with the people outside of their families, which is just kind of cool.

So a typical day, my school, I just started working last year at the Langley School in McLean, Virginia. And before that I had been at a public school for nine years, and then before that I was actually at Langley. That's where I started my teaching career and that's when I was with the little people. I like pre-K kindergarten age. And so I am back at Langley. It starts earlier than my old school and that was an adjustment last year. I have to be on campus at 7:45 and I'm not a morning person and I'm working on it. We are actually in Maine now where the sun comes up in the morning, in the summer, so like 4:30 or five. So we're working on it. So we'll see if I can transition back at the start of the school year to maybe being a morning person all of a sudden. But I usually try to do something in the morning, whether that's a strength training thing or cross-training thing.

I try not to do my heavier run in the morning during the school year just because I'm hardly awake. And then I'll do my longer workouts in the afternoon after school. In the summer, it's completely different, I could do almost all my volume in the morning. But yeah, so I am usually up around six, 6:30 and I try to get in 45 minutes to an hour of

something, whether that's a strength training session or some cross-training and then head off to school. Because I'm in a middle school, I do have breaks throughout the day. At my old school I was with kids from the moment I arrived until the moment I left. And there are opportunities in a middle school model for me to have meetings with my colleagues about kids and upcoming things and have time to grade. So I do get a little bit of time to breathe and maybe have a snack throughout the day, which was a really nice change last year just in terms of lifestyle, get a moment to breathe.

But yeah, I've usually got four sections of math throughout the day and each of those classes has about 15 kids in it. And then we have an advisory period or an elective. So sometimes that's just helping the kids with executive functioning things, getting them organized, just making sure that they are building good habits when they head off to high school. And having a consistent adult check-in, making sure that homework is turned in and that they've taken care of things they need to take care of. The school does a really great job at getting the kids to advocate for themselves and communicate via email with their teachers. So oftentimes that's just sitting down with the kids and making sure that we've made a checklist and we've emailed the people we need to email. And so I think that's just a great life skill that they're learning in middle school. And then sometimes I teach an elective and that's the last class period of the day and they have a lot of really cool choices for the kids to just have fun.

00:36:33

Rob Simmelkjaer: So that's not math, that's something fun.

00:36:36

Susanna Sullivan: It could be anything. So we have girls in STEM, we have puzzling, we have robotics, we have all sorts of interesting, sometimes there are more sports oriented ones in the school newspaper, things like that. So we've got that during the day and then as soon as school is over, I head off to George Mason University. That's where my coach, he's the director of the program there. He's been there close to 20 years now, and the men's team there, there's just a lot of guys that I can overlap with and work as I'm a volunteer assistant there in the afternoons. And it's just a great team. The men and the women, they work really hard.

They've got a lot of passion for the sport, and so it's really, no matter how the day has gone at school, no matter how draining it's been or whatever, going there and being surrounded by people who are 18 to 24 years old and are just super excited and are oftentimes kind of immersed in

that upward trajectory in their running journey, it just gives me a lot of energy. It's a great team. They've got great coaches, they're improving, and so to just be around that and to be around their excitement, it's just really cool. And they help me out too because it's awesome to have company for warm up or a cool down and then occasionally an interval or two. I usually get there a little too late to really be able to overlap a lot in workouts. But yeah, it's been a win-win I think, I hope.

00:38:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: Susanna, I'm curious about being a math teacher and a runner at the same time. It sounds like the two lifestyles probably go really well together in terms of the time you have to run, especially in the afternoons, it makes sense and then summers it's perfect. Do you use your math knowledge in your running at all? Do you look at your times, look at your training, look at the way you're approaching it, because there's a lot of numbers in running, there's a lot of numbers in the whole buildup and all of that. Do you ever find yourself making a little formula for your training or your running or throwing a variable or two in there when you're starting to think about how you can run?

