

Introduction

I was challenged to record my experiences and thoughts while training and completing the 4x4x48 Challenge made famous by David Goggins. This challenge is as much a mental challenge as a physical challenge. The challenge is to run four miles every four hours for forty eight hours. To clarify, the challenge involves completing twelve four mile runs at regular intervals within two days.

We will discuss the following topics as I record this experience, some in greater detail than others.

- The motivation for this and any other of my challenges
- A history of how I got to this point
- Some of the health issues that occurred and how they relate to the challenge
- The plan for the challenge and what I could have done differently
- Thoughts during the 12 runs.

What drove me to complete this challenge it is the same thing that drives me to do most of the crazy running things I have done in recent years. It's "For the Kids", the two missionary schools I support, one in Thailand, and the other in India. I endure the pains, trials, and stresses of training and completing the running challenges, so that the kids of Thailand can be kids without the undue stress that it brings the kids of those schools.

Choosing the Challenge

Now why did I choose this challenge over any other challenge? The pandemic in 2020 initiated the causes, which involved various medically related obstacles. The story begins with the Free Press Marathon Weekend of 2020, which I signed up for in January. I scheduled myself to run the Motor City Challenge Supreme event. The Supreme is a two day event with a competitive one mile run and a 5k run on Saturday and a Full Marathon on Sunday. We all are aware of what happened in March 2020. Now, once the organizers released the official statement that the event would take place virtually that year. I thought to myself, why would I spend the money for a Supreme to do it virtually? I decided that I would defer my Supreme registration and switch it to the Temptation. The Temptation is a 5k and 1-mile run on Saturday. I ran the full with my teammates more because I wanted to put my training to use more than anything else. The weekend came, and all went mostly well. I had a minor issue towards the end of the marathon. The issue was with my right side and the issue felt like an IT band issue. A couple of days of rest afterward and all was well, or so I thought.

I spent the next 6 months keeping my base and strengthening my right side. It turned around to training for the 2021 season and the deferred Supreme. All was going well until about June or July, when I started to have issues. My trainer and I thought the issue was a weak right abductor. It seemed that I could get an hour and a half to two hours of running, and then I could not lift my leg enough to run. With that said, I stuck it out and hoped for the best. Well, the weekend came and Saturday was good and I was happy with my performance. The marathon came on Sunday and that was a disaster, to say the least. It got to mile eighteen before the sweeper van picked me up. It was at that point that I posted my first and only (so far) DNF and headed back to the retreat to let everyone go home. It was also at that point that the process to determine exactly what the issue was began. After months of testing and doctors' visits, it was finally determined that I had a pinched nerve in the lumbar region. That now drives my strength training done most mornings and my stretching routine, which is done most nights.

As I needed a goal and a challenge, I decided that I would attempt to do thirteen half-marathons in thirteen months. That started with a short training season to build some strength and off I went with one of my favorite half-marathons. I was moving along and making the marks and it felt good, but the time was not great. I finished it well ahead of the sweeper van, which made it a success. The challenge had

started well, and I even had a destination event in the lovely borough of Brooklyn, New York, with a day at Coney Island. About that time, my next medical hurdle began with its many parts.

I have been having yearly physicals for a while, well at this one I had the doctor look at a spot on my back. After a few more doctor visits, the spot turned out to be melanoma. I continued with my goal and I was not going to let cancer interrupt me. I had surgery in early July in which they took an "Ice Cream Scope" sized chunk of skin and muscle out of my back and a lymph node. As part of the treatment and to ensure that the cancer would not return in the future, they prescribed me a series of medications. The medication has some side effects, including vision issues, high blood pressure, and high blood sugar, among others. The reason I bring up these side effects is they are the ones that hit me. To make it clear, these medications didn't cause the issues just pushed them over the limit. I will start with the easy one, my eyes. I was told that I had cataracts a year or so earlier. At that time, they were not bad enough to have the lenses replaced. At this appointment, we discovered that the cataract in the right eye had exploded and the left eye was also in need of replacement. That surgery went well, and I could even squeeze a half-marathon in between the two procedures.

Now on to the next side effect like the cataracts, I was aware that I was very close to having high blood pressure. The world that we live in almost causes high blood pressure, so it is not unusual. I was told by the doctor to monitor my blood pressure. As it began to get consistently a little too high, we started medications to control it. That brought it down but did not stop the climb. We added different medications, and that seemed to take care of that issue for the time being. I will admit it was short-lived as we added another medication for another reason and that caused my blood pressure to climb again.

Then the wheels started to fall off the program. The cancer medication is rather expensive, but they have assistance plans, to allow us folks who are not millionaires to afford them. Well, as part of the paperwork fight, there were times when I would be without medication, as they just could not process the paperwork correctly. Remember the side effects, well I got blindsided by the high/low blood sugar side effect. I was aware of this issue as well, but it was not high enough to be controlled by medications. We noticed that my blood sugar was high but not over the limit, so we were using diet and exercise to try to keep it low. My luck had run out as about a week before my 10th half-marathon, I had what we thought was a bout of the flu. Well, after looking at other things as they happened, it was very low blood sugar. The symptoms were alternating between shivering and shaking for hours on end. We believe that it was tied to the medications being unavailable. As the symptoms are very similar, my blood sugar dropped very low. We put it together when it happened again a few months later, as they had the same issue and I had the same response. Once the Cancer medication was coming on time, I did not have any issues with the shaking and shivering.

