

David,

First off, thanks again for another wonderful HL experience. A great time was had by all from RVA. A question: Do you have any Large finisher shirts? I asked (I think) for a Large, but somehow ended up with a Medium. If you have any, please put one aside for me. Just let me know and I'll send you the Medium along with a post-paid envelope for the Large. Thanks.

**Now, I'd like to share my HL experience, which I think you will understand:**

Please know that HL was truly the accomplishment of a BHAG for Hannah Mills and Emily Stock. As of this time last year, neither had run further than a 10K, and they had no lofty goals, errrr no goals at all. With a little prompting (yes, from me), they set their sights on a grand dream- *To run a MARATHON*. So they joined the SportsBackers Marathon Training Team, were thus handed a training plan and had weekend long-runs set up with groups of their peers, and set out train for and complete something monumental. And they did it. *They ran the Richmond Marathon 2014*. A very special moment for me was to run them in to the finish line from the lululemon cheer station at around mile 24. Yes, they did it. But little did they know that more was to come.

About 2-weeks post-marathon, I printed a couple of copies of the HL registration form, wrote each of their names on a copy, marched into the lululemon store, handed each their copy, and challenged them to take advantage of their 9-months of training by continuing to train for a couple of months and run HL; to not rest on the laurels of running a marathon. Hannah immediately had a serious look of determination on her face, and I knew she took the bait. Emily response was different, although with the same immediate acceptance. She cried tears of happiness to be challenged in that way.

Needless to say, they both registered without any further prompting from me. They continued to train. Then, with HL closing in, they wanted to do a last long run with me. We agreed to run the James River trails here in RVA 2-weeks out of HL. As agreed, we met at the Pump House Drive trailhead. Emily was awaiting my arrival. Then Hannah pulled into the parking area, but not alone. She brought her significant other, John "Abe" Ludden, who also had registered for HL. As for Abe, the longest that he

had ever run prior to that Saturday was 14 miles. On that day I took them on a convoluted circuit of Buttermilk, Texas Beach, NorthBank, and Belle Isle trails, as well as the Flood Wall and the Pipeline. They held steady through the day and completed 20.2 miles in 4:00:15. I was convinced that these three had what it would take to put HL in the books. And the rest is history. They now believe in what I've been telling them over and over again:

***You CAN do more than you think you can...***

Thank you and your crew for hosting another phenomenal event with HL 2015. I have continually brought ultra-rookies out based on the promise that they will experience an "event" like no other than they've ever experienced, and you and yours continue to deliver on the promises that I make. For that I am truly grateful, and of course hold your "events" in a special place in my heart.

As for Hannah, Emily and Abe, they have touched me in a very special way. Being a kind of old-school athlete (since 1978), I've gotten into a groove with running and cycling, and doing, doing, and more doing. And yes, I lead-up a couple of weekly runs, a monthly trail run, and whatever I can fit on the plate. There's usually an oncoming race, I usually know what's coming, and I feel that I'm rock steady. But these three have really shaken me up in a very special way. They've touched me with their drive, commitment and focus. Suddenly I remembered that spirit. What they've made me feel brings goose bumps to my arms, and is best described by Albert Schweitzer:

***In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out.  
It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being.  
We should be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.***

Best, Mark