00:39:04

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, I mean there's so much data available to us in running, and I do love to look at numbers and just, I like to see patterns and things and it's so easy to compare things and I feel like I try to strike that balance between being interested in the data and noticing things, but not getting too compulsive about it because I mean, I know a lot of distance runners can tend to get a bit compulsive about their training. One of the things that I really love about the curriculum we have at my school and for sixth grade is that being pre-algebra, a ton of rates and ratios and proportions and almost all the word problems in the book that they have are based on running, and they're actually fairly realistic. There have been some workbooks and textbooks that I've encountered over the years where it's like Sally ran 85 miles in whatever, and you're like, "What? Okay."

Or Sally ran three miles in 47 hours and you're like, "No." So this book is great because the curriculum that we use, there's a lot of sports word problems and application in there, and a lot of the kids in the grade that I just had. We'll see what happens with this next group, but there's a lot of sports fans and so it was very easy to kind of connect proportions and ratios to the math that was relevant and that they were learning at the time. Yeah, so

there's a lot of crossover there, and it's cool to be able to show them, " Okay, so if I wanted to average X pace and I was at the four-mile mark at 20 minutes and let's say 54 seconds, how fast do I need to run this next mile?" And so having them kind of figure those things out like, " How fast do I need to run the next mile in order to average what I wanted to average?" It's just really interesting and they get more invested in it if they think that you care about it.

And so yeah, there is a good crossover. My mother was an English teacher and grading essays just takes a really, really long time, but I feel like grading math stuff doesn't usually take... it shouldn't take as long, but then I love to look at their work and figure out if the train went off the tracks, where it went off the tracks so that I can give feedback. So it does take a substantial amount of time, but it's interesting to me when I'm grading papers, it's kind of like a nice brain break from running. And so I tend to do that in the evening, so after I leave Mason in the afternoon, to kind of get back to your question about what a day looks like. After I leave Mason, I usually hit the pool on the way home. We're really fortunate in this area that there's quite a few pools that I can get to pretty quickly on the way home, and I usually do about an hour of cross-training.

And so depending on what I've done in the morning, I'll finish it off in the evening and then after that, usually I try to get dinner right away after that and then usually do a little bit of grading, maybe like 30 to 45 minutes. I feel like as I've gotten older in the last couple of years, I've found more and more that I need kind of a buffer to decompress between the running and the schoolwork and being ready to go to sleep. So I've been trying to find opportunities to just relax at the end of the day, but sleep is so important that it really is just during the week, I have to be pretty disciplined in order to make sure that I have everything ready to go and I can get to sleep so that I can recover.

00:43:13

Becs Gentry: Yeah, absolutely. Okay. Random rumor, do you actually run with your kids at school ever?

00:43:21

Susanna Sullivan: At my old school used to go for a walk in the woods every day. We had a park behind the school and sometimes we would jog a little bit. The school that I'm at now has a turf field that's pretty close to my classroom and it has painted track laps on it, so I like to get outside for things that are active. I don't tend to go for

real runs with them just because our campus is fairly small. But yeah, there's a lot of local races in the area, and so it's fun to see them at... The school is a fairly active community. There's a 5K in McLean that schools or a lot of kids from the school do, so it's cool to just see them at running events and a lot of them like to do local 5Ks and things like that.

00:44:14

Becs Gentry: Yeah. I'm sure they love seeing you too. They're like, "Ms. Sullivan, she's winning." That's so inspiring for them. I love it. I really hope my daughter has a teacher like that, selfishly, who's a runner, obviously.

00:44:29

Rob Simmelkjaer: Susanna, I want to talk about Tokyo a little bit and your approach to running in the world Championships there. It's an interesting event, the World Championships, we had a group talking about this after the MasterCard Mini-10K in New York, and the approaches that people take to that race. It's coming into the fall. There's fall major marathons that are happening. You got some folks who choose to run the champion the world championships, some who don't. What's your approach going to be going into that race? How are you thinking about it? Are you really focused on getting on the podium? Are you just trying to have a good day? Are there other fall marathons that you're thinking about as well? How are you thinking about the world championships and what it means for you and your progression?