Now that we have the blood sugar and blood pressure issues under control. It was time for the next hurdle. As part of the treatment, along with monthly blood work, there were regular scans, including CT or MRI scans, every couple of months. Well, during one scan, it was reported that I had three broken ribs. The last time I checked, most people would know if they had broken ribs. Well, as you can tell, I am not like most people, and I never felt them at all even while breathing. I was still running between fifty and sixty miles a week and biking another thirty to forty miles a week without pain. So that we could be sure that there was nothing else going on, we got the bone testing done. The testing showed that I could use more calcium and Vitamin D in my system so that there would be more pills in the bin. Now that everything is being handled, the year of Cancer Medication is almost done. We will see it on the next visit. At this point, I think I am getting ready to graduate from monthly visits to quarterly and drop a few pills from my medication list. I am not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing (see the above incident) with the shivering and shaking. Now that we are done with the medical stuff on to the next topic.

Reason for any challenge

I am asked what motivates me, as stated in the beginning it is "the Kids". I have a few concepts that

keep me inspired. One I developed early in my running journey, is "I run to complete not to compete". I tied this to the fact that I am slow and run in an age bracket that always seems to have the greatest number of fast entrants. I am also, by nature, not very competitive. I do my best, and if I am not the leader, I am satisfied with my effort. I marvel at those who are mid/back of the packers diving for the finish line. If you are that concerned about your time, you should have been moving faster when I passed you a mile ago. Another concept that I saw just a month ago is, "Faith makes everything possible, that does not mean that it will be easy". This speaks to the trials and pains of doing something that is out of your comfort zone or requires sacrifices to complete.

The Training

Now what everyone has been waiting for is the training philosophy that I used to prepare for this challenge. As there were no actual plans that I could find when I started this, I improvised my training schedule, so here we go. My research showed that, as stated above, this challenge is as much a mental challenge as a physical challenge. The trick of the challenge is to not succumb to it, just squeeze the activities in order to start to trick your body into thinking it is a change in lifestyle rather than training. My big hurdle was not the mileage amount but finding the hour several times a day on several days a week. I already had a base schedule which only changed slightly with this training cycle. My base schedule is/was Monday, up to two hours on the bike. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings are five to six mile runs. Friday is an off day to recover and prepare for Saturday, which is an eight to ten mile run and another hour and a half to two on the bike while weather permits. That being said, I started by adding a short run during my lunch hour three days (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) a week when I normally take a walk. This added ten minutes to change in the locker room at work and ran instead of walking. It started with doing three miles during those runs. After two weeks after that, I added early morning runs on the same three days of the week, at the same three miles. This would keep me in the prescribed 10% rule of not adding more than 10% a week to your total mileage at any one time.

I would systematically add miles to the runs until the final schedule, which topped out about three weeks before the scheduled event. The basic formula was as follows. Monday had two runs of four miles during the day and in the evening a bike ride of an hour and a half to two hours (about twenty miles). Tuesday had two four mile runs during the day and an eight mile run in the evening. Wednesday ended with four four mile runs, with the last two in the evening being four hours apart and the first run on Thursday being four hours after the last run on Wednesday. Thursday was a very early four mile run, a lunchtime four mile run, and an eight mile run in the evening. Friday ended with three four mile runs, one morning, one lunch, and one evening. Saturday was a constant thought throughout the training with a ten mile run and a twenty mile bike ride (a total time of just under four hours).

The Training Schedule

| Week | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|------|--|--------------------|---|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | 3 Mile AM Run 2 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 5 Mile Evening Run | 6 Mile Evening Run 2 Mile Lunch Run 3 Mile AM Run | 5 Mile Evening Run | 3 Mile Lunch Run 3 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 2 | 3 Mile AM Run 3 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 6 Mile Evening Run | 6 Mile Evening Run 3 Mile Lunch Run 3 Mile AM Run | 5 Mile Evening Run | 3 Mile Lunch Run 3 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |

| Week | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-------------|--|--------------------|---|--|---|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 3 | 3 Mile AM Run 3 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 6 Mile Evening Run | 6 Mile Evening Run 3 Mile Lunch Run 3 Mile AM Run | 6 Mile Evening Run | 3 Mile Lunch Run 3 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 4 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 6 Mile Evening Run | 6 Mile Evening Run 3 Mile Lunch Run 3 Mile AM Run | 6 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 5 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 6 Mile Evening Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 4 Mile Evening Run | 5 Mile Lunch Run 5 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 6 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 7 Mile Evening Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 7 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 8 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 9 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 10 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 11 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |

| Week | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-------------|--|---|---|--|---|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 12 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 14 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Midnight Run | 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 15 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Midnight Run | 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 16 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 5 Mile Evening Run 3 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 4 Mile Night Run 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 17 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 18 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 19 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 Hour Ride | 8 Mile Evening Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 8 Mile Evening Run 4 Mile Lunch Run | 4 Mile Lunch Run 4 Mile AM Run | 1.5 hour Run 1.5 hour Ride | Rest |
| 20 | 4 Mile AM Run 4 Mile Lunch Run 1.5 hour Ride | 5 mile shakeout Run | AM Walk Lunch Walk Evening Walk | Start 4X4X48 | Middle 4x4x48 | End 4x4x48 | Rest |

Table 1 - Training Schedule

The training schedule should fit your lifestyle, but in the end, you need to train your mind and

body to accept the fact that it will need to change. Also, remember that this is not a race but a challenge and the amount of time your runs take is not the goal. As stated earlier, one of my catchphrases fits here perfectly, "I am not here to compete but complete". You have four hours to propel yourself four miles. You are not in a hurry and you need to leave gas in the tank. An average walker is about sixteen to twenty minutes a mile, with it taking about an hour and a half to complete the four miles. That leaves about two and a half hours to rest before the next four mile walk. Also, be reminded that this is a mental as well as a physical challenge. The activities in the dark will push you mentally. If you do not have a solid motivation, it will be very hard to complete the sessions you just do not feel like doing.

Event Days

Now let's discuss the event days. My suggestion is to have a choice of about three times in mind when you start the training. You will need at least six to eight months of training, depending on your base, your running style, and your lifestyle. I also add at this time another piece of sage advice, if you are a seasoned runner you will already abide by this rule. "Nothing new on Event Day", if you have not trained with it, do not even think about using it. That includes changing a running style, a piece of clothing, food/fuel/hydration, and trying to train in the conditions that you will be running in. The reason for this is so that you can be sure that you will know how your body will react to the conditions.

As for the actual schedule, there are two frames of thought decide on a finish time and work backwards, or decide on a start time and work forwards. It is a personal preference, and I chose to work backward as I wanted to end at a convenient time. Luck would have it I could get the start to lineup with an already scheduled activity. Although the activity changed slightly from what I planned for other reasons I could still start the run with a group of supporters. When scheduling your runs keep in mind, that you might want to have pacers (people to run with) on some of them. Having them all from your living location may sound great if you do not want to have folks to motivate you to get out of the house and run four miles. For me, an out and back is just fine if I get to do it with someone, even if you may not know.

Now that I am all trained up and I have all the plans in place, it is time to do the event, as this is an ultra run, and since most ultras have some sort of hills, I started with mine. The first leg went well, although I did start a little faster than I should have. I blame the not running several days beforehand as the cause of that issue. I got settled down and completed the first of twelve runs without any problems. The next three segments (two, three, and four), were in the neighborhood as I was trying to dodge cars while it was dark. There were minor issues with forgetting things, but it did not affect the outcome of the runs. It only affected my mental state for being stupid and forgetting something. The runs of segments five, six, and seven were the destination runs along some of the local Rail-to-Trails. As for the type of run, they were out and back with lunch between segment five and segment six. Segment seven was from a local watering hole. The run was followed by a food truck, a BEvERage, and conversations. Segments eight and nine were again around the neighborhood. Eight was uneventful, but nine almost doomed me. Segment nine was when technology tried to take me down, and it was not the high-tech stuff, it was the low-tech electric alarm clock that didn't allow me as much wiggle room as I would have liked. Segments ten and eleven were along another Rail-to-Trail, this one was just a little further away. Some of my teammates joined me. I do the Free Press Marathon with them as this is our normal Saturday morning training spot for most of August, September, and half of October. Segment ten was a little bit of a risk as it was still dark at that time. Also, the fog had started to build, as this was an unlit section of the Rail-to-Trail. The concern was abated when I was joined by others on the trail. The last segment (twelve) was done in the neighborhood around the house. That was so once I was done, I didn't have to do anything except rest. I needed it, but not as much as you might think, a nap and some food and I could go and be social.

In Conclusion

That is a wrap on the event and now a few of the accomplishments. The final total of the completed miles, according to what they recorded on Strava, is just under fifty. That is with a moving time of nine and a half hours over forty five hours of clock hours. I had a few aches for a day or so, but nothing to be concerned about. Now it is on to strength training for a few months before I choose my next goal. I have a few in mind, but nothing concrete at this time. As a hint, this is another running goal that has nothing to do with speed.

As for the state of mind, it was fun to do the challenge. The hardest part of the challenge was the training. By the time I got to the challenge, the hard part was done. So I had fun just being out there and completing a goal after several attempts. I began to understand how to control some of the things my mind does to me while out on the road. I also learned that there are things that I can control and I need to control them rather than let them control me. That is all I have to say in this forum and we will see how this goes over.