00:45:14

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, I mean, we're definitely making it the priority in the training for the fall. We know that it's going to be hot and humid and hilly, and with having an all-Brooks team, it has just given me such an opportunity to learn more about training for humidity and hills. We were out, the three of us and others, but Jess and Erica and I were out in Seattle a couple of weeks ago and we were meeting with all sorts of people on the Brooks campus, but we met with their exercise physiologist and a couple other people who work in their research lab. And they've been helping us to understand our individualized sweat rates and just kind the way that we handle heat and humidity.

And I just think that's just felt a lot of support and I feel like Brooks is putting a lot of their energy into helping us be as prepared as we can be. And so I'm just super excited for this opportunity to work together with Erica and Jess and hopefully, I think all of us have aspirations to be close to medaling as we can. And we've been saying so many things can happen in the marathon. I

think that with it being a course that is hot and humid and has a lot of hills, it gives, those things can be equalizers depending on how well you've prepared and what kind of day you're having. So when I train, I'm training with those things in mind that I want to make sure that I am leaving no stone unturned in terms of preparing for just acclimatizing to the heat and making sure that we're going in mentally prepared for any kind of scenario.

And if that means that we find ourselves in striking position of a medal, being able to respond and not count yourself out because I've been working really hard and training's going well. So yeah, I'm super excited for the opportunity because with every country only being able to send three athletes, that actually is kind of an opportunity for just looking at the rankings. There's quite a few Ethiopians and Kenyans that are ranked ahead of me on the world rankings list, but they can only send three each. And so it does get you thinking, "Okay, so why not a medal." If you have a good day, the field is not-

00:48:18

Rob Simmelkjaer: Quite as deep as it might be in a Boston or in New York. Yeah, exactly. It makes sense.

00:48:23

Susanna Sullivan: Right.

00:48:26

Becs Gentry: Yeah, absolutely. I'm so excited that you are all getting to actually go and run in the stadium in Japan with people being able to cheer you on because obviously when athletes were there for the games, it was fake people in seats in COVID. And so now I think I read that the course was two laps of the stadium to start with, potentially.

00:48:51

Susanna Sullivan: Oh, yeah. I think that's right.

00:48:55

Becs Gentry: Like a hurrah, a couple of laps to see people, which is super cool. How does that make you feel of like, "Oh, wow, this was for the Olympics"?

00:49:02

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, I think it's not going to really hit... I mean, we've looked at the thing like the Google Earth maps and things like that where you can go stand on the street corner, and I'm really appreciative to all the folks who've kind of sent along data mapping the course and route maps that show elevation and things like that. I definitely

think that we are prepared with intel for what the course is going to be like, but my husband is a Marine officer and goes to Okinawa a lot and has spent a bit of time in Tokyo. And he says, once you're on the ground in Japan, it's going to feel like you're on a different planet. So I'm super excited for the experience of just being somewhere new, and I think it really is going to just hit me that like, "Wow, this is very, very cool."

00:49:56

Becs Gentry: It's really, really cool. I've run in a lot of places around the world and running in Tokyo was totally, just like your husband says, I was just like, "It's bizarre. It's so bizarre." And I stayed in the hotel right opposite the stadium and just the hills, the humidity, as you say, even just, you guys I'm sure will have your own food that's suitable for your training. But I mean, I was just running the world majors races, so getting used to different diets, different food, different everything was just so cool as well. I nerd out over the body, obviously in my profession, but how we react to things like that as well as the nerves that you're going to have, but oh, it's going to be a breeze of adventure all the way.

00:50:48

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, I'm super excited.

00:50:51

Becs Gentry: Yay. Okay. With looking ahead, obviously focus is right now world champs, but there is so much anticipation of 2028 LA Olympics. I know you're not probably putting too much out there, but is that on your radar? Are you thinking this is a goal for me in two years time? Two and a bit.

00:51:15

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, for sure. I mean, I feel like I have this conversation occasionally with my husband that I'll see my name in something and I just like, "Oh wait, I did run really fast in Chicago and I really shouldn't be counting myself out for '28." So yeah, I'm super excited. I feel like there's still more to give. I mean, I feel like the 221 in Chicago, I feel like I learned a lot from it. I feel like running my own race was a huge thing there. I didn't actually realize that I was in the lead American spot until very, very late in the race, maybe a mile to go. I started to have suspicions of it at about the halfway, because I feel like I heard somebody say Top American, and I was like, "No, surely I must have missed somebody with all the chaos at the start, somebody must be still further ahead."

But then with about a mile to go in Chicago, one of the

motorcycles pulled up alongside me and was yelling to other people lead American, and I was like, "Oh. Oh, okay." And so I think I just learned a lot about you just prepare the best that you can and you run your race and see where (inaudible)

00:52:47

Becs Gentry: Ready you are.

00:52:47

Susanna Sullivan: ... put you. Yeah. And so I mean, that was just such a big surprise for me, not the time. I just didn't think the time would put me in that place with all the talk before it about an American record and everything I thought I could run. We really did think 221 high, 222 low was a realistic goal, but with all the talk about the American record, I thought, "Okay, there's going to be three people that run 218, 219, 220." And we knew that my training had gone really well, but we also knew that it was the first time that I was going to have finished a marathon in a year or even attempted a marathon in a year.

So I just knew that there was potential, that things could go sideways even though preparations had gone really well. And so I think I learned a lot from that. I feel like training has gone well since then. I've been feeling good. I mean, like I was saying before, I just have so much trust in my coach, and I feel like we are continuing to progress, and I think our communication is really solid. And after every marathon we have a conversation, well and periodically throughout the cycle, just kind of what's going well, what could be improved upon. And so I feel like we still have plenty of ideas with regard to nutrition and hydration and getting more sleep, which is always a challenge in the school year. And so I do feel like there's more to give, and so when I stop to think, "Okay, well if there's more to give, and you're already in this space in the American marathoning scene, yeah, 2028 should be a realistic goal." So we'll just see. I mean, so much can happen in three years, but yeah, definitely planning on going for it.

00:54:55

Becs Gentry: Definitely out there. Sorry, go ahead.

00:55:00

Susanna Sullivan: I've run a couple of flat fast courses recently, and so I'm excited for the challenge of running Tokyo. I think that the training that's been involved in running this, it's been different from what I've done the last couple of cycles, and that's just kind of an exciting prospect in terms of continuing to develop as an athlete, is

that I am having to train a lot on hills, and I'm having to pay a lot more attention to nutrition and hydration because like I was saying before, Brooks is putting a lot of energy into making sure that we are prepared. And so we've been actually learning a lot about what I sweat out and how much I sweat, and that's been kind of surprising to me.

00:55:42

Becs Gentry: So cool.

00:55:43

Susanna Sullivan: And so that's definitely changed my understanding about what I should be taking in along the course in terms of electrolytes and carbohydrates, it's significantly higher than what I had been doing. And so we're starting to do the training involved with preparing in that regard. And so I just feel like there's... Brooks has given me all these opportunities to kind of recognize what I need as an athlete, and so I'm excited to see what that yields. If I'm stronger on hydration, stronger nutrition, just being forced to run a million hills to get ready for Tokyo.

00:56:26

Rob Simmelkjaer: That's pretty interesting. Sweat analysis. I like that. So you're actually learning what's coming out of your body when you sweat, which makes a lot of sense.

00:56:33

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, apparently I'm a really salty sweater, which I never would've known because I'm not a crusty sweater. I've seen people have rings of salt on them.

00:56:40

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, yeah.

00:56:42

Becs Gentry: I'm with you. I did it as well.

00:56:43

Rob Simmelkjaer: How would any of us know? Yeah, how would you know if you're a salty sweater or not? You only know your own sweat, so it's kind of good for somebody to tell you that. That's pretty interesting.

00:56:52

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, it's been fascinating.

00:56:54

Rob Simmelkjaer: Speaking of nutrition, can we talk about something much more important than the race in Tokyo, which

is what are you going to eat in Japan? When I went to Japan, Becs, knows I was so focused on the food and what am I going eat? I mean, of course there's nutrition for the race. So I don't know, are you going to be looking for pasta carbs over there? Are you going to make the move to rice. Because rice, rice is fantastic and there's obviously so many opportunities. There's Ramen as well as another great carb option. What do you think, are there foods you're excited to eat when you're in Japan, both before and after the race?

00:57:32

Susanna Sullivan: There are, I have been told that I absolutely must go to the fish market and that it's just an out of this world experience. So I think I'll probably save that for after the race.

00:57:43

Becs Gentry: Yes, I would.

00:57:46

Susanna Sullivan: So I'm allergic to shellfish, so I'm just in the states, I just don't generally have a lot of sushi because I've just been kind of leery of cross contamination. I've also been told that the Japanese are a very conscientious society.

00:58:05

Rob Simmelkjaer: They're very careful. Yeah, they're very careful about things.

00:58:06

Susanna Sullivan: That shouldn't really be a concern. And so I think I will be having some sushi while I'm over there. Yeah, I've heard the food is fantastic. There will be kind of an American dining hall, so I suspect that they'll have a lot of pasta. But generally before any kind of race, I tend to be pretty flexible about the carbohydrate source. I like potatoes, I like rice, and so I suspect I'll be having a lot of rice over there. But yeah, I am excited to be a little more adventurous on the back side of the race. Initially I thought I would be heading back right after the race to head back to school. And back to school night is the following Thursday, so I do have to be back in Virginia by then. But I say I'm going to stay, I think two days after the race. And I know Brooks has some excursions planned for me and Jess and CJ, because CJ is competing on the men's side. So Brooks has four of the six marathoners, and apparently we're going to go gallivanting around Tokyo after.

00:59:13

Becs Gentry: Fantastic.

00:59:13

Rob Simmelkjaer: Don't sleep on the Ramen. Susanna, I don't know if you're a Ramen fan, but you've to get to a couple of good Ramen shops.

00:59:20

Becs Gentry: It doesn't even have to be good ones. I mean, good, hole in the wall.

00:59:23

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah. The hole the walls spots in Tokyo that are just out of this world and are card sources, but-

00:59:30

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah. We'll be out there far enough in advance too, that I feel like the first day or two if I had something that was a little adventurous. I mean Ramen isn't that exotic, but something like that where probably I would be fine, but I think I'll save the sushi and anything really different that I don't have here that often, I'll save that for after the race.

00:59:55

Rob Simmelkjaer: Yeah, save the sea urchin for after the race. I would recommend that.

00:59:59

Becs Gentry: Okay, Susanna-

01:00:01

Rob Simmelkjaer: Or not at all, since you're allergic. Yeah.

01:00:03

Becs Gentry: ... we have something to ask for you, which is not something we normally do here on Set the Pace. We don't normally get our guests to give advice personally, but seen as you were the top American winner in 2024 at the Chicago Marathon. Wonderful Rob here has just today on the top of the show, announced that he is going to be running the Chicago marathon this October.

01:00:33

Susanna Sullivan: Nice.

01:00:33

Becs Gentry: Yay, Rob. So what advice have you got for Rob for his first ever Chicago marathon? And yes, you should be

scared he's coming for your 221 56.

01:00:50

Rob Simmelkjaer: I'd be thrilled at 321 Susanna, so don't worry. Yeah.

01:00:55

Susanna Sullivan: That's tricky. Wow, you've run New York, I would assume?

01:01:02

Rob Simmelkjaer: A couple of times, yes.

01:01:02

Susanna Sullivan: I mean, I have not yet run the New York City Marathon.

01:01:10

Rob Simmelkjaer: We know we're paying attention.

01:01:11

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, it's on my bucket list.

01:01:15

Rob Simmelkjaer: Good. That's good to know.

01:01:15

Susanna Sullivan: But I feel like the energy in Chicago just standing at the starting line and looking around which is just a shot of adrenaline. So I would just say, just soak up the crowds. I feel like the first couple of miles, I didn't look at my watch and I've heard that if I had, I mean I was kind of looking at it, but then I was like, "No, that can't be right." So I would say don't bother, just kind of trust your trust yourself.

01:01:52

Rob Simmelkjaer: Is that just because the watches aren't accurate there with the tall buildings and everything?

01:01:54

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah. You go on a tunnel and then there's just a lot of taller buildings. I mean, not unlike New York, but yeah, I would say just maybe soak up the energy of the crowd but also recognize that first 5K that it's so, so easy to go out too fast.

01:02:19

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's a little downhill at the start. Is that it?

01:02:20

Susanna Sullivan: Yeah, I think so. Definitely when you head through the tunnel right at the beginning, it's definitely downhill and I feel like that's probably true for a lot of the majors, but I feel like it's particularly important there because it is so fast and flat that you just want to be comfortable, not comfortable, but you have legs under you the last 10K or so. So I think just being cautious early on. I feel like in New York I've heard, and I don't know this from experience, but I feel like everybody cautions people to remember that the hills in Central Park will be there for you and you're going to place under you. But I feel like nobody really talks about that in Chicago because there isn't an element like that where you're just, "Something is looming and if you make a mistake early, you will absolutely pay." I feel like no one talks about that in Chicago because there isn't a feature like that. But I think it's still important what with it being 26.22 miles.

01:03:28

Rob Simmelkjaer: It's still 26.22 months miles. That's the thing, don't get too excited in mile four or five. Yeah, that's good. That's good advice.

01:03:36

Susanna Sullivan: That's great advice.

01:03:36

Rob Simmelkjaer: I appreciate that. I'm so excited about it, Susanna, it's a great city. It's such amazing energy. The architecture in Chicago is so beautiful. You see so many beautiful buildings when you're walking around that city. So I'm excited and I will eagerly follow in your footsteps. You had such a great day there, so I'm hoping for a good day for me too. Hopefully it'll be one I'll remember as I know you've remembered your race. Well, it's been great talking to you and we wish you all the luck as you get ready for Tokyo this summer. It's going to be incredible to watch you there carrying the Stars and Stripes for us and have a great, great day over there. And then let us know when you're ready to come to New York to tackle the TCS New York City Marathon. I'm guessing maybe not this year, but you never know. People have done it. People do all kinds of things so you never know, but we definitely eagerly await your debut at the New York City Marathon, one of these years.

01:04:38

Susanna Sullivan: Thank you so much.

01:04:53

Rob Simmelkjaer: New York Roadrunners 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 well-being of our communities through inclusive and accessible running experiences, empowering all to achieve their potential. Learn more and contribute at nyrr.org/donate. In 2024, Udai Jariwala ran his first marathon ever at the age of 75, just a few years after moving from Hillsborough, New Jersey to New York City and joining the November project.

Since that time, Udai has become a familiar face in the New York City running community, participating in Roadrunners races despite facing significant setbacks including severe knee arthritis and two knee replacement surgeries. He completed his first race, the Kurt Steiner Cross Country 5K back in 2019. And even after a right knee replacement in 2021 and then a partial left knee replacement in 2023, he returned each time to group training determined to stay active. Now 76 years old, Udai is a proud team for kids marathon finisher with 32 Roadrunners races under his belt, including seven 10Ks, six half-marathons, and his first marathon in 2024, which he calls the best experience of his life.

01:06:21

Speaker 5: Thanks, Rob. Wow, Udai, welcome to the Set the Pace podcast. It's great to have you. How are you doing today?

01:06:29

Udai Jariwala: I'm doing great. Thanks for having me.

01:06:31

Speaker 5: Great. What was going through your mind at the start of your first marathon last year, knowing you have already overcome so much just to get to the starting line?

01:06:42

Udai Jariwala: Oh, a lot of things, but mainly it was to, I was telling myself the goal is to finish. This is your first marathon and the goal is to finish. Indeed, just getting to the start line itself was an achievement because the 16, 18 weeks of training itself to prepare for the marathon is the marathon and then running the marathon was just to get the medal in across the finish line. So yes, I was just telling myself, you have your plan, the goal is to finish, stay comfortable and just go slow.

01:07:33

Speaker 5: Well, you did get to that finish, but at the age of 75. What was that finish line? Some of us started my do I was 27 when I did my first marathon, but for youth to be an example for people getting to that finish line and run your personal best basically as long as you get to the finish line, that's a personal best. What was that moment for you?

01:07:52

Udai Jariwala: Oh, unbelievable. I was crying. I cannot forget that moment. It was just everything came out.

01:08:08

Speaker 5: It was the emotion.

01:08:10

Udai Jariwala: Yeah, emotions just take over me.

01:08:14

Speaker 5: Well, you fought through 26.2 miles and to get to that finish line was magical and we're so proud of you. But your first NYR was the Kurt Steiner Cross Country. What did that race teach you about running?

01:08:27

Udai Jariwala: I really wanted to. I had just started running and wanted to run the NY. I joined NYRR membership, wanted to run a race, so I went on the site, signed up for this Kurt Steiner I saw, 5K, which is a good start, I said. Then I realized that, "Oh, this is a cross country in Portland and Portland Park, so it's different. Okay." So anyway, I had no idea. We start on the grass and we run and being the first race, I had no clue about pacing or anything. When everybody started running, I started running. And by the end of the grassy field even before I got on the trail, I was pooped basically, I was tired. I said, "This is not going to work." I took a breather, started walking a little bit. Once I got my breath under control, I finished the race very well and there is a kicker at the end of finish. They stopped me. They said, "Wait, wait, wait." I said, "What happened?" They said, "You are first in your age group." I said, "How come?" So the lessons basically I learned was run your own race, run at your own pace and basically start slow, finish strong.

01:09:58

Speaker 5: Sounds perfect. And no matter what age, what the experience you have getting into the (inaudible) and healthy and finish strong is amazing. And you did that. How did joining the November project and the NYRR group training change your approach to running or even life in New York?

01:10:18

Udai Jariwala: November project is a free fitness group and they focus mainly on the strength training, body weight exercise. So when I started with them, I learned about NYRR also and I got into running because a lot of people in NP, November project ran races. So at that point I did not understand the connection between the strength training and the running. I was just doing the workout with them and once I joined the NYRR group training, I learned the importance of warm up, cool down, I had some structured training and running, how to improve running form and running by RPE rate of perceived exertion. And that's what I like. I run by feel, how I'm feeling. And the speed work and the hill workouts, I could not have done without joining the NYRR group training. And of course the group support that we have in NYRR training, so both of them and November project and NYRR, they have become sort of integral part of my life in New York City. I mean that's what I look forward to every day.

01:11:58

Speaker 5: Absolutely. The New Yorker runners do an amazing job not only on race day, but getting you running the sideline healthy and strong.

01:12:04

Udai Jariwala: Absolutely.

01:12:06

Speaker 5: Looking back now at your 32 races, is there one that stands out, the toughest or the most memorable and what did you take away from that?

01:12:19

Udai Jariwala: The toughest and the most memorable. I will go most memorable first because undoubtedly that is the New York City Marathon. I mean it will always remain as my most memorable race. No doubt. The toughest one. I would say this was prior to my knee replacements, I was running all the races with a lot of pain in my knee, but I just wanted to get it done and any one of those races that I ran prior to my surgery were tough in itself. Yeah.

01:13:02

Speaker 5: Absolutely. And I can also relate to my first memorable one was a New York City Marathon in 2002. What to do, what not to do. It sticks to like it was yesterday, still there. The first marathon is always memorable. What's the most unexpected thing that you have learned about

yourself or about running since you started this journey in your seventies?

01:13:26

Udai Jariwala: About myself, I learned that I can do hard things even if I started so late in my life running. I wish I had started earlier, but it's never too late. And as far as running what I learned that what was unexpected was that running slow makes you run faster. And really that was so unexpected, but so true is that finally I realized that running slow builds my endurance and once I build my endurance, it gives me the opportunity to run faster. And that's how I have slowly, gradually and really I have become faster over over time. It took long time, but I can see the improvement in my... so that was something unexpected when people say running slow makes you run faster.

01:14:40

Speaker 5: I can agree with that because I always tell people, my athlete, that you can build stamina and when you have stamina you could turn into speed, but you can't turn speed into stamina. But what advice would you have for those people that are contemplating running is I can't do, it's not for me, but people think the misperception is, people think you have to sprint the whole way, but as we just heard you, run slow, get to the finish line and start building up. But what advice would you give the people that are on the fence of, "Should I, should I not?" And especially when you start in your seventies.

01:15:16

Udai Jariwala: One more thing I would like to say unexpected that I realized that running could be so much fun. I had not realized until now that it could be so much fun. I find so much joy and peace when I run. And as I said earlier, I wish I had started earlier in my life, but I'm okay with it. I enjoy it now and I will continue to enjoy it.

01:15:46

Speaker 5: You savor in every mile, keep doing what you're doing and you'll be fine. It's great. So thank you for being on the podcast and looking forward to seeing you on the road.

01:15:55

Udai Jariwala: Well, thank you for having me.

01:15:58

Rob Simmelkjaer: Thank you so much for joining us, Udai, and

for being a member of New York Roadrunners. Now it's time for today's Med Minutes.

01:16:05

Speaker 5: Vacationing. When you go on vacation doesn't mean you need to stop running. It just means to adjust and your mindset. Think about the maintenance, not the mileage. 20 to 30 minutes every other day is enough to keep your rhythm going. Explore new route, run without a watch. I like to have a watch, but sometimes ignore the pace you're just going on for having fun and find a local group. Sometimes when you're on vacation, you're going to run into somebody and just ask them what they're training for and go a mile with them or teams with them.

And I've done that myself when I'm running Hawaii and be able to just enjoy the camaraderie because sometimes I tell them, "Hey, can you take a picture of me just for social media?" And then when you come back they want to start running with you because they Googled you and things like that. But effort is important when you are on a vacation, progressive run. Think about quality workout instead of quantity. Just be able to put a little run in is important. Not to worry about I have to run seven miles or eight miles. Just think about just getting a good quality in and spend quality time with your family. And if you have to skip a day or so, not a problem because rest is equally as important. At the end of the day, you are still on vacation.

01:17:20

Rob Simmelkjaer: Well that does it for another episode of Set the Pace. I want to thank our great guest today, Susanna Sullivan and Udai Jariwala. And one more thank you for today's show, our terrific audio engineer, producer, editor, the man who has made Set the Pace as good as it can possibly be given the hosts over the last couple of years. Lou Pellegrino, today is his last day working on the show. Lou has been a huge part of making this show what it has been. When we were first starting Set the Pace, we really didn't quite know really what we were doing at all in fact. We really needed help in terms of getting this show set up. That great open that you hear on Set the Pace, all the things that have made this hopefully a fun listen for all of you out there, Lou's been a huge part of making all of that happen and we cannot thank Lou enough for his tremendous work on Set the Pace. We're going to miss him. He's been awesome. So, Lou, thank you. Happy trails. I know we'll see you down the road, but you've been a huge part of Set the Pace and we all thank you from New York Roadrunners. All right folks, well I hope you have a great week. Enjoy the miles. We'll see you next week.